



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee **Date:** February 4, 2019

From: Elizabeth Ayers, Director, Recreation and Sport Services **File:** 11-7000-10-01/2019-Vol 01

Re: Accommodation of Olympic Wrestling in City of Richmond Facilities

Staff Recommendation

1. That the staff report titled, "Accommodation of Olympic Wrestling in City of Richmond Facilities," dated February 4, 2019, from the Director, Recreation and Sport Services, be received for information.
2. That staff report back to Council at the completion of the Review of the Richmond Sports Council's Needs Assessment 2018 report with a prioritized list of infrastructure needs and improvements for Council's consideration as outlined in the staff report titled, "Accommodation of Olympic Wrestling in City of Richmond Facilities," dated February 4, 2019, from the Director, Recreation and Sport Services.

Elizabeth Ayers
 Director, Recreation and Sport Services
 (604-247-4669)

REPORT CONCURRENCE	
CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER 	
REVIEWED BY STAFF REPORT / AGENDA REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE	INITIALS:
APPROVED BY CAO 	

Staff Report

Origin

On May 7, 2018, at the General Purposes Committee meeting, staff received the following referral:

That staff look at the possibility of accommodating Olympic wrestling in City facilities and report back through committee after discussions with the Richmond Sports Council on the priorities and possibilities.

This report supports the following actions from the Recreation and Sport Strategy:

Collaborate with community partners to ensure children and youth have the opportunity to participate in school sport teams, community sport organizations and recreational leagues.

Provide inclusive, safe and welcoming facilities and spaces for recreation and sport programs and services.

Analysis

Background

Wrestling has a long history as an Olympic sport along with community roots in secondary schools sports and community clubs. There are currently 23 community wrestling clubs in BC registered with Wrestling BC.

Olympic style wrestling (wrestling) is broken into Freestyle and Greco-Roman, with Freestyle being the most popular in Canada. Wrestling is an individual sport that requires minimal equipment, making it one of the more accessible sports. The sport provides participants with opportunities to challenge themselves through their dedication to the sport, development of individual physical literacy skills, and physical conditioning.

There are no longer any wrestling teams affiliated with Richmond's ten secondary schools. While there are no school teams, or sponsor teachers, student wrestlers who are club members can compete in secondary school wrestling competitions with the support of the Bhullar Wrestling Club.

The University of the Fraser Valley and Simon Fraser University are the only two institutions that still have wrestling programs at the post-secondary level in BC. SFU has 40 wrestlers competing in their program and the University of the Fraser Valley has approximately 20 competitors.

Of the 23 clubs in BC, 22 are co-located in university facilities, temples, private and public schools, community centres or commercial gyms. Few clubs have a dedicated space for wrestling, with the majority of clubs using shared school gymnasium or multipurpose space in

facilities. The City of Surrey is an exception; it has a dedicated wrestling room at the Newton Community Centre that is approximately 4,500 sq. ft. with two 40' x 40' wrestling mats.

Facility Requirements

Wrestling mats are 40' by 40' and require a minimum of 1,600 sq. ft. of space per mat. Ideally, crush space is provided around the mats, so a room of 2,000 sq. ft. for a one-mat or 4,000 sq. ft. for a two-mat set up would be adequate in a dedicated space.

Wrestling mats are heavy and cumbersome to move and require substantial storage space.

In a dedicated space, mats would be left in place resulting in the space being used for wrestling and a limited number of other combat sports or physical activities, such as martial arts and stretching and conditioning. The mats are not conducive to programs requiring balance, such as yoga, due to the soft density of the wrestling mats. Shoes are typically not allowed on the mats to prevent undue wear and tear which again, limits the spaces for multi-use.

In a shared space, the wrestling mats could be rolled up in sections on a daily basis and brought to a storage space in close proximity to the wrestling area. Approximately 400 sq. ft. is required to store two wrestling mats. Another option is to suspend the mats from the ceiling via motorized hoist system.

Wrestling in Richmond

The Bhullar Wrestling Club (the "Club") is the only wrestling club in Richmond and is a registered not-for-profit organization. The Bhullar family has been wrestling in Richmond since 1976 and has had many successes over the years, including Arjan Bhullar's gold medal at the 2010 Commonwealth Games and his participation on the Canadian Olympic Team at the London 2012, Summer Olympic Games, both in Freestyle wrestling.

