

City to proceed with twin pad plan

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After an exhaustive site selection process, Hamilton city staff has been directed to start the design and build stage for the proposed Flamborough twin pad arena at Clappison's Corners. The new \$13-million facility will be built behind the North Wentworth Arena, allowing the current building to remain operational while its replacement is built. Eventually the old arena will be demolished to make way for a parking lot.

"We need it (the North Wentworth Arena) to be in use because there is no alternative ice surface," Flamborough councilor Margaret McCarthy explained while discussing the plan to use the old arena while a new one is built. The city owns the 22-acre site so there's plenty of room to accommodate the project.

Two weeks ago, McCarthy got unanimous support from city council to move the project along. Staff was directed to call for design/build tenders "as soon as possible...so that another season is not lost."

The project was delayed several months while staff looked at the possibility of building the twin pad at Joe Sams Leisure Park at the corner of Centre Road and 5th Concession Road East, just north of Waterdown. The province's greenbelt legislation, which places limits on development in the area, and the absence of piped water to the building, quashed that plan. "That left us with Clappison's Corners or nowhere else," McCarthy said.

Coralee Secore, the district manager for Hamilton's culture and recreation division for Flamborough, Dundas and Ancaster, said the project has been on the books since before Flamborough's amalgamation with the city six years ago. Flamborough's Master Recreation Plan of 2000 called for a twinning of the North Wentworth Arena.

The new facility is being modeled after the 65,000-square-foot arena on Appleby Line in Burlington, Secore said. Besides two ice surfaces, it will include meeting rooms for community groups.

Because the city will lose the front corner of the arena property when the Ministry of Transportation proceeds with plans to build a cloverleaf at the intersection of Highways 5 and 6, an alternate access to the twin pad will be built from a new road east of the arena. The road will run parallel to Hwy 6.

Built in 1973, the North Wentworth Arena is one of only two arenas in Ontario that has an ammonia expansion ice-making system. "It's reached its life expectancy," Secore said, adding that ammonia-based systems are being phased out and arenas with them are being de-commissioned.

Increasing demands for ice time in Flamborough and the expectation that those demands will climb even higher as the community grows also prompted officials to look at a twin pad complex. "It's a community-focused project," Secore said, adding that city staff has worked closely with a volunteer citizens' group, the Flamborough Ice Committee, in planning the project.

Funding for the facility is outlined in the city's capital budget, which indicates that the arena could be under construction as early as next year. "That would be terrific. We might as well shoot for that," McCarthy exclaimed, although she acknowledged the target is optimistic given the preliminary work that remains to be done.

Later this month, a business plan outlining the project's financing will be presented to council. While almost half of the cost will be covered by development charges, McCarthy said there's a chance the facility could be facing a \$2-million shortfall. But other funding options remain open, including naming

rights, partnerships, community fund-raising and work-in-kind agreements, she noted.

Given the size of the site and projections indicating a doubling of Waterdown's population over the next 10 years, there's opportunity to expand the twin pad to a four-pad facility, McCarthy said. Larger arenas have proven to be more financially viable than their smaller counterparts.

Hamilton currently has two twin pad facilities, the Chedoke and Mountain arenas. It also has a four-pad arena on East Mountain.

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