

SPORTS & LEISURE

GDHS dream field a step closer to reality

By **EAMONN MAHER**
Staff Writer

The Field of Dreams project at Georgetown District High School has cleared a major hurdle to becoming reality as construction is slated to begin in early April.

A recent \$110,000 grant from Ontario's Trillium Foundation pushed the community fundraising total to over \$500,000, reaching the "trigger point" for the tendering process to start later this month on the \$2.1 million project.

Scheduled to be ready for play in September, the proposed artificial turf sports field and all-weather rubberized track will be the first such facility within the Halton District School Board, which has loaned \$1.5 million to the local committee to offset construction costs.

The Town of Halton Hills is also a partner in the project and several other communities across the province have already made inquiries to the committee about the successful fundraising model that has been utilized in Georgetown.

"That will be the legacy that transcends this field," said committee chairman Ian Troop.

"Maybe other communities will see this and say, 'This isn't so difficult after all,' but it does involve critical factors. The community elements have to band together and link with the town and the school board. And I think what transpired here resonated quite well with the Trillium Foundation."

A committee meeting was



The Georgetown District High School Field of Dreams project, which calls for a fully lit field and track with a synthetic field surface and grandstand, recently received a \$110,000 Ontario Trillium Foundation grant pushing the local fundraising total to more than \$500,000.

Graphic by Andrew Hickson

held last week to iron out specific details for construction with the project manager, who is also presiding over the extensive renovations currently underway at GDHS.

During a recent tour of similar artificial turf fields at Halton Catholic board high schools, Field of Dreams committee members were advised to push for as much grandstand seating as is financially feasible.

The current plans would see five rows of grandstand seating on one side of the fully lit field and the type of synthetic

turf surface that the committee expects will be installed should have a lifespan of approximately 10 years.

"Maybe other communities will see this and say, 'This isn't so difficult after all.'
—Committee chairman Ian Troop

"We're still fundraising so that we can have the kind of venue with the right set of grandstands with personalization on the field and all those extra things cost money and

we want to do it right," Troop added.

"We'd like to get 10 or even 15 rows of stands and really transform the Field of Dreams from being a very good community facility to a really good event venue and hopefully we can start to host some regional championships up here."

The Georgetown Soccer Club and the Halton Hills Minor Football Association are thrilled about the prospects of the new facility and as the two major community partners in the project, have committed to rent a

substantial number of hours at specified rates. Those user fees will be used to pay off the loan to the school board, with the Town overseeing the loan repayment and scheduling for the venue amongst the various community groups.

Both the GSC and HHMFA feel they'll be able to significantly increase their registration numbers in 2011 from the current 2,800 and 260 for each, respectively. The facility will also greatly expand the duration of the clubs' playing schedules and complements the two-year-old Dufferin Centre in Acton, as well as the Trafalgar Sports Park, which are both booked to capacity.

"Not only does this give us the artificial field we've been looking for and that the Town wanted to build anyway, it also gives us more flexibility around the existing fields, so if Cedarvale Park needs a rest for a while, we can play here," said GSC president Alice Strachan, who submitted the application for the \$110,000 Trillium grant.

"If we want to run a larger-scale event, we can do that now. Our annual tournament, for example, has been held back in terms of the number of teams registering because of a lack of fields in Halton Hills. That's huge revenue for the Town."

Jim Kardash, president of the HHMFA, has watched his organization's enrolment triple over the past four years, having to use fields in Acton and Milton for its house league and rep teams.

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