

# Riverview council updated on \$45M facility

Proposed wellness centre, with at least one rink, pools and more, wouldn't be built until 7 to 10 years from now

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TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

The Town of Riverview is moving forward with plans to build a \$45-million wellness centre for its residents, but its current facilities, along with its finances, are allowing the municipality lots of time to make decisions.

Christina Townsend, an urban and recreation planner with WSP Canada Inc., the company tasked with building the feasibility study, and Coun. Tom Toner, a member of the town's wellness centre committee, updated Riverview Town Council on the potential of a massive wellness centre in the next seven to 10 years for the town at its meeting on Monday night.

"Wellness is alive and strong in Riverview," Toner said. "The question isn't do we need a new rink, pool, track, etc. Really, the question is, 'How do we continue to offer excellent wellness opportunities and how do we grow those opportunities?'"

"We're growing as a town, so we will have increasing demands on our facilities, our programs and services. We need to protect and plan our future to grow wellness in Riverview."

The 122-page study contained many recommendations, including its feasibility, components, costs, how the town should pay for the centre and conditions of current facilities.

The report found users wanted more availability when it came to "prime time" hours of rink use, so the proposed wellness centre should include a single arena with space available to add another if needed, especially if the Byron Dobson Arena is decommissioned.

The report does recommend the town continue to operate Byron Dobson, providing capital upgrades to maintain safety and life cycle functioning until it's decommissioned, and eventually the town should assess whether one or both rinks at Byron Dobson Arena should be replaced.

Whatever happens, Townsend said, the study found Riverview should have three rinks.

When it comes to pools, the study recommends a new two-tank aquatic facility and a smaller leisure tank. The pool at the Pat Crossman Memorial Aquatic Centre should be decommissioned when the new centre opens.

The centre should also have a double gym and multipurpose space, with a raised, temporary stage and storage, and acoustic wall tiles to accompany performances.

An indoor walking and running track, a big wart in the community, a modest climbing wall, one or more meeting rooms (with A/V support) and a kitchen for instructional classes and banquets

# Councillors all voted in favour

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should also be part of the centre.

A proposed concept drawing of the wellness centre brings the building in at 97,000 square feet, with a possible 29,000-square-foot addition if a second rink were added.

Based on these recommendations, the facility would cost about \$45 million.

Townsend said she expects the town could get \$10 million from other levels of government, raise around \$4 million through community and corporate fundraising (such as naming rights and chair sponsorship), and should start a new capital reserve to secure another \$2.5 million (\$250,000 a year for 10 years).

This would leave the town with \$28.5 million in loan debt.

"Annual debt costs of such a scenario would be \$2,287,000, which would equate to an annual property tax increase of \$234 to the average assessed home (\$150,000)," the report reads.

"In addition to the annual cost for capital borrowing, the annual additional \$679,000 (approximate) operating cost increase would equate to approximately 4.6 cents on the tax rate or about \$69 per assessed home.

"When combining the average cost of capital borrowing (\$234) and the cost to carry the anticipate deficit (\$69.00) the average assessed home in Riverview would see an annual tax increase of \$303 if the Wellness Centre was built today and with the assumptions previously noted."

This would mean an almost 13 per cent annual tax increase to the average assessed home in the community.

The report found the centre is not an immediate need for the community but that they do need to start planning, especially when it comes to finances in the next few years.

Toner updated council on the committee's plans in the next three to five years, which all support a wellness centre being built in the next seven to 10 years. This includes targeted partners, finding the best operating model to run it, working with citizens to develop a conceptual plans and vision, and looking at the different components of the facility.

Because of this, Coun. Wayne Bennett made a motion that the council accept the Wellness Centre Feasibility Study and ask that staff ensure the report is considered in the town's long-range capital and operating budget planning, and that the council endorse and support the wellness committee's proposed action plan over the next few years to continue moving this key community project forward.

All councillors voted in favour of the motion.

H.F. - Sports and Recreation Facilities