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Media Release

Event Centre Renovations and New Tennis Courts in LaSalle

The development of the Small Coast Waterfront project has taken a big step forward as LaSalle Council approved administration's report at the May 25, 2021 Regular Meeting of Council. The report outlines the tender responses received for the renovation of the former Westport Marina into a municipal event centre. Tender documents were released on April 23, 2021 and closed on May 12, 2021. Bids were received from 4 general contractors with the project being awarded to local contractor Vince Ferro Construction at a cost of \$6,540,520.

Renovations to the facility include: 21,500 square foot of event space for year round use, a servery, barrier free washrooms, multi-purpose space, second floor viewing/eating area, accessible lifts to the second floor, large glass doors that open to outdoor plaza/Detroit River and to Front Road, built in sound attenuation, outdoor canopy cover for inclement weather, and office/storage space.

The tender also included a price to supply and install gym curtain dividers, tennis and pickleball floor sockets, equipment and other specifications. The roll up curtains would provide for separation between the courts and provide protection of the glass end walls. The layout would allow for two pickleball courts and one tennis court that could be shared as a possible basketball court. These roll up dividers could also be used for other programs and events that would benefit from separation.

"It is anticipated that the event centre will be substantially complete by March or April of 2022 which could allow use of the facility in the summer or fall of next year. Town administration is in the process of determining future uses of the event centre including municipal festivals and events, and outlining rental guidelines," said Kevin Miller, Director of Special Projects.

The Westport Building renovation and improvements were originally estimated to cost approximately \$5.2 million. As further analysis was completed, the scope of work increased resulting in the architect to revise the estimate to approximately \$6.6 million. The low tender came in at just over \$6.5 million.

Approximately \$3.5 million will be funded from a combination of debt issuance and reserves. An additional \$3 million will be provided from the federal Gas Tax Fund (GTF). This is a permanent source of funding provided twice-a-year to provinces and territories who flow the funding to their municipalities. The funding can be used to support local infrastructure priorities like recreation projects. The Town of LaSalle typically receives \$1.5 million annually through the GTF, and is receiving an additional \$1.5 million in 2021.

Sports Zone

In addition at the May 25, 2021 meeting, LaSalle Council approved administration's report that makes a change to the plans for the Small Coast Waterfront project. Initially, the project included upgrades to the tennis courts and sand volleyball courts on Front Rd.

"Based on feedback received through the waterfront consultation, there is a demand for tennis courts in Essex County. With the plans for the waterfront, it would not be possible to expand the installation of tennis courts at the Front Rd. location", said Peter Marra, Deputy CAO. It is also difficult to provide shaded areas or to host tournaments at Front Rd. in the future. After investigation, Town administration has also identified soil conditions that are not conducive to installation of heavy pavement that would be needed to ensure longevity of the courts.

Administration presented LaSalle Council with a proposal to install up to eight tennis courts and 12 pickleball courts at the Vollmer Complex, directly behind the building. The full build out and long-term vision presented has an estimated cost of \$3 million. The concept meets the recommendations in the Vollmer Master Plan that the Town consolidate active facilities, such as courts, at one location for ease of maintenance, programming, and general upkeep. This proposal to build courts at the Vollmer Complex would allow the Culture and Recreation Department to use these facilities for programming like day camps.

At the Council Meeting, it was approved to move forward with Phase 1 of the plan including building four lit tennis courts with associated walkways. Phase 1 will cost approximately \$450,000 and closely coincides with the original work proposed as part of the sports zone in the waterfront project. The Town has received a COVID Resiliency Grant that will be used for the build, as well as funds that were allocated in the 2021 Budget for the project. A tender for the four courts will be issued in the coming weeks.

This means that the current tennis courts, sand volleyball courts and basketball court will remain at Front Rd. for use in 2021 in their current state. Minor repairs will be made as needed, and it is anticipated that these courts will be available for use for 5 or more years.

“We believe the full build out concept has addressed most of the comments provided from the tennis community. This full build out concept will not happen in the short term but will be a long-range vision,” said Marra. “This concept also addresses the multiple requests the Town has had for more pickleball courts. Again, this will not happen in the short term but will provide for a long-range vision.”

The location of the proposed tennis facility behind the Vollmer Centre is proposed over two existing 9v9 soccer fields. In Phase 1, one field can remain, however, one field will need to be relocated south of Mike Raymond Drive. A plan for this has been developed and discussion will take place with the soccer user groups.

Phase 1 of the ultimate build-out concept allows Council and the Town to expand in the future as budget money becomes available. Should there be a need for more parking, washrooms, a premier court with grandstands, a covered/enclosed facility, etc. this will allow Council to consider those requests as money and/or sponsors become available.

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