



THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF AMHERSTBURG

OFFICE OF PARKS, FACILITIES, RECREATION & CULTURE

MISSION STATEMENT: Committed to delivering cost-effective and efficient services for the residents of the Town of Amherstburg with a view to improve and enhance their quality of life.

Author's Name: Heidi Baillargeon	Report Date: July 20, 2022
Author's Phone: 519 736-0012 ext. 2128	Date to Council: August 15, 2022
Author's E-mail: hbailargeon@amherstburg.ca	Resolution #:

To: Mayor and Members of Town Council

Subject: Jack Purdie and H. Murry Smith Centennial Park Master Plan Approval

1. RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that:

1. Council **APPROVE** the Conceptual Master Plan for Jack Purdie Park as presented in Appendix A;
2. Funding for the phased implementation be **DEFERRED** to the 2023 budget deliberations as this project is expected to be phased in over a number of years;
3. Council **APPROVE** one of the options presented for H. Murray Smith Centennial Park as presented in Appendix B; and,
4. Funding for the phased implementation be **DEFERRED** to the 2023 Budget Deliberations as this project is projected to be phased in over a number of years.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

N/A

2. BACKGROUND:

In order to create a robust park system that offers quality recreational experiences for the entire community, it's important to look at the park system in its entirety while keeping in mind the role each park plays within the Town. The amenities found within each park should not only consider the needs identified from public comment, but should also be designed to balance the unique design characteristics of the park such as access to

water, topography, location, size, demographics, natural heritage features etc. To be fiscally responsible and in keeping with the recommendations of the Parks Master Plan and best practices, duplication of larger recreational park amenities such as skateparks, splashpads, baseball diamonds etc. should be avoided when possible unless they serve a need within the parks system as a whole and are balanced with an approved service level the Town can afford to maintain long term.

On August 21, 2016, the CAO presented Council with an in-camera update on discussions with the Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB) and a new site for General Amherst High School.

On April 30, 2018 the land sale transaction for the southern parcel of Centennial Park closed with the GECDSB and the net proceeds of the sale were transferred to the Parkland Reserve Account.

On January 14, 2019 the CAO brought forward a confidential report to Council regarding 320 Richmond Street and Centennial Park Report #20190114-C.

On May 13, 2019 the CAO brought forward a confidential report to Council regarding an update on 320 Richmond St. (former St. Bernard School) and Centennial Park Properties Report #20190513-A.

On February 22, 2021 Administration brought forward a report on Jack Purdie Park and H. Murray Smith/ Centennial Park regarding Land Use Options. As a result of the report Council Adopted the following Motions:

Resolution#20210222-057

That Administration BE DIRECTED to proceed with public consultation for rezoning of a portion of Jack Purdie Park in accordance with the highest and best use for the subject lands in accordance with the Town's Official Plan regarding Housing First Policy.

Resolution#20210222-058

That Administration BE DIRECTED to proceed with public consultation for the rezoning of H. Murray Smith/Centennial Park in accordance with the highest and best use for the subject lands in accordance with the Town's Official Plan for Housing First Policy.

On Wednesday, July 7, 2021 the Town in collaboration with Bezaire Partners hosted a live virtual public meeting to discuss potential re-development options for both Jack Purdie Park and H. Murray Smith/Centennial Park. A total of nine (9) conceptual drawings were presented with a total estimated value ranging from \$3.4m to \$4.8m.

In addition to the live public consultation /presentation, Administration launched a public survey on 'Talk the Burg' which ran from July 7th to August 1st 2021. Administration followed the public consultation process and prepared a letter to residents within 0.8km distance of the park to notify them of the public consultation process for both parks.

Due to some unresolved issues with H. Murray Smith/Centennial Park the projects were placed on hold. A confidential in-camera report went to Council on November 25, 2021 regarding these issues.

At the Council meeting held November 25, 2021 Council directed Administration to further investigate opportunities for a track with the GECDsB despite a report that went to Council on November 23, 2020.

The report indicated the CAO met with the Director of Education for the GECDsB to discuss Council Resolution 20200824-252. At that meeting, the Director advised the CAO that the budget approved by the Ministry of Education did not have funding to include a track at the new high school, it was not a Ministry requirement and not a priority of the school board.