The Club has 73 active members and over 70 per cent of those members are Richmond residents. Members' ages range from 5 to 18 and 41 per cent of the members are female. Each participant pays an annual fee of \$50 a year which goes towards fees paid to Wrestling BC to cover participant and coach insurance. The club's coaches are all volunteers which minimizes barriers to participation by keeping the program fees low.

The Club is located on the Bhullar family farm on Sidaway Road and has space for one 1,600 sq. ft. mat. The Club currently practices on Tuesday and Thursday nights from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

The Club requested a dedicated space of at least 3,200 sq. ft. from the City. Previously, the Club requested 2,000 sq. ft. of space, through the Richmond Sports Council's Needs Assessment 2018. In addition, washrooms and storage would be required, and spectator space and changerooms would be desirable. If the City is only able to provide the Club with space smaller than the requested 3,200 sq. ft., the Bhullar's have stated that they would consult with their members to gauge their interest in relocating from their current location.

Opportunities to Accommodate Wrestling at City of Richmond Facilities

At present, there are five community centre gymnasiums and one multipurpose space that are large enough to accommodate the requested 3,200 sq. ft. space. Of these gymnasiums and multipurpose spaces, there are presently no vacant weekly times that could accommodate wrestling during the requested evening or weekend times. An additional challenge with the six spaces that are suitable for wrestling is that none of these spaces have the capacity to store the wrestling mats in their current state.

The Club has previously been in discussion with the Richmond Olympic Oval about possible use of space for their wrestling program. The Oval is unable to accommodate wrestling due to challenges with regards to availability of space, lack of suitable storage, hourly costs of the space and logistics of setting up and setting down the mats on a daily basis.

Staff have contacted the Richmond School District about the availability of space and have been advised that there currently is no gymnasium space that could accommodate wrestling due to the current use of various school facilities by school district programs. Staff will continue to monitor opportunities within the school district as school enrollment changes.

At the February 4, 2019, General Purposes Committee meeting, staff were directed to explore the “Viability of Repurposing Minoru Aquatic Centre – Low Cost Options” report’s prospect of infilling the pools, and that “various groups be invited to make submissions on how to possibly use the Minoru Aquatic Centre”. As part of this referral, staff will contact the Bhullar Wrestling Club.

Richmond Sports Council’s 2018 Needs Assessment

In June of 2018, the Richmond Sports Council submitted its 2018 Sport Facility Needs Assessment to Council that included a request for “over 2,000 sq. ft. of space for wrestling.” The Needs Assessment contains an extensive list of requests by 17 of Richmond’s sport organizations; however, no prioritization of the various requests was included in Sport Council’s Needs Assessment. Staff has initiated a review with Richmond Sports Council of its Needs Assessment. The purpose of this review is to understand collective needs and build consensus among the various sport organizations. The outcome of the review will be a prioritized list of facility improvements and new infrastructure requests for Council’s consideration.

Work on the review will be completed in the Spring of 2019 with staff reporting back to Council at that time.

The Chair of Richmond Sports Council is aware of the request from the Bhullar Wrestling Club and has stated that the Club’s request should be included as part of the review of the Richmond Sports Council’s 2018 Sport Facility Needs Assessment.

Next Steps

The review of the 2018 Facilities Needs Assessment will provide Council with a prioritized list of sport infrastructure needs for consideration. The Bhullar’s request for space will be one of the

needs identified. Staff recommend that this study be completed before further steps are taken to provide space for wrestling in a City facility.

Should wrestling be an identified priority, staff recommend that it be co-located with other recreational activities in a multipurpose facility. This could happen with the reallocation of space in existing facilities, or space could be considered in new spaces as facilities are developed. Another option could be to build additional space on an existing facility.

Staff will also stay in contact with the Richmond School Board and continue monitoring the options within the City's existing inventory of gymnasiums and multipurpose spaces in the event that space becomes available.

Financial Impact

None.

Conclusion

Wrestling is a valued sport in the community and it contributes to the development of healthy, active, and connected individuals. The review of Sports Council's 2018 Needs Assessments will provide further insight into the needs of wrestling and how they compare to Richmond's other sport organization's infrastructure needs and priorities. Staff will report back to Council in the spring of 2019 with a prioritized list of sport infrastructure needs and improvements for Council's consideration.



Gregg Wheeler
Manager, Sport and Community Events
(604-244-1274)