
RESOURCE J

Public Consultations on “Tennis Bubbles”

When developing a recreational facility it is common for municipalities to conduct public consultations to collect feedback from local residents. Due to the diverse needs and interests of residents in any municipality, public consultations can typically result in valuable discussion and debate. Provided below are a brief synopsis of two public consultation processes that were conducted for air-supported tennis facilities in Canada. In both instances of discussion and debate, the air-supported structure was successfully implemented.

CASE STUDY 1: L’Amoreaux Tennis Centre – Scarborough, ON¹

In 1997, the L’Amoreaux Winter Tennis Club identified the need to cover five of ten outdoor courts to accommodate growing demand for year-round tennis. By late 1999, City Council approved a \$400,000 project to erect an air-supported structure over five existing outdoor courts as a part of the 2000 Capital Budget. The structure was financed through a capital reserve fund generated from existing operations of an indoor permanent structure. Between November 1999 and April 2000, three public consultations were held to receive feedback from the local community. Existing community tennis clubs and local residents were widely in support of the structure, however some residents raised concerns about the visual impact of the structure, and indicated they would have preferred to see a permanent tennis facility instead.

At a City Council meeting in June 2000, council stated that funds were available to proceed with the air-supported structure immediately, with no additional costs to the tax base. Council stated that if a permanent structure were to be explored, it would also have a visual impact and the project would undoubtedly require taxpayer dollars and would be delayed to the next five-year capital budget cycle. Given these facts, City staff recommended the project move ahead with an air-supported structure.

CASE STUDY 2: Vancouver Lawn Tennis & Badminton Club – Vancouver, BC²

In 2005, the Vancouver Lawn Tennis & Badminton Club submitted an application to City Council to erect a second air-supported structure over four existing outdoor courts to accommodate current and future growth in tennis participation. When the application was submitted, the Club erected a rezoning sign on the site and City staff notified approximately 3,000 property owners in the surrounding area. Staff subsequently received three letters from a resident who lived across from the Club and opposed the air-supported structure. The letters noted the proposed structure would adversely affect that resident’s home value. The home owner noted that the Club had the option of building four underground courts.

The Club’s report to Council noted that the cost of the underground court project would be an estimated \$6.5 million and would not be feasible until many other interior upgrades and additions were completed. In comparison, the air-supported structure would cost the Club approximately \$600,000 to engineer, design, ship and install. In February 2005, City Planning Staff recommended the Club land be rezoned to allow for a second seasonal air-supported structure. There was no further opposition to the project.

1 Scarborough Community Council. (2000, July). Installation of a “Bubble” over Five Outdoor Tennis Courts at L’Amoreaux Tennis Centre (Ward 17 – Scarborough Agincourt).

2 City of Vancouver (2005, February 28). CD-1 Text Amendment – 1630 West 15th Avenue (Vancouver Lawn Tennis and Badminton Club).