As per Council's direction, the CAO and the Director of Parks Facilities Recreation and Culture met on December 1, 2021 to further discuss potential opportunities for a track at H. Murray/Smith Centennial Park. Once again, the GECDsB indicated that they do not currently have funding for a track nor do they have any intention of building a track at the new North Star High School.

Further, at the request of Council on November 25, 2021 Administration prepared design concepts that include a track, however, it should be noted that Recommendation 63 of the Council approved Parks Master Plan indicates that "replacement of the Centennial Park outdoor running track is **not recommended**."

It should also be noted that if the track was removed from any of the conceptual designs, Administration would propose open passive recreational space in its place with an informal 3M wide asphalt multi-use trail circuit that would connect park amenities and provide users with same recreational opportunities associated with park trails.

On June 8, 2022 Town Administration met with the GECDsB at their request to see if the Town had any space available for rent to run special programs. At this meeting the track was again approached as a topic of conversation to see if the school board would be willing to partner with the town on a potential basic asphalt track at the park. This was followed up by several emails to which there has not been a response.

At the May 24, 2022 Council meeting, Council passed the following resolution to replace the playground equipment at Jack Purdie Park. The construction and installation of the new playground equipment is under way and anticipated to be complete in the Fall 2022.

Playground Design, Supply and Installation for Jack Purdie and Briar Ridge Park RFP #2022-011 Resolution #20220524-07 That:

- 1. The Mayor and the Town Clerk BE AUTHORIZED to sign a contract with New World Park Solutions to an upset limit of \$550,000 for the complete design, supply and installation of playground equipment and site servicing including site preparation work at Jack Purdie and Briar Ridge parks satisfactory in form to the Town Clerk, financial content to the Chief Financial Officer, and technical content to the Director Parks, Facilities, Recreation and Culture;*
- 2. \$550,000 BE FUNDED from the Parks Reserve Fund as per Council Resolution 20210208-031; and,*

3. Council DELEGATE authority to the Chief Administrative Officer to award and issue purchase orders and/or sign and execute any agreements as may be required for the necessary services to execute the scope of work for the Playground replacement project at Jack Purdie and Briar Ridge parks.

3. DISCUSSION:

From January 25, 2022 to March 1, 2022, a second public survey was hosted on “Talk the Burg” to receive comments on the preferred design(s) from Survey #1 for both Jack Purdie and H. Murray Smith Centennial parks. Results are attached to this council report for Councils’ reference under the Appendices.

On March 24, 2022, the Town in collaboration with Bezaire Partners hosted the first in-person public meeting since COVID-19 to present preferred options for both Jack Purdie park and H. Murray Smith Centennial park based on comments received by the public. A total of four concept designs, three for H. Murray Smith/Centennial and one for Jack Purdie Park were prepared for public consideration and comment. The public Open House and second public survey for both parks received a total of 369 responses.

The designs were favourably received by the community and the meeting was well attended with over 100 participants that came to review, comment and speak to Administration regarding their opinions on the conceptual designs.

Jack Purdie Park Design

Jack Purdie park is located within a 0.8km distance of Centennial park and is surrounded by housing on all sides. The park was named after the Purdie family and was always intended to be a ‘family oriented’ park equipped with playground equipment, open space and a place for families to gather.

Survey results gathered throughout the public engagement process make it clear that the community wishes to keep this park in its entirety and amenities found within should cater to a ‘family oriented’ recreational experience. As a result, final design concept plan presented for Jack Purdie Park attached under **APPENDIX A** was developed with this in mind. The plan proposes a larger playground (currently being installed this fall), splash pad with public washrooms/change rooms, a shelter with a paved common gathering space, sports court, multi-use pathways, exercise workout stations, trees and a large open passive recreational space that can be used for a number of recreational needs.

Overall the comments for Jack Purdie park design were positive and supportive of the design presented at the March 24, 2022 Open House therefore minimal changes have been made to this concept plan.

