

Good Evening Mayor and Council,

I want to thank you for the opportunity to delegate tonight regarding the parks and recreational framework on allocation.

My name is Sarah Merritt-Kellogg and I am the president of Burlington women's recreational soccer league. I am also one of the founders of this club 25 years ago. Part of our vision is to provide soccer for women at all levels that is inclusive, that is excepting and meeting the needs of women in sports regardless of one's ability and skill level. Our goal is to promote women in sport, specifically soccer. BWRSL is a league that has and represents members in all wards of Burlington. So, when I speak to you today, I'm hoping that you don't see me just as ward resident for a particular ward but as someone who is here asking that you recognize and help all the women in the community who are engaged in sport.

I'm here today because I have grave concerns regarding the framework that Parks and Recreation are presenting and asking counsel to adopt. I found the document very disappointing and left out important factors that must be considered. It lacked substance, it lacked concrete direction and policies and left the reader confused as to where this document was going. I attended the user group meeting the city held on October 17, 2019 where this framework was presented to us. I have to say I find it surprising that this document was presented to us as we had never had any prior discussions and had never been engaged by the city staff for the need to make any changes regarding the framework of allocation.

In my experience, before making changes to policies and procedures, including framework, one should look at the logic behind it. One needs to review and know what was done right, what was done wrong, what failed, what was successful. What area could find improvement, where is there common ground on issues that parties are apart on or different in opinion on, and how do the people who use the facilities and need to meet these policies feel about it. None of these things were discussed with us, no suggestion of new policies was mentioned, and no one talked to us about it. I find it disturbing that if this framework has been in process for two years, then why is it that we've never once been approached by the parks and rec department to talk about this. A primary principal in engagement would be to speak to and work with the user groups who this policy and framework will affect. Sadly, this never happened.

Replacing one bad policy or allocation framework with another doesn't solve the problem it just makes matters worse. If the policies and procedures that are actually in place currently was followed there would be less problems. It makes no sense to replace a policy with a bad one when you never followed the original in the first place. After viewing the presentation, I found that the framework is too vague, that the presentation provided no value, no specifics, it didn't explain what it was supposed to align with and what policies are being replaced. As a user group I should know what policies the city wants to replace and why. I should be able to provide my feedback and my input should be valued, it should be taken into consideration and implemented as part of the policies. None of this occurred, we were just spoken to at the user group meeting. None of our questions, none of our concerns were ever addressed.

If the city feels they need to adjust your framework then do so for your own programming but to come in and dictate how my programming and others are run is inappropriate. I and the volunteers do the work not your department, my club operates based on its members needs not based on staff dictating how we should be operating. Our members come to us based on us meeting their needs. They tell us what they need and we adjust our programming accordingly. I find it unbelievable that staff feel they have a better sense of what our members and the community want when we provide the majority of the programming. The city of Burlington needs the user groups to operate programs because the city of Burlington doesn't offer a multitude of programming and therefore, should have more respect for us and how we operate than what's currently being presented by parks and rec.

The definition of Recreation provided by this framework fails to in compass or in body the fact that Recreation means something different to most people. It could mean something completely different to me than it is to you, and you could change your meaning based on your experience, based on your skill level, your interest, your age whether you're male or female. I don't think you should be locking in a definition when it's more beneficial to be fluid. Recreation means many things to many people, and we all have different experiences and needs. So, I believe the definition of Recreation in itself is flawed.

When you look at the framework hierarchy it leaves one to wonder what the intent is and the purpose. How is this achievable? Is it achievable and is it realistic? Well, I agree

everyone has the right to play I do not agree that because you offer sport to all you have a greater right and a more important right to access the allocation of resources of the city of Burlington. As a taxpayer and a user group representative I believe all the current user groups that are Burlington Based, and meet the residency requirement, have a right to have access and fair and equitable treatment in the allocation process. This new policy could easily provide one user group preferential access and treatment to ensure more allocation of the cities facilities and thereby causing irreparable harm to other user groups. This in itself is reprehensible. BWRSL along with other user groups who offer specific programming should not be pushed aside so that one user group can have more access, so that one user group can monopolize so that it makes it easier for staff to deal with one user group over a number of user groups. Having a monopoly or limited opportunities for sport choices not only will it stagnate but kills opportunities and future sport opportunities for a healthy community and the opportunity for a better city.

When looking at shared responsibility the document talks about creating a win- win -win outcome for the taxpayer and the partners in the city. I don't believe community-based organizations should be mandated or interfered with how they operate unless their behaviour is detrimental to other community-based organizations, or to the principles that the city embodies. An example of this would be organizations acting in bad faith – such as mass permit dumping at the start of a season, (this has happened a # of times in the recent past) which does not allow another user group to utilize these permits because planning and registration has already occurred. The end result is that full

utilization of a facility does not happen. There are fields not being used, and while some are sitting out, it's too late to correct it. Another example would be their behaviour is not aligned and not within and not adhering to city's policies and procedures.

