

Disposal of Former Saskatoon Police Service Outdoor Firing Range Auxiliary Training Building

ISSUE

In 2015, an agreement was reached with the Saskatoon Police Service (SPS) and the Saskatoon Wildlife Federation (SWF) to relocate their outdoor firing ranges to a location east of Saskatoon to accommodate construction of the North Commuter Parkway. For various reasons, the SWF did not exercise the option and the building was later decommissioned by the City of Saskatoon (City) and has subsequently remained vacant and unused. The SWF recently approached the City with a new proposal to repurpose and relocate the building onto their adjacent site, and has requested that a similar opportunity be made available to them as in the previous agreement.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Standing Policy Committee on Finance recommend to City Council:

1. That the Administration be authorized to dispose of the former Saskatoon Police Service Firing Range auxiliary building for \$1 via an agreement with the Saskatoon Wildlife Federation to relocate the building to the Saskatoon Wildlife Federation at their sole expense; and
2. That the City Solicitor be requested to prepare the appropriate agreements and that His Worship the Mayor and the City Clerk be authorized to execute the agreements under the Corporate Seal.

BACKGROUND

Prior to construction of the North Commuter Parkway, concerns relating to active use of outdoor firing ranges by the SPS and the SWF within immediate proximity to the new Parkway resulted in closure of the outdoor ranges. The firing range and auxiliary training building were situated on future development land owned by Saskatoon Land, whereas the immediately adjacent SWF range was situated on their own land that included the SWF offices, indoor firing range, and a multi-use hall.

After considering various options to replace the SPS range, the decision was made to enter into an agreement with the SWF to construct an exclusive use, multi-directional range for the SPS on lands owned by the SWF east of the city. The agreement also included environmental remediation of the former range site and provided the SPS with access to the SWF ranges on a discounted rental basis (50% of market) with priority booking privileges.

In addition to the contract price of \$750,000, the SWF was provided the option to relocate the auxiliary training building situated on the SPS site to the new range site. The approximately 2,941 square foot single-storey building was constructed in 1994 on a slab foundation. Logistically the building would be costly and difficult to move and there is a risk of it being damaged particularly if moving any significant distance. For various reasons, the SWF did not exercise the option and the building was later decommissioned by the City and has subsequently remained vacant and unused.

Subsequent inquiries were made with various civic departments to determine if there was an internal user for the building; however, due to its somewhat remote location, the site was not a good fit for any group and the building was subsequently decommissioned by the City's former Facilities Branch in 2016.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Since being decommissioned in 2016, the building has remained vacant and unused (Appendix 1). From a corporate use perspective, the primary hurdle in finding a suitable and willing occupant is its somewhat remote location, which significantly reduces the number of potential users.

From an external use perspective, leasing to an external party is problematic as the sole physical access to the property is via the SWF's site. While the outdoor ranges were still operating, access was permitted through an agreement between the SWF and the SPS. However, the Administration anticipates it would be difficult to find an external tenant that the SWF would have a similar level of comfort with in sharing their only road access. Additionally, the somewhat remote location would be a factor for an external tenant.

Without finding an occupant or tenant to warrant the building being recommissioned and the resumption of regular ongoing maintenance, its condition will deteriorate over time.

Through recent written correspondence to the City Manager, the SWF has requested the building be donated to them for relocation to their adjacent site for use as a multi-cultural interpretive centre/office facility. While the original offer in 2015 was to move the building to the new outdoor firing range property and share the facility with the SPS for training, it was also being offered for the same \$1 price (Appendices 2 and 2A). The City expects that all costs to move the building would be borne by the SWF.

The letter states one of the mandates of the SWF is to promote the benefits of a healthy lifestyle associated with outdoor activities, and having the building available to them for repurposing would be key to their future plans. Once relocated and updated, they propose the building would become home to a multi-cultural interpretive centre focusing on the historical and future importance of native areas such as the Northeast Swale. In developing the centre, the SWF will be consulting with the following organizations to ensure they have the best possible information to educate visitors:

- Meewasin Valley Authority
- Wanuskewin Heritage Park
- Ducks Unlimited Canada
- Ministry of the Environment
- City of Saskatoon

Their stated goal is to promote their location as a "must see" attraction for the city to visitors from near and far. The location is also thought to be ideal for larger groups, such as educational institutions, as a launching point to walk the trails of the Northeast Swale.

To provide visitors with the best possible experience, the SWF is proposing they would relocate their administration offices into the new building to administer federation business and answer any visitor questions that may be asked about the area.

The SWF has provided a Letter of Commitment to recognize the City's generous donation of the proposed building that would be prominently displayed on their donor plaque/wall at the front entrance listing the project donors (Appendix 3). The design is yet to be finalized, but SWF has indicated the City would be at or near the top of the plaque/wall. Much like a "living document", the plaque/wall would be designed to continually add new donors that come forward in future years.

In addition, with the City's approval, the building donation would be mentioned in press releases and update articles. The SWF is also welcome to any additional ideas the City may have regarding recognition.

The SWF had previously been provided the opportunity for the building to be gifted to them for relocation to their new outdoor range site; however, for various reasons they were unable to do so at that time. The SWF is now in a position to proceed in a slightly different direction that will provide education and cultural awareness to residents and visitors alike.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The recommended option requires no financial output by the City, and would result in eventual savings when future development reaches this area and the building would have to be moved, or more likely demolished.

Demolishing the building when required to accommodate future urban development is estimated to be in the range of \$30,000 to \$40,000.

The recommended option of donating the building to the SWF would forego the City some amount of revenue that could result from the sale of the building for relocation to another site.

Moving the building over a longer distance is possible, however, logistically difficult and expensive, and would be a considerable risk to the structure due to its construction being on a concrete slab. Quotes received in 2015 to move the building approximately 20 kilometers were \$125,000, plus \$85,000 to construct a foundation on which to place the building, plus another \$50,000 to reinstall everything that had to be removed to accommodate the move.

Due to these factors, the Administration expects a sale of the building for relocation would net a minimal amount of revenue, anticipated to likely be in the range of \$20,000 at the low end and as high as \$50,000.

The City could issue a public tender for its disposal, but given the challenges noted above, it is assumed that such an approach is not likely to result in a significant financial benefit to the City. If that approach is taken, the SWF may or may not be the successful

bidder. While the original offer had expired, by providing the building to the SWF it continues to recognize the same.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Moving the building to a new site results in less waste material from demolition being transferred to the landfill and is a more sustainable reuse of the building.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Council Policy No. C09-012, Administration of Civic Properties, states that:

“All improved and unimproved properties owned by the City and not needed for present or future Civic purposes or programs shall be disposed of in such a manner as to bring maximum economic benefit to the City.”

While it cannot be determined with certainty that the proposed approach brings maximum economic benefit to the City, market conditions, carrying costs, maintenance costs and other related costs are factors that the Policy identifies as considerations in the decision. Based on these factors as well as the original offer, the Administration believes this is likely the most optimal way of disposing of this particular unused asset. The relocated asset will also provide a future benefit to the citizens of Saskatoon through the education of the interpretive center for the Northeast Swale at no additional cost to the City.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no privacy, legal or social implications identified.

NEXT STEPS

If the recommendation is approved, the City Solicitor's Office will draft the necessary documents and agreement to accommodate the transfer of the building.

APPENDICES

1. Aerial View of Former SPS Range Building and SWF Site
2. SWF Letter to City Manager Requesting Donation of City Building
- 2A. Addendum to Letter to City Manager
3. SWF Letter - Acknowledgement of Donation

REPORT APPROVAL

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