The Master Plan for Jack Purdie Park attached under **Appendix A** includes:

- a new play structure (currently being installed Fall 2022),
- splash pad,
- pavilion with washrooms and change rooms
- multi-use asphalt pedestrian trail,
- hard surface area sports court,

- numerous shade trees,
- benches,
- outdoor exercise stations,
- lighting,
- sledding hill,
- treed picnic area,
- deep well trash and recycle receptacles and
- open play area

The concept plan presented in this report meets the top 15 requested amenities preferred in the survey responses from the community. The comments generally focussed on the play equipment with additional comments to ensure the open field space is large enough for soccer or football, having hard surfaces and basketball nets, and the addition of Gaga ball (sport for children in a hexagon box with a ball).

Optional amenities identified through the survey include:

- Skate park – to be located at the Libro Community Centre, Council Resolution #20211213-384
- Tennis Courts (located at Centennial Park within 0.8km distance)
- Disc Golf (the town has this amenity at Beaudouin park)
- Formal Track (could be an option for Centennial park)
- Football field
- Rugby field
- Cricket

H. Murray Smith Centennial Park

The remaining portion of Centennial park abuts the new North Star High School with higher density residential housing to the west, the community HUB to the North and single-family dwellings on the east.

From the public engagement process, a number of people indicated they wanted the old ACS building to remain and be repurposed to include washrooms for the park, meeting rooms and senior use. The building could function and be repurposed for the recommended uses. The park has a need for washrooms, and the Town requires additional meeting rooms and space to house the seniors outside of the Libro Community Centre. Additional costs to renovate the facility for the above uses could be brought to Council during the 2023 Budget deliberations.

The majority of respondents from surveys submitted indicated they did not want long term care facilities as part of the park. Some respondents felt the three concept plans were in 'addition' to the original 5 concept plans, which should be taken into consideration evaluating the comments.

Overall the 'All Park' design concept plans were preferred over those that showed the park as being developed. The concept plan that indicated a 2-acre parcel for development and was not desired. There were conflicting remarks in regards to having the track. Some responses felt the track was no longer needed while others felt the track should be rehabbed and or upgraded and a focal feature. A number of respondents questioned if the school would contribute to the cost and maintenance of the track and

football field as it was felt they will be the main users. Track costs for basic resurfaced asphalt and minor adjustments are estimated to be \$400,000. Administration has reached out to the GECDSD several times regarding potential cost sharing for this amenity but have not received any formal commitment from them.

Other Comments on park amenities are as listed below:

Football field: The football field was designed within the track compound. Responses felt it was well thought out, safe with room for spectators.

Pool: A few responses indicated a pool could be installed where the old ACS building is. Note: The concept plan for Jack Purdie includes a splash pad.

Playground: Comments were received regarding playground equipment. New playground equipment is being installed at Jack Purdie Park.

Sledding Hill: Considered an important part of the park with requests for sledding towards safe areas with no obstructions.

Accessible workout stations: There was comment that workout stations were not required at both parks, one would be enough.

Pickleball Courts / Hard Surface Areas: No concerns were received regarding these amenities.

Baseball: Questions were asked where adults are to play baseball.

Other amenities: Additional tree coverage, trash/recycle receptacles, benches, and additional parking was requested.

It should also be noted that Council and members of the public asked about the original Centennial Park sign and Administration has responded that it is in the process of being refurbished and once completed can be erected back in the park.

In summary, for H. Murray Smith Centennial Park there are two conceptual designs presented in this report attached under **Appendix B** that cater to an older demographic of users. The two concept plans provided for Council's consideration include Concept Plan 1 that does not include a track and Concept Plan 2 that is inclusive of an asphalt track. The other amenities in each of the design concepts remains the same with the proposal of a multi functional sport court, tennis courts, walking paths, lighting, outdoor fitness stations, retention of the tobogganing hill, trees, site furnishings and open passive park space that can be used for football, soccer or a number of other recreational sports.

Finally, for both Jack Purdie Park and H. Murray Smith Centennial park the following Parks Master Plan recommendations are in support of both designs prepared and presented in this report:

Parks Master Plan recommendations:

Recommendation #12. Provide an appropriate balance of active and passive spaces within the parks system that can support recreation and sports, casual use, special events and cultural activities. Flexible park designs should be encouraged.

Recommendation #14. Engage stakeholders and the public when designing new and redeveloped parks and trails.

