



## Report to Council

Department: Community Services

Division: Community Services

Date: August 12, 2024

Prepared by: Jake Morassut, Director, Community Services

Report Number: Community Services-2024-30

Subject: Co-An Park Master Plan

Number of Pages: 6

### Recommendation(s)

**That** Community Services-2024-30 entitled Co-An Park Master Plan, prepared by Jake Morassut, Director, Community Services, dated August 12, 2024, be received, and

**That** Council approve the Master Plan for Co-An Park, as presented, and

**That** Council direct administration to update and negotiate the agreements that govern the operational use, capital investment, service delivery and programming of Co-An Park with the Town of Amherstburg, including any sub agreements required with the Essex County Steam and Gas Museum and the Co-An Park Board.

### Purpose

To endorse the Co-An Park Master Plan, and update the agreements with the Town of Essex, Co-An Park Board, and Essex County Steam and Gas Engine Museum.

## Background and Discussion

Co-An Park is a 15.9 ha Athletic park located in The Town of Essex and was founded in 1977 by the Townships of Anderdon and Colchester North to provide municipal parkland and recreational services to the community.

The park consists of, but is not limited to, the following amenities:

- Six Baseball diamonds
- Three Soccer fields
- Two Tennis courts
- Playground equipment
- Washrooms
- Pavilion and canteen with site furnishings
- Maintenance, storage buildings
- Walking Paths
- Parking lots with lighting
- Essex County Steam and Gas Engine Museum Inc.

Although Co-An Park is located in McGregor (Essex) it is jointly owned 50/50 by the Town of Amherstburg and the Town of Essex. There are several by-laws and agreements dating back **to the early 1970's that govern the use, maintenance,** and operation of the park which is run by the Co-An Park Board.

Currently the Board, consists of members of Council and residents from each municipality. The Board is responsible for the operation, maintenance, capital and operating expenditures, recreational programming and activities associated with the park. Decisions regarding capital investments in the park are currently made by the Board and costs are mainly jointly shared on a 50/50 basis between the Town of Amherstburg and the Town of Essex.

The Board holds regular monthly meetings and submits to Council an annual report of its activities and operational costs, as well as other reports that are required from time to time. In September of each calendar year, the Board submits to Council a detailed estimate of identified operating and capital budget requests for consideration and approval for the following year's budget.

The Essex County Steam and Gas Engine Museum Inc. is also located in the park and is owned and operated by a third party since 1997. The museum and associated buildings on site have a twenty (20) year lease with the Town of Essex in the amount of \$1.00 per year. The lease term began July 2008 and expires June 30, 2028, with the right to renew the operating agreement for a second term. The Museum is responsible for:

- All utility and insurance costs
- Repair and maintenance of the property including buildings, driveways, sidewalks, parking areas and grass areas
- All associated costs related to the museum

The agreements and by-laws that currently govern the use, maintenance, and recreational operation of Co-An Park need to be updated and/or amended to meet the changing needs of the community and current legislative and municipal requirements.

Operational requirements, regulations, and municipal standard practices have changed dramatically over the years. In order to remain current and to minimize any potential risks and liability to both municipalities, administration is recommending that all agreements that govern the use and operation of the park be updated. The recreational amenities, services, and programming that are offered to the community currently via Co-An Park are well attended and are paramount to the wellbeing of the community. Therefore, any changes and updates to these agreements and or the governance structure of the park must be carefully considered to preserve and maintain the high-quality programming and service delivery the public has come to know and expect.

Both municipalities will work together to enter into an agreement with shared responsibility for all park assets, infrastructure, operational risk and liability which has not been captured in the existing agreements. Administration will work closely with all parties including the Co-An Park Board and the Steam and Gas Engine Museum to ensure changes in legislation, current municipal standards, policies and by-laws are captured while ensuring the continuity and consistency of service delivery is upheld.

The Parks Master plan approved in 2023 speaks to this under Recommendation number 42:

*“Continue to partner with other local agencies and municipalities (e.g., CWATS, Town of Amherstburg, County of Essex, Essex Region Conservation Authority, etc.) to bring larger scale park and trail improvements that can serve the broader region.”*

Administration has been working with the Town of Amherstburg for the past two years to undertake the public engagement process to develop a Master Plan for Co-An Park.

The public engagement process included in person public information sessions as well as surveys available on Town of Essex and Town of Amherstburg websites, and/or paper copies available at select municipal locations.

- The first survey was available November 8, 2022
- The first Public Open House was held November 17, 2022
- The second public Open House was held March 26, 2024
- The second survey was available March 27, 2024

The in-person public information sessions were well attended and aimed to inform residents about the current amenities found within the park; provide information on how the park is managed, programmed and operated, as well as collect feedback from both municipalities and residents on the needs and recreational desires of the community.

The feedback collected by both municipalities was then used to develop a master plan for the park. The Master Plan for Co-An Park is attached as (Appendix A), and represents the

combined feedback of both municipalities and supports the recreational needs of the community.

The number one request from the surveys is for a new playground. The 2024 Capital budget identified funding for the purchase and installation of a new playground unit at the park that will be cost shared 50/50 with the Town of Essex. The Town of Essex will work with the Town of Amherstburg on the RFP process for the new playground. The final design will then be brought back to Council for final approval.

In summary, Administration has been working closely with the Town of Amherstburg and the community at large for the past two years to develop a Master plan for Co-An attached under Appendix A. The master plan will help guide future decisions for development of the park where both municipalities can work towards common goals. Administration is requesting council approve the proposed design that was developed with feedback from both communities and all involved parties so we can also move forward and update the agreements that govern the use and operation of the park. Once the agreements are negotiated and updated, they will come back to Council for final approval.

## Financial Impact

The Town of Essex annually commits \$21,000.00 toward the operation of Co-An Park and \$15,000.00 to the capital reserve for Co-An Park, **approved in the Town's budget and outlined** in the current cost share agreement with the Town of Amherstburg.

The 2024 capital budget (CS-24-0012) approved \$400,000.00 in funding for a new playground at Co-An Park in a 50/50 partnership with the Town of Amherstburg.

Future costs of implementing the Master Plan will be presented during the annual budget process.

## Consultations

Town of Amherstburg

Co-An Park Board

Essex County Steam and Gas Engine Museum

Kate Giurissevich, Director, Corporate Services/Treasurer

Doug Sweet, CAO

## Link to Strategic Priorities

- Embrace asset management best practices to build, maintain, and continuously improve our municipally owned infrastructure.
- Leverage our Town's competitive advantages to promote jobs and economic investment.**
- Take care of our natural environment and strengthen the sense of belonging to everyone who makes Essex "**home**".
- Deliver friendly customer service in an efficient, effective, and transparent manner while providing an exceptional working environment for our employees.
- Build corporate-level and community-level climate resilience through community engagement and partnership and corporate objectives.

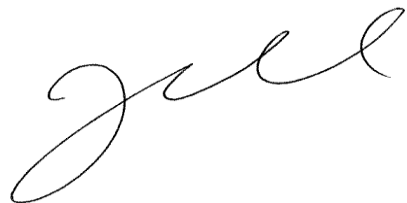
## Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Co-An Park Master Plan - Community Services-2024-30.docx
Attachments:	- 2024 CO-AN MasterPlan_Redesign.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Aug 7, 2024

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:



**Kate Giurissevich, Director, Corporate Services - Aug 7, 2024 - 9:13 AM**



**Joseph Malandrucolo, Director, Legal and Legislative Services/Clerk - Aug 7, 2024 - 11:21 AM**



**Doug Sweet, Chief Administrative Officer - Aug 7, 2024 - 11:23 AM**