

Subject: FW: recreation facilities in C/DNV

Date: Wed, 23 Jun 2004 14:46:02 -0700

From: "Ernie Crist" <ernie_crist@dnv.org>

To: "FONVCA (E-mail)" <fonvca@fonvca.org>, <Cagebc@yahoo.com>, "Senior Management Committee" <managecomm@dnv.org>

-----Original Message-----

From: Ernie Crist

Sent: June 23, 2004 2:44 PM

To: 'Clive Roberts'; Mayor and Council - DNV

Subject: RE: recreation facilities in C/DNV

Dear Mr. Roberts:

There is no shortage of playing fields in the District of North Vancouver including grass fields. There is however a shortage of playing fields if we count both the City and the District as one unit which is indeed the case since playing fields are under the jurisdiction of the North Vancouver Recreation Commission and since there is a desperate shortage of playing fields in the City of North Vancouver.

The City has not kept up with the construction of playing fields commensurate with its population growth. The city is building the high-rises and the District is building the playing fields. However, any and all efforts on my part to amalgamate the two municipalities have failed since the Sport users who have considerable influence do not care who supplies playing fields as long as there are enough of them more or less. They are a powerful group who would and indeed did campaign against anybody who attempted to change the status quo. The politicians got the message or so it seems.

Neither is the City interested in amalgamation since the District has provided more than its fair share of the playing fields free of charge more or less. The same incidentally is true for recreation facilities. Even though the District has three facilities for every one the city has, the city contributes not a single penny to the capital maintenance of those facilities in the District.

Thus the District is subsidizing the City here as well. But here too, any and all efforts on my part to change this have failed on the rocks of political and bureaucratic inertia and public apathy which by the way is considerable even though it is costing District taxpayers a great deal of money and even though there is the occasional grumbling about high taxes.

Those taxes are indeed considerably higher than they are in the City of North Vancouver. Taxes on a house of similar value are considerably less in the City than it in the District for the simple reason that the District, courtesy of District Council is subsidizing the City on a rather generous scale.

Yours truly,

Ernie Crist

-----Original Message-----

From: Clive Roberts [<mailto:CLIVE.ROBERTS@ubc.ca>]

Sent: June 23, 2004 12:55 PM

To: Mayor and Council - DNV

Subject: recreation facilities in C/DNV

Dear Mayor and Council

I hope that you will read this letter.

I would be happy to elaborate on this; I do think the state of sports fields fro our kids and adults is a matter for serious concern, and I believe that building more artificial fields, or embarking on a partnership with users so that we can fundraise and build our own should be a priority

best wishes

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964 Drayton Street
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June 22, 2004

Dear Councillor/Sports Council Member.

I am writing this letter to voice serious concern over the state of North Vancouver's soccer facilities, and to ask what plans The City, District or Recreation Commission have to rectify the situation. This is going to be a moderately detailed letter with concerns under 4 headings so please bear with me.

1. Access for children to acceptable soccer fields is shockingly bad.

North Vancouver is the only municipality of which I am aware where children under 11 are neither allowed to play on grass nor an artificial turf surface. Due to lack of facilities, and the fact that "soccer practice" is allowed only on gravel, children under the age of 11 in our soccer clubs have to play on gravel. In my opinion, this is unacceptable in an affluent community such as ours. My family paid a lot of federal, provincial and municipal taxes last year, and we are pretty typical for North Vancouver, so governments clearly have the money. Additionally, North Vancouver is the only municipality in the lower mainland where kids have to play on gravel, and is certainly the only municipality where they pay a field levy to play on gravel. This is amazing in one of our wealthiest municipalities.

2. The state of our soccer fields is DANGEROUS

Children under 11 play on gravel. These fields are very dangerous. All of the school fields have uneven surfaces that frequently trip and injure players. The fact that the surfaces are gravel makes any fall dangerous, even though the children wear shin, knee and elbow pads and gloves. Watch any game in Euro 2004 and imagine yourself playing this game on gravel. Not the same game on gravel, is it? I will remind you that we don't have enough fields to allow anyone to practice on grass. Our practice fields are unsuitable and for the most part very, very poorly maintained. As an example, I suggest you go and have a look at the gravel fields at the Lucas centre/Hamilton. These are used intensively, yet they seem to get little or no attention. The south one has a stream that runs north from the centre circle through the north goal. The north field has a stream that runs south from its centre circle through the south goal. Each of these rivulets cuts its own channel, and it was in one of these 9 inch deep ruts that my own 11 year old son sprained his ankle last spring. This was during one of the most important soccer events of the year, the soccer tryouts. The tryouts couldn't be held anywhere else as this was the best pitch available, and as they were I suppose technically "practices"- so the municipal rules forbade using a proper soccer pitch. My son took 2 weeks to recover from 2 injuries he sustained in the tryouts, that would not have happened on a "real" soccer pitch. Young athletes deserve far better than this.

