

Suitors eye an ice-less Syl Apps



Sporting organizations are approaching Brant County with ideas for future use of Paris arena.

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SEAN ALLEN
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Indoor sporting groups are lining up to convince Brant County that the Syl Apps Community Centre is just right for them.

This is the last winter season that the Syl Apps will have ice, as the county plans to shut down the rink when the twin-pad arena is ready for next season.

A committee of county council is currently investigating what to do with the landmark arena in Paris now that it won't be needed for hockey and figure skating.

Anthony Punturiero from Brantford City Soccer Club tried to make a case to have turf installed inside the building.

"Not only would you be getting a guaranteed 40 hours per week in rentals from our club, but baseball, football, rugby and other turf sports would want the facility as well," said Punturiero. "This is a case where demand greatly exceeds supply."

Punturiero said they have 2,500 young athletes looking for a place close by to play soccer from the fall to the spring every year.

"We are the single biggest sporting organization in the county. We are suggesting the county install turf and we would become the major tenant."

Punturiero estimated the cost to install a spongy, grass-like turf would be in the range of \$150,000.

However, the soccer club isn't the only sporting group eyeing Syl Apps.

Brock Murray runs Four Seasons Sports, an organization that currently concentrates on the sport of roller hockey.

"We've already purchased our own Sport Court flooring that installs directly over the concrete that is already there," said Murray. "It can be used for roller hockey, basketball, volleyball, lacrosse and can even accommodate soccer."

After hearing from both groups, councillor Roy Haggart said one thing became clear to him.

"There is the potential for revenue to continue flowing in from this building. We need to look at a way to maximize rental space, and explore a compromise to keep this building active for as many groups as possible."

The committee learned that the Brantford Harlequins have also expressed interest in using the building for winter training.

But Haggart said the county has bigger fish to fry first.

"We need to strike while the iron is hot and invest in fixing the problems with Syl Apps."

The repositioning committee passed a motion to council that calls for a request for proposals from companies, to fix the community centre's aging roof, walls, heating and air conditioning.

"I've spoken to (Brant MPP) Dave Levac and (Brant MP) Phil McColeman, and they both expressed interest in taking a proposal forward to see if there is any infrastructure money for this project," said Haggart.

In the meantime, the committee approved Murray's request to install his own Sport Court flooring in Syl Apps and leave it in until a decision is made on what to do with the building.