



**SUBJECT:** Considerations for the evolution of Tyandaga Golf Course

**TO:** Community Planning, Regulation & Mobility Cttee.

**FROM:** Recreation, Community and Culture

Report Number: RCC-15-23

Wards Affected: all

Date to Committee: September 12, 2023

Date to Council: September 14, 2023

---

### **Recommendation:**

Direct Office of the City Clerk staff to present recommendation RCC-15-23 to the September 14, 2023 Council meeting for final approval; and

Direct the Director of Recreation, Community and Culture to commence engagement with the community regarding the evolution of Tyandaga Golf Course as outlined in recreation, community and culture department report RCC-15-23 and report back in Q4 2023 with options for consideration including engagement result.

### **PURPOSE:**

#### **Vision to Focus Alignment:**

- Increase economic prosperity and community responsive city growth
- Improve integrated city mobility
- Support sustainable infrastructure and a resilient environment
- Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture

---

### **Background and Discussion:**

The property of Tyandaga is situated on 108 acres of greenspace and is used both as a golf course and public park. It is also located in the Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System which is considered one of the richest areas in the country when it comes to diversity of species.

Tyandaga was established as a city asset in 1973 and since then has operated as an 18-hole golf course paired with a Clubhouse that opened for use in 1998. In addition to golf, the property offers ample green space and walking trails available to Tyandaga's residents and neighbouring communities. The location is one of the city's six designated tobogganing areas and features a disc golf course in the offseason.

In 2009, following Council's directive, staff conducted a comprehensive assessment of overall operations. This evaluation led to the implementation of revised marketing practices and expenditure management strategies. At this time, Tyandaga was designated as a 2-2 ½ star golf course, a classification that remains today. Furthermore, rates and fees were aligned to this industry rating.

In 2010, based on the operational alignment and adjustments, Council directed City staff to continue with the operation of the Tyandaga Golf Course. Part of the direction provided to staff at that time, was to ensure the golf course continued to operate as a net zero (i.e., contribute each year to the Tyandaga reserve fund), be self-supporting (not a burden to the tax base) and be sustainable both through the operating and capital budget.

Each year a variety of adjustments have been made to the standards, marketing campaigns, programs, service providers, grounds, and the facility to help ensure a meaningful and active recreation experience is achieved.

In 2020 (RCC-02-20), staff gathered community feedback on the future of Tyandaga and reviewed financial models for the golf course including capital and operating. Feedback received clarified that residents stated:

- ✓ We value the greenspace at Tyandaga
- ✓ We value having a municipal golf course
- ✓ We value having a destination for the community year-round
- ✓ We look forward to hearing about additional uses for the Clubhouse
- ✓ We would welcome hearing about additional uses on the greenspace for the community to enjoy.

The pandemic further supported the uptake of outdoor recreation and golf was no exception to this rule. As a result, we saw a huge uptake of people of all ages and abilities take up the sport. In addition to this, the flexible and work from home model permitted more adults to golf during the day. In addition to this, the golf world saw various equipment technology advances (e.g., equipment that allows golfers to hit further) which further impacted the sport; this led to some safety concerns as we saw an increase in the number of balls out of bounds and impacting surrounding areas of the course.

In 2021 (RCC-01-21), Council approved a transition in the Tyandaga operating model, phased in for implementation between 2022 and 2026. This shift entails moving from a net zero model to a tax-supported model, encompassing funding derived from both user fees and the general tax-base.

In the ever-evolving landscape, our staff remains dedicated to seeking out opportunities that provide the community with a year-round destination to encourage healthy and active lifestyles. There is also an opportunity to restore and preserve ecosystem health, increase our urban tree canopy while establishing appropriate recreational uses. The current operating model aligns with both the City's Strategic Plan and the City's Framework for Community Recreation. Tyandaga not only provides accessible entry-level play for various age groups but also emphasizes affordability, inclusive program offerings, and a real sense of community for all user demographics, volunteers, and residents of Burlington.

### **Strategy/process**

In 2015, safety concerns were identified specifically regarding hole 14. A consultant gathered data around ball trajectory and number of balls out of play and recommended the conversion of this hole from a par 4 to a par 3. In 2022, staff experienced a similar situation involving hole 18, prompting another review by a consultant. The conclusions were similar to that of hole 14 and staff chose to convert this hole to a par 3 for the 2023 season. This recent change converted Tyandaga's 18-hole par 4 into a par 3 and increased the count of par 3 holes to seven.

The consultant's report identified limitations with the 108-acre Tyandaga property. Today, an 18-hole course would require around 200 acres of land. Due to space limitations coupled with the adjacency of homes surrounding the course, one-off safety reviews are likely to recur on a regular basis.

Staff have been closely monitoring golf trends and have noticed a notable rise in the popularity of 9-hole courses. Staff anticipate that this trend would also be attractive to the Burlington golfer given the increase in flexible work accommodations. Not only would it allow for residents to fit a round of golf during lunch breaks, but this shift would also yield various gains to the non-golfers by utilizing the additional available green space.

Over the last year, staff have been strategically looking at the evolution of Tyandaga and are looking to engage with the community on their thoughts in preparation for bringing forward some options for Council's consideration in Q4 2023.