I trust the city, district and soccer clubs carry good insurance, as a growth plate injury in a growing child is a serious matter, and it's only a matter of time before the municipality is sued over the state of these fields. As a coach, I have coached and refereed a number of games on grass fields with unexpected ruts, holes and traps and have in fact injured myself twice in the last 18 months as a result of these. If you'd like an example, go and look at one of our "best" fields at Grand Boulevard. Run across the centre circle or up the east touchline. Now do it looking up, just as you do in a game. You will likely twist your ankle or knee in one of the many holes and ruts. It is vital that NVRC staff have the funds they need to maintain these fields. They really are a disgrace compared to the ones we play in elsewhere in the lower mainland. To be brutally honest I am fed up of apologizing to parents from other parts of the lower mainland for the state of our "home" fields.

One of the biggest dangers here is that kids will give up participation in sport. We spend billions of dollars on medical research and treatment each year in Canada, much of it aimed at diseases associated with inactivity. {Heart disease and stroke, diabetes especially childhood diabetes for example} Hardly a day goes by without someone bemoaning the problems of overweight/diabetic/asthmatic children. What can we do about it? *Well amazingly enough, the best solution is for once almost certainly the cheapest- make it easy for children and adults to participate in sport.* In fact most municipalities IN THE WORLD have realized that building artificial surfaces for soccer makes perfect financial and societal sense. I'm arguing that it makes MEDICAL sense too. I know a little about this as in my professional life I run a medical research laboratory, and teach medical students. In the last 10 years I have been a member of a number of advisory committees that decide on future medical and scientific funding in Canada.

3. We don't have enough soccer fields. The NVRC has known this for years, and it is about time the municipalities did something about it.

Four or five years ago NVRC commissioned a report that showed that the community's needs justified at least 4 artificial turf fields. One was built (William Griffin). The community has partial use of a second, at Carson Graham High School. Since 1999, there are 25% more registered youth soccer players in North Vancouver (soccer is the biggest user) and other uses have increased disproportionately. As an example of this, a field users' meeting was convened last spring as part of our ongoing efforts to "share the pain" - this had to be moderated by a professional independent arbitrator and during the course of this, the following users expressed strong convictions that they weren't getting their share of field time: Adult soccer, Youth soccer, girls soccer, womens soccer, field hockey, ultimate frisbee, seniors, and others.....You get the idea. Ask the NVRC staff what a headache field booking is. We have shared a lot of pain for a long time. I'd like to know what plans our municipal leaders have to do something about this.

Building more fields makes financial sense; there is a demonstrated need and the users' fees contribute to maintenance and debt servicing. Additionally, an approach such as building more artificial turf fields takes pressure off the grass fields. When you consider the tax base of this community, we should be able to afford at the very least the four fields suggested by the report 5 years ago.

What are other municipalities doing? First no municipality has such a shortage of grass fields as North Vancouver, so kids elsewhere don't have to play on gravel. Incidentally, the argument that we don't have land surely can't be valid as we continue to develop as the Lower Mainland's Auto Mall Capital. A few years ago, North Vancouver lost its best adult mens soccer team to Surrey as the team couldn't get field time in North Vancouver. They have no problem in Surrey; Surrey has lots of grass and a number of "turf" fields. Burnaby has multiple well maintained grass fields, which their children use for soccer, and 3 artificial turf fields and a clubhouse in the Burnaby Lake West complex, with a fourth and fifth under site preparation at the moment. West Vancouver now has more available "turf" time than North Vancouver, with its two public "turf" fields and most of the schools in West Vancouver have well-maintained grass soccer fields, so their kids don't have to play on gravel.

4. North Vancouver needs to communicate its vision for liveability in general, but in terms of recreation particularly.

If such a vision exists I'd be pleased to hear it. I'd like particularly to see a vision for soccer, not just because I and my children enjoy the game, but because it is Canada's number 1 participation sport and a perfect "fit" for this community and climate. I have a vision for the development of a soccer/field sports centre myself if you'd like to hear it. This isn't an idea I can lay great claim to as it arises from conversations on the sidelines at every single soccer game on the north shore. With more than 10,000 people involved, and undoubtedly the worst facilities in the lower mainland for soccer, the state of our fields is a big topic of conversation.

Here's an outline of my vision:

Option 1: NVRC should Build 3 lit artificial turf fields, a high quality grass field and a clubhouse at the Hamilton centre. It's already a lit facility, so local impact should be nil. Use our fees to service the debt.

OR

Option 2: Turn the Hamilton Centre fields over to the field users' clubs, for \$1. Allow us to raise the money we need to develop a facility.

I could go on about economic benefits, school programs, world class sports programs and other benefits to our community that could result from a scheme like this. However at the moment I'm just hoping we can get to the bottom rung of the ladder- get our kids off the gravel, so they can play on a decent soccer surface before the age of 11. Pretty young? Well, Wayne Rooney was identified at the age of 11. If he'd grown up in North Vancouver he'd have been almost eligible to play on grass.

If NVRC has an alternative plan that will alleviate our field problems and provide us with a soccer tournament site, I'd love to hear it.

Sincerely

Clive Roberts

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