

From the desk of Mayor Fred Haynes

January 8, 2021

Braefoot Park building transitioning to Saanich to support broader community

Our Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department has a critical and immediate need for more space to deliver priority programs that respond to our community's needs, especially vulnerable populations. Given this pressing need, Council directed staff to [transition the operations of the Braefoot Park building to Saanich](#). The building has historically been leased to the Braefoot Community Association (BCA) at no cost.

The demand for park access and use continues to increase with our growing and diversifying community. We continue to receive requests from groups for access to spaces and places to carry out their activities. It's also been challenging for us find suitable spaces, especially during COVID-19, to offer programs and services to vulnerable populations due to most adequate spaces reaching capacity. This transition will allow us to serve the broader community of Saanich while continuing to support amateur sport which was the original purpose of the facility.

As a result of the increasing demands on our places and spaces and the need to ensure that we have transparent and accountable agreements in place, Council asked staff to review and modernize the many historical agreements that exist. In reviewing the agreement with BCA, it was clear that broader community access was not possible beyond the BCA, its clients and the sub-tenant's programs.

While this decision is being questioned by the BCA, I'm pleased that we have received letters from the Lakehill Soccer Association and the Saanich Lacrosse Association in support of the transition. They look forward to continuing their strong relationships with Saanich. They expressed excitement about new possibilities and improving access to park amenities.

I want to be clear that this transition is about using publicly-owned space to deliver cost-effective and high quality programs and services to our diverse community while supporting amateur sport. It is not in any way part of a relocation of municipal staff offices.

Support through the transition

While we know this isn't the outcome the BCA was expecting and understand that change is difficult, we committed to a positive working relationship and have offered a lease until the end of April 2021 as the group transitions to a new location. The BCA has been informed it can certainly continue to provide programming in many Saanich Parks, including Braefoot Park, by obtaining park permits as they do now. The BCA can continue to provide administrative support for its various holdings in an alternate location thereby making space available for us to meet the community's highest priorities.

We have contacted the BCA's sub-tenants to reassure them of our commitment to a smooth transition for all parties, participants, and clients and will follow up with further conversations and plans in the coming weeks. We will also ensure that longstanding amateur sports, such as soccer and lacrosse, will continue in Braefoot Park. That will not change.

Funding and municipal requirements

The Braefoot Park building located on public parkland is an important publicly-owned asset. Over \$1.5 million has been invested in park infrastructure over the past 30 years or so. Subsequent to the initial investment of the Braefoot Athletic Community Association (now known as BCA), the majority of funding has been provided by Lakehill Soccer, Saanich Lacrosse, Saanich, and some from the BCA.

Saanich has always been responsible for the building and any major system upgrades as well as maintaining the natural turf fields, lacrosse box, playground, and artificial turf in partnership with Lakehill Soccer.

As the building is located on publicly-owned parkland, there are certain requirements and restrictions of use which must be upheld as outlined in the Community Charter and our Parks Management and Control Bylaw. Please be assured we are committed to aligning future programs and services with community need and these requirements.

Questions

Please contact Saanich Parks at parks@saanich.ca or 250-475-5522 with any questions or concerns about the Braefoot Park building.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "F. Haynes", with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Mayor Fred Haynes