

SUBJECT: Framework for community recreation
TO: Committee of the Whole
FROM: Parks & Recreation Department

I am Murray De Pape – past president, treasurer and member of the BOTSC. I am a long-time resident of Burlington and a member of this unique soccer club for over 25 years.

I am here in opposition/concern to the proposal of a new framework for delivering/allocating sports resources in Burlington.

This is the first time our organization the BOTSC has been consulted or more correctly been told of this new framework. There was little time for input / consultation prior to the meeting in Oct. We were just told this was going to happen. This framework has as stated, been 2 years in the making – this was news to many, if not all of us.

At first glance – without looking at the old policies being proposed to be rescinded – there was nothing really at issue here – in fact this new framework is so general, so generic and simple - it could be considered just politically correct fluff.

I initially suggested to my soccer club colleagues that there is nothing here to be concerned with – it was just too general. It was simple bureaucratic stuff.

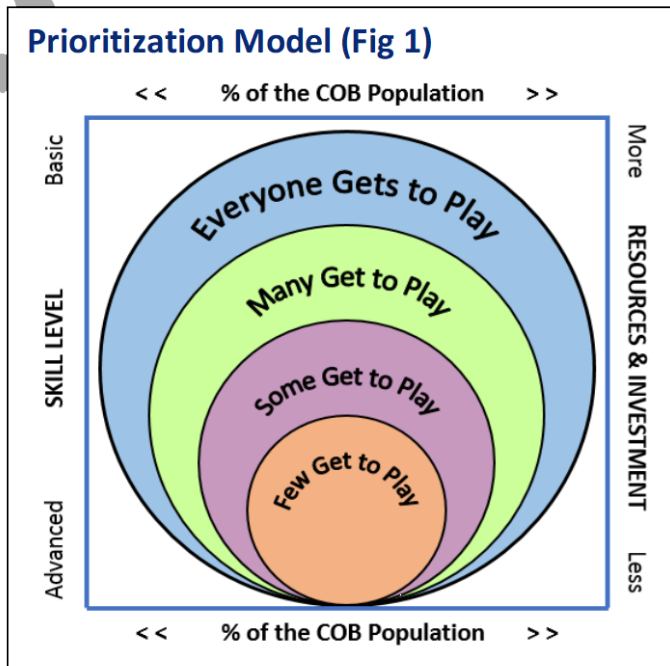
I suggested that our concern about being treated fairly should be on the next steps where field (resource) allocation and rate determination would be defined.

After all a framework is just that – a framework of guiding principles. What really matters is how these principles are met, how these principles guide the implementation, the actions, the actual behaviours of those involved and how they impact the outcome. By the way what is the expected outcome – what does it look like. Looking forward what would the city's preferred outcome be with this new framework. Is this any different than what was previously stated in the city's policies.

Just for the record, our relationship with the city department has been great. We have been treated with respect and we have worked hand in hand at addressing permit issues, field condition concerns, ie. uneven dangerous field conditions, length of grass etc. We thank the department for their service over our 35 years.

The basic premise

“The Prioritization Model illustrates that more City resources will be placed on recreation experiences that support broader interests that reach most of the population.”



It simply would be hard for anyone to object to it since it is so simple and without any basic structure or concept as how it would be implemented. The world of sport, however, is much more complicated when you take age, gender, skill level, demographics, financial capacity into consideration. This framework leaves it up for wide interpretation that could prove to be detrimental to some sports groups even within a specific sport.

On further evaluation of this proposed framework a number of questions arise from this announcement.

- What was wrong with the existing policies?
- What issue or issues are not being addressed that a rethink of the framework was needed?
- Was the current policies causing undue pressure on this service department to deliver its mandate?
- What is the driving motive to change a system that has been working (albeit not without its issues)?
- What are we as a sport group giving up if these existing policies are rescinded and replaced by this framework.

What does this framework really do?

What it really does is open up the whole recreation sport service support for a *redefinition* of how sports groups interact with the city – primarily based on size. The basic premise being that the larger groups that serve a wider age group get more proportion share of the available resources – potentially preferential resources – or influence control over who gets access to what. This could be seen as a built-in procedure to discriminate against other organization regardless of the quality or value of their offering.