For example, if an organization was not following the residency expectation or the zero-tolerance policy's or not following the rules of the permit then I can see that the city has the right to interfere with the operation of the organization to ensure compliance.

Otherwise you should not be interfering and dictating a framework for these organizations that are primarily volunteer-based that provide a multitude of opportunity of sport for the Community that the city does not operate and cannot operate. The City needs to respect these organizations and their rights to operate. If the city wants to adopt this confusing and unrealistic frame work for its own programming, that is something Council may wish to consider, but I hope it's done with real meaningful user-based engagement otherwise you could find your policy's have created more empty spaces in programming vs having them filled. While I understand the end goal is to have all facilities used to their maximum use thereby, bring in revenue to help off set the costs of these facilities. Since all the facilities the city owns and all the programming the city operates themselves are subsidized by the tax payers, I can see why the focus is on the win-win-win for the tax payer. I challenge the premise that dollar value for tax payer subsidy is the principle goal or objective. All of the city facilities be it a pool, arena, golf course, or sports field should be subsidized, along with any programming the city operates. Why – because it provides value to the community that you cannot put a dollar value to. It encourages a sense of belonging, participation, it allows citizens to engage in their community. Why is that- well because it in the best interest of the city to

have programming and facilities that all of the residents regardless of age, ability, race, gender can utilize to lead and be involved in a happier and healthier community.

If you look at the meaningful engagement section of this framework, you'll see that it talks about public engagement opportunities, round tables, program provider forums etc. etc. well parks and rec have failed to do this at all levels as there has been no engagement with the user groups and one meeting a few weeks ago does not meet the definition of engagement. So, I ask that the staff go back to the user groups and have a meaningful dialogue with us about changes for the allocation process, including discussions around the current policies and practises what we believe works and doesn't work, what we believe could be improved on and where we could all work better together to make the process easier for all. In the end I believe it's really important that counsel understand that this framework will not support and encourage the current user groups that are engaged in providing sport in Burlington a better outcome, a better opportunity in the allocation process but instead will allow for unfair allocation to one user group over others and this will lead to the demise of many other opportunities for the citizens of Burlington to be engaged in sport.

The City has allocation policies - follow them- you were to review them in 2017 with us, you did not. You have an allocation and gender equity policy, that staff don't follow.

Moreover, the new policy will allow One User group who offers the sport to all groups (youth, adult, male, female etc.) to be the dominate permit holder for all facility allocations. How is that fair? It's clearly not. The end goal is to eliminate choice and competition and ensure there is a monopoly. That way city staff only have to deal with 1

or 2 user groups and not several. It creates a monopoly, it removes free choice, and competition. Competition is good for the community; people should have some options.

A female should not have to join a non female organization to access sport. Women have the right to be a club on their own and operate as a women's only club.

Secondly, no one user group should be the dominate operator in the city and have better treatment (preferential) or be allowed to capture another user groups' membership by operating as the dominate operator. The city should not treat one user group more favourably than another. Furthermore, those clubs that are already established in the City of Burlington have a right to continue and flourish, not be stifled by Parks and Rec and receive less favourable allocation time because the parks and rec dept suddenly want to adopt policies that make their life easier not ours.

As a volunteer organization, one who has been operating now for over 25 years, has No Paid Employees, I find it offensive that the Park and Rec dept is trying to stifle us. If they have concerns about new groups coming in (so a kid is cut from a rep team, suddenly those parents start a new organization and demand access citing youth right etc.) They city simply has to deny it as a duplicate of service- if there are already other organizations that operate the same sport. Almost every sport has more than one organization offering identical programs, and some different programs.

Historical use can work if it is done correctly- You must support your permits by your membership proof and use of Fields. BWRSL has always been able to do so. Sadly, there is a couple organizations - soccer and others who hold permits and won't return them or who have done bulk dumping of permits after the season starts. The end result

is that fields and facilities sit empty. or what they do is move some programming on to it, and leave a variety of different fields empty so that it's hard to track. But it is done. It's been done for years. The city does not have all its field time rented - mainly because the city does not do a good job managing permit allocations out and returns.

This new policy won't get all your facilities rented. Your pricing is off, your service standards are off, and in some cases, the services are poor. How staff apply the policies are also part of the reason why you have gaps. The fact that rates and fees were pushed through on Sept 23 and Parks and Rec failed to engage us to tell us they wanted to again raise fees, when services are poor is yet another example of why you have some facilities not a full capacity. Why would I want to utilize more facilities when I am forced to accept increases in rates and forced to accept poor service such as dirty washrooms, messy fields, or lock washrooms. All of these things effect your facility use.

I strongly urge you to take the time and direct staff to go back and start over and engage with the user groups and to look at the current policies and procedures that the allocation process uses and enhance and improve on those instead of starting all over. I hope that council sees the value of not adopting this frame work and working instead to improve what we have in place to better serve us all.

Sarah Merritt-Kellogg
President, Burlington Women's Recreational Soccer League