Recommendation #19. As part of the new secondary school development at the former Centennial Park, coordinate with the Greater Essex County District School Board to ensure that existing municipal park facilities are maximized, relevant gaps are addressed, joint use agreements are explored, and resources are not duplicated.

Recommendation #45. Replace the four (4) tennis courts in Urban Amherstburg. Options for locating them on the remaining portion of Centennial Park should be explored.

Recommendation #46. Add pickleball lines to existing/and or new tennis courts as required.

Recommendation #49. Replace the loss of basketball courts at Centennial park with a new court to serve Urban Amherstburg, potentially at the Libro Credit Union Centre.

Recommendation #63. Replacement of the Centennial Park outdoor running track is not recommended.

Recommendation #66. Examine options for the remaining portion of Centennial Park, including community consultation.

Recommendation #73. Relocate many major outdoor recreation amenities currently housed at Centennial Park to the Libro Credit Union Centre. This may include: skateboard park, ball diamonds (4), tennis courts, and basketball courts. Future considerations for the Libro Centre Credit Union Centre (in addition to the re-location of Centennial Park amenities) include development of a second splash pad and installation of interpretive signage and features to promote appropriate access to Big Creek. A concept plan should be developed to guide investment.

The concept plans submitted by Administration as part of this report have been revised based on public comment and satisfy a number of the above noted recommendations from the Parks Master Plan. They also provide a well-balanced approach in providing park amenities that cater to the demographics of the area, site location and land use space associated with each park.

4. RISK ANALYSIS:

H. Murray Smith Centennial Park and Jack Purdie Park are both parks that have been politically contentious over the course of the past several years for a number of reasons. Firm direction and decisions regarding the future of these parks is required. Should Council defer approval of the conceptual master plans that have been prepared and

presented in this report based on extensive community engagement there is a high risk this will be perceived and reflected negatively in the public eye.

Although there is no risk of financial commitment at this time, both parks require a substantial financial commitment in order to complete the work associated with the overall designs. In order to help mitigate financial risks associated with approving these designs it is recommended that they be phased in over a number of years based on a five to 10-year capital plan that will be considered in concert with other projects at budget deliberations.

5. FINANCIAL MATTERS:

High level cost estimates have been prepared for each of the design concepts presented in this report based on current tender pricing and research conducted.

H. Murray Smith/Centennial Park

Concept Plan 1 (no track) -\$2,953,000.00

Concept Plan 2 (track) - \$3,381,085.00

Jack Purdie Park

Concept Plan - \$3,036,330.00

Council should be aware that these are high level cost estimates and prices will fluctuate pending actual tendering of the project.

It should also be noted that these projects are not eligible for DC funding. As a result, funding for completion of these projects will be a combination of taxation, transfer from parks reserve (currently insufficient to support these projects), from sale of surplus lands, and/or new debt. Council should also consider the 10yr long term capital needs and establish priorities, particularly for projects of this magnitude.

6. CONSULTATIONS:

Manager of Parks Development
Director of Planning

7. **CONCLUSION:**

The master plans presented in this report for both Jack Purdie and H. Murry Smith Centennial Park were developed over the course of a number of years with a plethora of public consultation and comment. The designs are supportive and fulfill a number of recommendations outlined in the Town's approved Parks Master Plan. They are designed to offer quality recreational experiences for the entire community while keeping in mind the role each park plays within the Town.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'H. Baillargeon', is positioned above a horizontal line.

Heidi Baillargeon
Director of Parks Facilities Recreation and Culture

h/b

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Jack Purdie and H. Murry Smith Centennial Park Master Plan Approval.docx
Attachments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- APPENDIX A -JACK PURDIE PARK CONCEPT PLAN.pdf- H. Murry Smith Centennial Park APPENDIX B DESIGN CONCEPTS 1 AND 2.pdf- 2022 Jack Purdie Park Survey Responses Report FINAL.pdf- Centennial Park Survey Responses Report FINAL.pdf- Centennial Park Open House Comment Sheet.pdf- Jack Purdie Open House Comment Sheets.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Aug 10, 2022

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:



Tracy Prince – CRO



Valerie Critchley – CAO/Clerk