What is unclear is how this creates or gives significant power / influence to some groups to the extent that they can disadvantage smaller groups and potentially be predatory towards the smaller groups membership. We have seen this within our community where

Case in point –we know of one organization that has used its preferential position to actively cause harm to another organization. To actively use their position to unfairly promote their organization against others in Burlington.

What we also believe is there are organizations trying to be the master of their sport community. What this proposed framework does, knowingly or unknowingly, is to potentially give more power and influence to these larger organizations over other groups within their community – even within the same sport category - regardless of the quality or value of the service they provide. By restricting access, you prevent competition.

Size of a club/league organization isn't the issue – size of the sporting community is. What the city needs to focus at is how to better serve the sport community as a whole. This is where there could be agreement and support for the new framework.

What is being asked for here is for fair and equal treatment for all groups within a sports community. Within a sporting community there are many groups and organizations that serve unique subsets of this community. This isn't being addressed within this framework.

This framework – deletes long standing policies and fairness, to give way to a process that has the potential to be manipulated and interpreted by the city department. Service isn't to serve the few large groups, it is to serve the many, diverse groups.

For example – my club, The Old Timers Soccer club with 220 members are part of the larger soccer community in Burlington - but if allocation is based on the size of the organization, organizations like the BSC which covers youth and open age class have thousands of players – our group could be disadvantaged on resource allocation.

If the BSC wanted to expand their offering for example to duplicate our club model to increase their membership – they could theoretically use this framework to make a proposal to get preferential time and field allocation that could be detrimental to our club.

I believe our membership would wholeheartedly support our club but if we were disadvantaged because of resource allocation – it could negatively affect our club.

We should get equal treatment because we serve a segment of the larger soccer community and we should not be discriminated against based on our groups size and our age category.

So what do we lose by approving this framework
Rescind the following Council approved policies;

1. **Leisure Services Delivery Policy (PR-700),**
2. **Community Development (Rec-017),**
3. **Gender Equity in the Allocation of Public Recreation Spaces (PR-05-07).**

We lose the following

Service Description Organized Sport Support

Customers & Their Expectations

Sport Organizations, who expect:

- **Access to suitable venues**
- **Venues that are clean and well maintained**
- **An efficient booking process\A fair allocation process**
- **Affordable rates**
- **Help with their growth and development.**

This service works with sport organizations to offer a variety of sports in Burlington. The service balances permits to make sure that one sport does not get better times and/or venues over another.

This is done within the Recreational Facility Space Allocation Policy and the Gender Equity Policy.

This service works with sport organizations to make sure the sport is played in a safe, clean and well-maintained venue that meets the needs of the sport.

Existing Customer Engagement Tools / Methods

- **Meetings, traditional media such as emails, broadcasts, websites, survey requests**

These expectations above are not identified in the new framework.

Service Objectives

Sport Organization Relationships
organizations. -

Develop and keep relationships with sport

Sport Venue Operations

Routine day-to-day operations such as:

- venue set-up
 - cleaning, mowing
 - Field and facility maintenance
- Field and facility repair/renewal.

Sport Venue Renovations

Sport Organization Allocation of Space **Permit suitable space for sport organizations in City and school board facilities.**

If the problem is that the city doesn't have the resources to manage the multitude of service requests – then please identify this as a problem. If the desire is to reduce the number of organizations the city deals with – this framework could be a start by forcing smaller groups out.

So in conclusion we are giving up policies that have tried to entrench fairness for a framework model of preference based on size - regardless of the quality or value of the service provided.

There is simply no way our club could ever be large in numbers – we are age restricted – we are however large in terms of the absolute share of age groups we represent. There is no larger group in Burlington serving this age group. So if the process is evidence based – these facts should be taken into account. We are a unique, but significant group within the Burlington soccer community.

This framework is innocuous at first glance but when you look at what isn't being defined it raises significant concerns.

If this is adopted today – then there needs to a proposal or amendment that the authors/owners/administrators of this framework will commit to ensure that significant involvement by the sports communities is allowed to formulate the processes for determining a resource allocation and a rate determination in a fair and non-discriminatory manner.