

## **Establishment of a Recreation Program Support Fund**

The Recreation Department is requesting approval to establish a Recreation Program Support Fund to assist individuals and families who are unable to afford the full cost of participation in recreation programs.

Currently, when a participant is unable to pay the full program fee, the Recreation Department requires them to cover only the direct cost of materials—such as a program t-shirt—while the remaining balance is not collected. While this approach allows participation, it results in lost revenue for the department and provides no sustainable or transparent funding mechanism to offset these losses.

The creation of a dedicated scholarship fund would allow the department to:

- Continue offering equitable access to recreation programs
- Maintain financial accountability and transparency
- Offset lost revenue associated with fee waivers
- Ensure the long-term sustainability of recreation programming

To establish this fund, the department intends to apply for a CAE grant to provide initial seed funding. If this grant is not approved, the department respectfully requests consideration of creating a dedicated line item in the 2027 budget to support the fund.

In addition, the department proposes that any customer account credits not used within one full calendar year be transferred into the Recreation Program Support Fund. This policy would allow unused credits to be reinvested into the community by supporting program access for residents in need, while also providing a responsible and transparent method for managing dormant balances.

The department also proposes including an option for participants to make voluntary donations to the support fund when they register and pay for programs. This would allow the community to directly support equitable access to recreation programs and further strengthen the fund's sustainability.

Awards from the Recreation Program Support Fund would be granted at the discretion of the Recreation Director based on demonstrated need and available funding. If an applicant has concerns regarding a decision, those concerns may be brought forward to the Recreation Committee for review and consideration.

A formalized support fund would replace the current informal practice of absorbing uncollected fees and would allow the department to support residents in need while maintaining fiscal responsibility. This initiative aligns with the community's commitment to inclusivity, youth engagement, and access to healthy recreational opportunities for all residents.