

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

TO: Shane Bourke, City Manager	DATE: June 23, 2025
FROM: Patricia Bailey, Chief Strategy Officer	MEETING: Council Committee of the Whole
REPORT WRITER: Chenoa Esau, Community Connections Manager	
SUBJECT: South Bear Creek Park Beach Volleyball Expansion	

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Committee recommend Council refer the beach volleyball expansion to capital budget deliberations, in the amount of up to \$352,000, with \$25,800 coming from the Alberta Summer Games Legacy fund.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL / COMMITTEE DIRECTIONS

On April 21, 2025, Council directed Administration to work with the Grande Prairie Beach Volleyball League and bring a report back to the appropriate Standing Committee with further information regarding their request.

BACKGROUND

On April 21, 2025, Council directed Administration to work with the Grande Prairie Beach Volleyball League and bring a report back to the appropriate Standing Committee with further information regarding their request. This direction followed a presentation from the League highlighting increased demand for beach volleyball and a proposal to expand the current facilities at South Bear Creek Park.

In 2025, the League reported 600 registered players and an additional 150 on a waitlist, with 60–70% of participants identifying as female. The organization has requested expansion to accommodate this growth and enhance access to inclusive, community-based recreation opportunities.

Site Review and Constraints

Administration has reviewed the proposed expansion site and identified challenges related to its historical use as a retired landfill. Development at this location is subject to strict provincial regulations in the Standards for Landfills in Alberta and the Code of Practice for Landfills in Alberta intended to protect public safety and environmental integrity.

Key considerations include:

- An engineered and stamped design confirming that all regulatory requirements are met is required, which would transfer liability from the City to the engineer of record;
- Landfill Cap Requirements: The City has been given direction to maintain a cap over the former landfill and to avoid ground disturbance that could lead to methane gas exposure at the surface.
- Methane Gas Migration: There is known subsurface lateral migration of methane in the area. Although the proposed expansion is not located directly over a former landfill cell, the development must proceed as if it were, due to the risk of gas migration.
- Construction Constraints: To mitigate risk, any new construction must include:
 - Additional material to build up the cap to the required depth;
 - Installation of an impermeable liner to prevent gas from surfacing;
 - Installation of an additional monitoring well;
- Potential reconstruction or elevation of the existing courts to align with the new grading.
- Utility Limitations: New utility corridors (e.g., for power and water) are prohibited by the Province in this area. This limits the ability to install lighting or other infrastructure without significantly increased cost. Detailed drawings would be required to determine the location of existing utility lines for any potential relocation.

These requirements substantially increase the complexity and cost of any expansion at this site. Nonetheless, outdoor recreation remains a compatible land use for former landfill areas, provided all environmental and engineering standards are met.

Project Scope and Feasibility

The League supports doubling the number of courts from four to eight at South Bear Creek Park. This expanded capacity would meet the standards required to host provincial-level competitions and accommodate current and projected demand. At this time, the League does not anticipate the need for additional expansion in the next 15-20 years, unless there is a significant increase in population or player registration in the future. A future dedicated storage facility has also been identified as a beneficial addition to support long-term operations and programming.

The League has engaged a local engineer to prepare a revised cost estimate that reflects the unique requirements of the site, including environmental mitigation. Preliminary figures estimate total expansion project costs at \$352,650, with environmental mitigation and utility relocation costs still to be confirmed once detailed engineering and design work is completed. The League's goal is to have the project completed by the end of May 2026, which would require construction to begin in Fall 2025.

The League has also requested improvements to the existing facility, specifically addressing the area between the sand courts and the shed, which currently consists of bare, compacted dirt. As this high-

traffic zone is used by barefoot participants for warm-ups, there are concerns about potential injuries caused by rocks and debris. Previous attempts to seed or cover the area with shale have not been successful. The League recommends installing artificial turf as a more durable and safer alternative. Cost estimates completed in April 2024 place this work at approximately \$48,199, which includes contributions through gift-in-kind support.

Alternative Locations

In consultation with the Beach Volleyball League, Administration is not recommending alternative locations. South Bear Creek Park remains the only feasible option for a high-quality, consolidated facility that aligns with competitive and community needs. The League has confirmed that operating across two sites is not viable, and SandZone is considered inadequate due to playing conditions, logistical limitations, and the importance of an outdoor setting for this seasonal sport.

Relationship to City Council's Areas of Focus / Strategic Priorities

Quality of Life

Environmental Impact

The project must incorporate stringent mitigation measures to protect the integrity of the former landfill site, including methane gas management and soil cap preservation.

Economic Impact

The expansion supports local sport tourism potential and community-driven investment while leveraging in-kind contributions to reduce municipal costs.

Social Impact

The project enhances inclusive access to outdoor recreation, particularly for youth and women, and strengthens community connections through sport.

Relevant Statutes / Master Plans / City Documents

[Recreation and Culture Strategy \(2024\)](#)

Risk

The project carries environmental, financial, and regulatory risks due to the site's status as a former landfill, potential cost escalations, and the need for strict compliance with provincial requirements.

Alternatives

Committee recommend Council direct Administration to bring back further information.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder engagement to date has focused on ongoing collaboration with the Grande Prairie Beach Volleyball League, which has taken an active role in project planning. The League has initiated outreach to community partners, including letters of interest and early-stage sponsorship discussions. They have expressed a willingness to lead aspects of the project delivery, subject to alignment with City requirements.

Administration has engaged internal departments to review environmental, engineering, and operational implications. Additional engagement with provincial regulatory authorities and the broader community will be required as the project advances. Nitehawk, who operates Nine of Diamonds

campground adjacent to the propose site, has also been informed of the potential expansion, however it will have no impact on the campground.

The League has also expressed intent in pursuing the project through the Community Group Funding Capital stream. This approach would reduce administrative and financial requirements for the City.

BUDGET / FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The League has engaged a local engineer to develop a revised cost estimate that reflects the environmental mitigation measures required for construction on a former landfill site. Preliminary figures estimate the base expansion cost at approximately \$297,889, with an additional \$54,761 anticipated for environmental mitigation, bringing the total estimated project cost to \$352,650, not including utility relocation. Environmental mitigation and utility relocation costs cannot be confirmed until engineering and design work is completed.

In addition to the expansion, the League has proposed turf upgrades to the existing facility, specifically the high-traffic area between the sand courts and the shed. This work was estimated in 2024 at \$48,199, including contributions through gift-in-kind support.

Administration is recommending using \$25,800 available through the Alberta Summer Games Legacy Fund to support the project.

The League has initiated stakeholder outreach and expressed interest in leading project delivery. Pursuing the project through the Community Group Funding Capital stream could reduce administrative demands on the City, with 50% of the project cost to be the responsibility of the applicant, supported through grants, fundraising, sponsorships, and in-kind contributions.

SUMMARY / CONCLUSION

The proposed expansion of the beach volleyball courts at South Bear Creek Park responds to significant community demand and aligns with the City's strategic priorities related to recreation, inclusivity, and quality of life. While the site presents unique environmental and regulatory challenges due to its status as a former landfill, it remains the only feasible location for a consolidated, competition-ready facility. The project has strong community leadership, with the League prepared to contribute through fundraising and project delivery. Pending final engineering cost estimates, the initiative presents an opportunity for partnership and investment in accessible, high-quality outdoor recreation, and should be considered as part of the capital budget planning process.

ATTACHMENTS

No attachments.