

Town of Riverview plans on keeping community pool, park

Recreation director says town plans to enhance Lions' pool and the park that surrounds it

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The fate of one of Metro Moncton's three remaining outdoor public pools is secure.

Last week, the Town of Riverview held a public consultation with residents about the future of what is commonly known as Lions park on Buckingham Avenue. The park, which doesn't actually have a proper name, is home to the Lion Ken Gabbey Community Pool and Bob Donahoe Memorial Field.

Some of the residents who showed up to discuss ideas on how to improve the park were concerned that the town might be considering getting rid of the pool.

"There was some concern about the pool, whether these meetings were to generate interest in getting rid of the pool, and that was kiboshed right off the bat," said Gerry Cole, Riverview's director of parks, recreation and community relations.

"We're not looking at getting rid of the pool, we're looking at enhancing its features."

Lion Ken Gabbey Community Pool, often referred to simply as Lions pool, is the last remaining outdoor, public pool in town and one of only three in Metro Moncton. It sees about 4,000 to 5,000 users each summer.

Dieppe has no outdoor, public pools while Moncton has Centennial Beach and the East End pool, the latter of which was closed for the summer and faces an uncertain future.

Riverview once had four outdoor pools open to the public and while

three of them have disappeared over the years, Cole said the town only wants to improve on Lions pool and the big park surrounding it.

Some of the ideas generated at last week's meeting included making the pool area feel more like a beach, with shaded areas and picnic tables. Heating the pool was also discussed.

Getting rid of the functional but not exactly attractive chain-link fence topped with barbed wire that surrounds the pool was brought up too, but that could prove to be a challenge. Cole said the town has to ensure the space is safe.

"We have people that would love to use that swimming pool when it's not staffed," he said, and he doesn't want any accidents to take place.

Some residents suggested adding a splash pad for younger kids to use, and there was discussion about fixing up the aging pool house that has seen better days.

Aside from the pool itself, residents suggested making the baseball field more functional for other purposes when it's not being used for games. Adding a hard surface in the park for things like road hockey was discussed, and seniors expressed interest in having more senior-friendly attractions in the area.

Other ideas included improving signs and labelling in the area. While there is a parking lot at Lions park, not everyone realizes it's there.

Cole said there was also discussion about how the park fits into the neighbourhood, with ideas thrown out that various entrances to the park could be made more welcoming and esthetically pleasing.

At present, the Lions park area seems like several recreational spaces all dropped in the same general area rather than appearing as one cohesive park, and that was also a topic



Riverview town council is going to redevelop the Lion Ken Gabbey Memorial Community Pool, the Bob Donahoe Memorial Field and the play areas along Buckingham street. PHOTO: GREG ADNEW/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

of conversation.

In the next few weeks, consultant Trace Planning and Design will take the ideas generated and come up with a design for a rejuvenated park. They will bring it to the park design team, made up of residents, town staff and a councillor, and eventually to the public for further review.

Cole said his aim with these park consultations is to get as many ideas from the public into the project as possible, if they make sense for the site.

"The only real restrictions we have, I think, is economics — the ability to pay for it," he said.

He hopes to have a plan ready for Riverview council in time for 2015 budget discussions, which will get underway in November.



Riverview town council is going to redevelop the Lion Ken Gabbey Memorial Community Pool, the Bob Donahoe Memorial Field and the play areas along Buckingham street. PHOTO: GREG ADNEW/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT