
HALDIMAND COUNTY

Report CDP-19-2024 Fields & Parks Management Program Review and Funding Update



For Consideration by Council in Committee on October 8, 2024

OBJECTIVE:

To provide Council with an update regarding Haldimand County's Fields & Parks Management Program, including proposed policy revisions and adjustments to operating grant funding in keeping with the principles of the Community Partnership Program.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report CDP-19-2024 Fields & Parks Management Program Review and Funding Update be received;
2. AND THAT the amendments to Policy 2019-04 Fields & Parks Management Program be approved;
3. AND THAT the 2025 grant funding calculations presented in Report CDP-19-2024, totalling \$338,140 and representing an increase of \$73,010 or 27.5% over 2024 grants, be incorporated into the 2025 Draft Tax Supported Operating Budget.

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Reviewed by: Katrina Schmitz, Manager, Community Development & Partnerships

Respectfully submitted: Mike Evers, MCIP, RPP, BES, General Manager, Community & Development Services

Approved: Cathy Case, Chief Administrative Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Currently, through the Fields & Parks Management (FPM) Program and associated Policy 2019-04, there are fourteen (14) community partnership groups receiving annual operating grants to operate and maintain County-owned fields, parks and other outdoor recreational programming spaces and amenities.

In accordance with Policy 2019-04, "The grant, which forms part of Haldimand County's Tax Supported Operating Budget, is reviewed annually, adjusted in-line with the Consumer Price Index, and is approved by Council."

In 2020, 2021, and 2022, during the COVID-19 pandemic, grants were held to the 2019 amounts given limited operating and programming activities. In 2023 and 2024 however, the grants were adjusted in accordance with the Consumer Price Index, as stipulated in the policy.

Policy 2019-04 further outlines that the FPM Program be reviewed every three years to ensure its grants continue to be calculated on the basis of current asset management principles, staff salary and benefit rates, and fleet/equipment rates.

The current update represents the first formal review of the Program since its major overhaul in 2019. Following a staff review of both Policy 2019-04 and the funding formula for grants to FPM partners, staff recommend that:

- Policy 2019-04 be amended, as outlined in Attachment 1, in keeping with both the County's Asset Management Policy 2019-03 and the approach taken in the recently-revised and Council-approved Policy 2003-01 Community Halls Capital Funding; and
- Funding to Fields & Parks Management Program partners be adjusted, as outlined in the chart below (Analysis – Fields & Parks Management Program Funding Rationale, Item 5), in keeping with the most current rates for human resources and capital equipment. The total annual proposed increase from 2024 to 2025 represents a 27.5% increase of \$73,010.

BACKGROUND:

Haldimand County's Community Partnership Program (CPP) provides potential community partners with the process by which building, enhancing, operating, and/or maintaining municipal assets can be accomplished by those local groups most invested in their respective communities through a cost-effective and responsive model.

In March 2019, an updated approach to the Fields & Parks Management (FPM) Program was approved through Report CDP-01-2019 and associated Policy 2019-04, which outlined operating procedures, an agreement framework, and an operating grant funding model in order to support these partnerships in a fair, clear, and consistent manner.

Consistent with historical parks funding models and the CPP capital grant framework, the FPM Program offers partnership groups funding equal to 35% of the costs the County would incur for caring for these properties. Groups benefit through increased autonomy in their own neighbourhood parks and fields, while Haldimand residents benefit from a decreased tax burden to fund park operations. To support the FPM groups, funding is provided not only for operations but for longer-term capital planning for equipment needs – funded at 35% of equipment replacement costs over expected equipment lifespans.

Currently, fourteen (14) partner organizations care for County-owned community sports fields, parks, and recreational amenities – up from the ten (10) original partner groups in 2019. This increase is testament to the success of the Program and its benefits to all involved.

The review and potential updating of funding levels for FPM partners is based on reconciliations of full operations during 2019, 2023 and much of 2024, partial operations in 2021 and 2022 and incorporates the County's 2024 human resources and equipment operating and capital rates, as well as the cost of supplies to care for the properties. This formula is intended to reflect the cost if the County were fully operating and managing the fields and parks, in order to adequately determine an appropriate percentage of funding for the partnership groups.

ANALYSIS:

The FPM Program and associated Policy 2019-04, as part of the County's overall Community Partnership Program (CPP), ensures a fair, clear, and consistent approach to identifying and evaluating partnership opportunities and addressing processes related to operating and capital matters, risk management, and resource maximization. Haldimand County encourages and supports these partnership opportunities through the implementation of the Program and the Policy.