## Options Considered

Staff reviewed industry best practices, spoke to experts, reviewed trends and data and surveyed the golf community to gather insights. Through this research and feasibility review, staff have identified various options for consideration for the evolution of Tyandaga. These options include a conversion to a 9-hole golf course, addition of a driving range, addition of various green space amenities for non-golfers, to name a few. At this time, staff is seeking Council's approval to proceed with an extensive engagement plan. Following this engagement period, staff will be bringing forward a follow up report for Council's consideration in late 2023 which will include various options for the evolution of the golf course including costing and engagement results.

Today, Tyandaga operates as an 18-hole course with offseason additional amenities for the non-golfer. Although the course is currently surpassing its projected attendance and revenue targets for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row, there are notable cons to its current operating model, these include:

- Green space use is limited to the offseason or outside of the golf hours due to majority of the 108 acres being used during the April-November golf season.
- Green space uses cannot be expanded upon given the layout of the course and limited space of 108 acres.
- Safety risks around ball trajectory and balls going out of bounds.

Through the engagement with the community and the follow up report planned for late 2023, staff will identify the other possible options for uses of the space and the evolution of the golf course. These options will look to address the concerns with the current operating model.

One of the operating model changes currently being investigated by staff is the transition of the golf course to a 9-hole course using existing holes in addition to the creation and implementation of a new driving range. The remaining nine holes would be centralized in the overall property increasing the distance from active golf play to adjacent backyards. The new layout could create an opportunity to leverage the green space for year-round recreational trails and increased ecosystem health. This transition would align with Recreation's objectives of adding variety and optimizing the utilization of physical assets across the 108-acre space by enhancing and maximizing the variety of recreation options such as hiking, walking, and various green space uses year-round. Furthermore, improving quality of life and social inclusion meets Recreation's goal of Thriving Neighbourhoods. Finally, this option would benefit the goals and objectives of the Cootes to Escarpment Ecopark and the City's goal of expanding its tree canopy.

This option represents a new concept for Council and the community to weigh on and will be the major focus of the engagement approach. Staff have an extensive

communication and engagement plan (as identified in Appendix A) which will be rolled out this fall. Lastly, it should be noted that the ultimate design would need to be approved by Hydro as part of the golf course resides on their corridor. Hydro has been consulted and aware that the city is looking for alternative design options.

At this time, staff wish to engage with current and future golfers, residents, and neighbours on Tyandaga's future operating model as a potential 9-hole golf course. Following an engagement period, staff will be bringing forward another report to Council including a summary of the engagement efforts, detailed financials on options and ultimately bring forward a recommendation for the evolution of Tyandaga effective for the 2025 golf season.

---

## Financial Matters:

Report (RCC-01-21) recommended a 3-year phase-in of tax supported funding. The first 2 years of this plan have been incorporated into the 2022 and 2023 budgets respectively. The 2024 budget simulation includes the final phase of \$130,000.

	2022	2023	2024	TOTAL
<b>Phased tax-supported funding</b>	<b>\$150,000</b>	<b>\$125,000</b>	<b>\$130,000</b>	<b>\$405,000</b>

Staff will be bringing forward a follow-up report in Q4 2023 that will include a full financial analysis of both options including both operating and capital impacts. It should be noted that any changes to the operating model at Tyandaga would not be realized until 2025 and as such, the projected 2024 budget will remain as presented through the budget process.

Funds are currently being allocated to support capital projects that require upkeep (ex. irrigation system) or those that will arise as a result of this initiative.

---

## Climate Implications

Burlington has been experiencing many extreme weather events that have negatively affected the golf industry throughout southern Ontario. The climate crisis directly affects the overall operations, causing later openings and early closures to the golf season and many extreme weather closures all of which negatively impacted the overall financial performance.

Transitioning to a 9-hole golf course opens up opportunities for alternative uses of green space, which is predominantly available outside the golf season due to the courses' primary focus on golf. Additional space can furthermore allow for naturalization to occur,

such as the addition of native plants and hiking trails, pollinator gardens, rain gardens, or wildlife habitats to name a few. These examples allow for the restoration of natural ecosystems, in addition to enhancing biodiversity within the neighbourhood.

---

### **Engagement Matters:**

In addition to the engagement efforts identified in Appendix A, staff will be sharing results of satisfaction surveys at Tyandaga in addition to reminding Council of past survey results on the operations. All this feedback will assist staff in bringing forward options for the evolution of Tyandaga that will best service Burlington residents and the golf community. Following Council, staff will begin a robust engagement plan and approach including in-person and virtual opportunities for residents, neighbours to Tyandaga and current and future golfers. In order to allow for ample time to engage the community this fall, RCC-15-23 will be going to Council on September 14, 2023 for approval such that staff can begin rolling out the tactics outlined in Appendix A.

---

### **Conclusion:**

Staff are contemplating various options for the evolution of Tyandaga and will be bringing a follow-up report for committee's consideration in late Q4 2023 including feedback from the community engagement as well financials tied to each option. At this time, staff will be bringing a formal recommendation for implementation in 2025.

---

Respectfully submitted,

Emilie Cote

Director of Recreation, Community and Culture

Renee Kulinski-McCann

Manager of Recreation Services

### **Appendices:**

- A. Considerations for the evolution of Tyandaga Golf Course - Communication and Engagement Plan

**Report Approval:**

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Counsel.