

Provincial BMX coach hopeful track built here

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An outdoor BMX track in Whitchurch-Stouffville is one step closer to reality.

On Tuesday, Brendan Arnold, head coach for the Ontario Cycling Association and former competitive BMX rider, lobbied town staff and council for their assistance during the 2012 budget open forum.

"I'm excited about what took place the other night. I'm now very optimistic," Mr. Arnold said.

The Stouffville resident said he originally brought the idea for a local BMX track to then-mayor Sue Sherban about six years ago.

He said Ms Sherban indicated there wasn't much interest in it nor was there money in the budget for it.

Mr. Arnold did not give up and approached Mayor Wayne Emmerson about two years ago, he said. The two talked about it with the result being his formal request this week to have it included in next year's budget.

"I think council liked my idea and sounds like staff is going to investigate it," he said.

When asked about the proposal by The Sun-Tribune, Mr. Emmerson called it "pretty good".

The one concern Mr. Emmerson did raise, however, was availability of space.

Mr. Arnold's proposed park will be about two acres in size. He suggested locating it either in the town's works yard on Bethesda Road or in the Bethesda Sport Fields.

Mr. Arnold is hoping to model the track after the one in Port Elgin, which he said started small

in 2002 with \$20,000 and over the past eight years has expanded to the point where the club currently has about 100 members and hosts an annual competition that brings in more than 300 riders.

Mr. Arnold said the track could not only provide an activity for locals, but it would also draw riders from Barrie, Ajax, Pickering, Uxbridge and Newmarket.

Riders from those areas currently travel to Milton, the closest track, he said.

"I know there's a need for more bike outlets because we don't have a great trail system," he said.

Mr. Arnold estimated the track will cost \$40,000 and that includes dirt and fencing to keep motorized vehicles out.

A typical BMX track is a continuous soft earthworks stretch of terrain with dirt obstacles and berms about 400 to 700 metres in length. The track requires a start hill, spectator viewing area and parking lot, according to Mr. Arnold.

His goal is to operate the track as a not-for-profit club with the town's only involvement being the donation of the land.

"The goal is to not run it off town money," Mr. Arnold said.

The typical BMX rider, according to Mr. Arnold, is male and between the ages of five and 15. However, he said, there are riders as young as three and as old as 60 in Milton and some females.

A draft budget is expected to be released in early December with final deliberations taking place in January.

'Fix old pool,' resident says

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approved, we have to go back to council to see if they want to go ahead without the grant," Mr. Pourvahidi said.

The town's 53-year-old outdoor pool, also located in the downtown Stouffville park, was closed at the end of the 2010 season after its recirculation system failed.

Mayor Wayne Emmerson said Oak Ridges-Markham MP Paul Calandra "is still trying to see if some funding could be found for us."

"There's no grey area," he said. "We did say we would put an outdoor pool beside the current one."

"I think we're all disappointed we didn't get it but we're not going to stop trying."

The Memorial Park master plan, which includes the pool, will be brought back to the public for consultation sometime before the end of the year.

"We promised we would go back to the public to see if that is what they are looking for," Mr. Emmerson said.

James Moffatt, who was a vocal member of the Save the Outdoor Pool committee, said he was not surprised the town did not receive the grant.

"The (government) has been very good to the town of Stouffville. I thought they were going to share the wealth with our neighbouring communities," he told The Sun-Tribune.

Mr. Moffatt also expressed his disappointment with the mayor and councillors because "all hopes of this water facility were banking on this grant".

A report to council from the municipality's leisure services department regarding various go-forward options is expected in December, according to Mr. Pourvahidi.

'I think we're all disappointed we didn't get it but we're not going to stop trying.'

Mr. Moffatt's suggestion is to "take a very hard look at fixing the pool".

The pool does not meet current health code regulations when it comes to water turnover rates, but it has been able to operate as such because of a grandfather clause, according to Rob Raycroft, director of leisure and community services for the municipality.

If repairs were to be made to the pool, the clause would be voided and the pool would have to be brought up to code.

That would cost between \$820,000 and \$980,000. A new tank pool is estimated to cost \$900,000.

"We are where we are because we didn't fund the necessary repairs," Mr. Moffatt said. "We have to make the right infrastructure investment."

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