For many years, the municipality has had formal and informal relationships with a number of groups which operate baseball and soccer fields and assist in maintaining numerous parks and trails in the County. These groups have always done an excellent job of providing these services, and were

instrumental in the 2019 development of the current operating and funding model, initiated to formalize these relationships and assist groups with increasing legislative and risk management requirements such as documenting inspections on all fields/parks/trails, equipment and structures, and maintaining these important recreational assets to municipal standards.

The funding model developed through CDP-01-2019 conforms to standards set through the capital grant stream of the CPP – which offsets group costs through a 35% County contribution. A four-part calculation includes operating costs for equipment and people, building maintenance funds, groundskeeping and janitorial supplies, and annualized capital equipment replacement.

FPM partners are encouraged to leverage volunteer labour to perform most tasks at the field/park, and to offset their costs with facility rentals and/or fundraising through the community. Staff acknowledge that community organizations can often acquire equipment and/or services they need through preferred costing and local suppliers, thereby saving taxpayer dollars while the community gets the park standards it desires and is engaged in the process. Community partners must first obtain explicit written permission from Haldimand County before acquiring equipment, goods and services to ensure the supplier(s) and/or product(s) are consistent with County standards. As indicated in Policy 2019-04, community partners are the owners of the equipment and are required to hold contents insurance on all equipment and goods they purchase for use in their respective parks or fields.

FPM funding grants are based on a 26-week season, roughly from the beginning of May through to the end of October. Parks, with the exception of the portions of two parks with outdoor arenas, are not expected to require winter maintenance, in keeping with Facilities, Parks, Cemeteries & Forestry (FPC) Division guidelines.

Fields & Parks Management Program Funding Rationale

Each of the fourteen (14) parks and fields currently in partnership with the County through the FPM Program are unique. In 2019, funding envelopes were developed based upon the four funding factors used for the current 2024 review:

1. Operating Costs for labour and equipment are based on 35% of equipment and staff hourly rates according to assets, acreage, and amenities of each park during the course of a 26-week season:
 - a. Human resources calculations are based on a combination of a full-time equivalent employee (FTE), at the rate of a CUPE Grade 6 employee, and a part-time student minimum wage employee (PTE), according to each appropriate task. Funding in 2019 was based on a Grade 5 full-time parks maintenance employee – that position has been shifted to a Grade 6 level due to a recent job evaluation. Included in the calculation is the hourly wage plus benefits for each position.
 - b. Equipment costs have been revised according to current operating data provided by the County's Fleet Division. These vehicle and equipment rates have changed significantly from 2019.
2. Building Maintenance is funded based on an amount equal to 1% of the replacement cost of structures, buildings, pavilions, etc. to allow for their minor cleaning, maintenance and repairs. Building and structure valuations (used to calculate 1% of value for maintenance purposes) are currently under review by the Facilities Capital & Asset Management Division (FCA), as part of the provincially-required Asset Management Program process. As a result, 2019 values continue to be used for the current 2025 FPM funding calculation review. It is anticipated that the next review of the FPM Program will result in different values, according to updated replacement value, structure condition and lifespan data.
3. Utilities and Supplies are for groundskeeping, general maintenance, and janitorial supplies, plus utility costs – funded at 35% of the previous year's actual receipts. During program development

in 2019, many of these calculations were estimated according to FPC data on similar parks. In the current review, actual values were collected from groups as part of their annual reporting requirements to the County and form the basis of the calculation of 2025 grants. It is expected that annual grants may fluctuate going forward as actual data is collected and used as the basis for subsequent years' calculations.

4. Capital Replacement is costed on 35% of the current replacement cost, annualized over the lifespan of a given piece of park equipment. Groups are expected to manage these funds as a capital reserve for future major equipment maintenance and/or replacement. Equipment costs have risen sharply since initial calculations in 2019. Most pieces of equipment have more than doubled in value, including mowers, tractors, and pickup trucks – all high-dollar value pieces of equipment that are crucial in caring for field/park facilities.

5. FPM Partner Funding Adjustments for 2025 Tax-Supported Operating Budget:

FPM Group Council Report #	Funding 2024	PROPOSED Funding 2025	Change in Funding \$	Change in Funding %
Caledonia Athletic Softball Association ¹	\$21,120	\$26,830	\$5,710	27.0%
Caledonia Disc Golf Association ²	\$13,800	\$16,970	\$3,170	23.0%
Dry Lake Saddle Club ³	\$4,750	\$5,780	\$1,030	21.7%
Dunnville Soccer Park Corporation ¹	\$8,710	\$10,630	\$1,920	22.0%
Fisherville Lions Multi-Purpose Outdoor Facility ¹	\$7,050	\$7,230 <i>grant based on structure value only</i>	\$180	2.6%
Fisherville Parks Committee ¹	\$30,870	\$38,110	\$7,240	23.5%
Friends of LaFortune Park ³	\$4,210	\$6,240 <i>maintenance hours corrected 2025</i>	\$2,030	48.2%
Haldimand Youth Soccer ¹ - Caledonia McClung Complex	\$46,920	\$66,750 <i>increase due to equipment operating and replacement costs</i>	\$19,830	42.3%
Haldimand Youth Soccer ¹ - Cayuga Broecheler Park	\$22,290	\$32,500 <i>increase due to equipment operating and replacement costs</i>	\$10,210	45.8%

FPM Group Council Report #	Funding 2024	PROPOSED Funding 2025	Change in Funding \$	Change in Funding %
Haldimand Youth Soccer ¹ - Cayuga Broecheler Park Lease	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$0	0.0%
Jarvis Lions Park Committee ¹	\$42,670	\$53,780	\$11,110	26.0%
Nanticoke Park Committee ¹	\$7,270	\$5,050 <i>funding changed to passive park</i>	(\$2,220)	(30.5%)
Selkirk Park Committee ¹	\$26,810	\$32,190	\$5,380	20.1%
Springvale Park Committee ⁵	\$5,220	\$6,470	\$1,250	23.9%
Townsend Lions Park Committee ¹	\$18,440	\$24,610 <i>equipment corrected for 2025</i>	\$6,170	33.5%
TOTAL FUNDING	\$265,130	\$338,140	\$73,010	27.5%

¹ CDP-01-2019, ² CDP-06-2020, ³ CDP-02-2022, ⁴ CDP-04-2022, ⁵ CDP-05-2023

Overall, funding for County parks and fields operated by Fields & Parks Management Program partners has risen by nearly 30% since 2019. While staffing costs have risen slightly, the increase can be attributed to equipment operating and replacement costs that have risen dramatically since 2019. The aggregate increase to operational funding overall shows an increase of 27.5%.

The proposed funding amendments above were calculated using current Fleet Division rates (from Public Works Operations) and Human Resources wages and benefit calculations – applied to 2018 task descriptions. Exceptions to these calculations are indicated in the chart above – some previous miscalculations or missteps were corrected as noted as well as one notable decrease in funding to the Nanticoke Park Committee as a result of its moving from an active ballfield to a passive park which no longer requires specialized grooming.

The County’s community partners take excellent care of these parks and recreational assets, offering services and amenities to the public that are well-cared-for and facilitate high-quality programming and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

Consistent standards of care and maintenance are ensured through County oversight and the requirement of detailed inspections and record-keeping to ensure public safety. The program is very popular with the community partners and aligns with the County’s strategic priorities of creating Community Vibrancy & Healthy Community, and Corporate Image & Efficient Government.

FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

The 2024 Tax-Supported Operating Budget included \$265,130 for transfers to community groups for the FPM program (operating grants and lease). If approved, an increase of \$73,010 will be included in the 2025 Draft Tax-Supported Operating Budget.

2024 Tax Supported Operating Budget	2025 Proposed Draft Tax Supported Operating Budget	Increase \$	Increase %
\$265,130	\$338,140	\$73,010	27.5%

STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:

This report was reviewed by representatives from the following Divisions: Community Development & Partnerships (CDP), Facilities Capital & Asset Management (FCA), Facilities, Parks, Cemeteries & Forestry Operations (FPC), Finance (FIN), and Legal & Support Services (LSS). Updated source data was supplied by Human Resources (HRD) and Fleet/Public Works Operations (PWO).

All Fields and Park Management Program community partners have been advised and are in favour of the enclosed policy amendments and funding changes.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: No

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: Yes

Policy: Yes

REFERENCES:

1. [Policy No. 2019-04 Fields & Parks Management Program](#)
2. [Policy No. 2019-03 Asset Management](#)

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Updated Policy 2019-04 Fields and Parks Management Program, with tracked changes displayed.
2. Draft Updated Policy 2019-04 Fields and Parks Management complete updated policy.