



Memorandum

Infrastructure Services

Prepared for: Council-in-Committee

Meeting Date: Monday, July 7, 2025

Title: Fort Erie Tennis Club Operating Agreement

Fort Erie Tennis Club (FETC) – Operating Overview and Comparable Municipal Models

This memo provides an overview of the Fort Erie Tennis Club's (FETC) current operations, its partnership with the Town, and the value it brings to the community. It outlines the club's responsibilities, financial contributions, and limitations, particularly regarding public access. Additionally, the memo includes a comparison to similar municipal tennis facilities across Niagara Region to help inform Council's review of the proposed operating agreement. The goal is to support a balanced and sustainable model that preserves community access while maintaining the viability of club operations.

General Terms and Uses

Junior members of the FETC are granted unrestricted access to the courts through a gate code, with no limitations on the time of day or day of the week for play.

Greater Fort Erie Secondary School (GFESS/FESS) has consistently used the tennis courts for physical education classes and the school tennis team. Although the Fort Erie International Academy (FEIA) has been offered access to the facility, they have not taken advantage of this opportunity to date. Staff will follow up with the school to extend the offer again.

The FETC maintains its own liability and contents insurance, while the Town continues to insure the assets, including the clubhouse and courts. The club is responsible for day-to-day maintenance (including janitorial services and court upkeep), site scheduling, programming, and basic security. The Town currently does not have staff resourcing to support the tennis club operations or programming, as this is currently provided by the FETC. The Town provides structural, mechanical, and electrical maintenance, along with covering all utility costs. It is important to note that even if the club did not operate, the Town would still bear these infrastructure-related costs. However, the club's involvement offsets what would otherwise be additional Town expenses related to general maintenance and program delivery.

Public court access is facilitated by FETC volunteers and currently offered on Monday evenings—coinciding with available volunteer availability. Should Council wish to increase public access hours, Town staff may be required to supervise the facility, as volunteer availability is limited. Public access may negatively impact membership, which directly

supports the club's operations on the Town's behalf. As an option to promote both greater public access and free tennis court access, the Town could proceed with some capital improvements to Court #7 (previously budgeted) and designate this court for unrestricted public use, similar to Ferndale Park. This would allow the public with greater access for both fee-based premium court access and free, unrestricted public access.

Comparable Agreements in Fort Erie

Regarding the proposed operating agreement, a shorter term of 5 years is acceptable if desired by Council. Staff initially proposed a longer term to align with other Town agreements (e.g., Leisureplex agreements: 20–30 years; Bertie Boating Club: 25 years; Bill Connolly Clubhouse: 20 years; Crystal Ridge Community Centre: 40 years; and EJ Freeland Community Centre with the Boys and Girls Club of Niagara: 20 years). Longer-term agreements reduce administrative overhead by avoiding frequent renewals.

A comparable operating model is the Bertie Boating Club (BBC), which manages the Town's boating facility. Like FETC, the BBC is member-driven, though non-members can access services through a daily use fee. The BBC covers its own maintenance and utility costs, but charges significantly higher membership fees and generates substantial revenue through an on-site bar and restaurant. Unlike FETC, however, the BBC does not offer community programming.

At the Leisureplex, tenants such as the pub and concession operate under partnership-style agreements, which include revenue-sharing models and defined service expectations. Conversely, leases with user groups like Jr. B Hockey, the Kinsmen Club, Minor Hockey, and the Figure Skating Club are standard space rentals. These groups do not pay rent but share proportionate utility costs.

FETC is a not-for-profit organization, reinvesting all surpluses into site improvements or program enhancements. For example, the club previously contributed \$10,000 toward the Hard-Tru court upgrades. The Town recovers a user fee per participant in accordance with the established User Fee Schedule. Any increase to this fee would either reduce the club's ability to reinvest in the site and programming or force higher membership fees, potentially making access less affordable for some residents.

Comparable Municipal Tennis Clubs:

- **Welland Tennis Club:** Operates 8 courts with a \$220 adult membership and \$10 guest fee (up to 3 visits/year). The City funded most of the capital, including 4 indoor courts. The club pays \$5,500 in annual rent plus hydro (~\$2,000).
- **Niagara Falls Tennis Club:** Indoor facility leased to a third-party operator; membership-based access. Capital investment was shared between the operator, the City, and private sponsors.
- **St. Catharines Tennis Club:** Re-established in 2021 after a decade-long absence. City funded over \$800,000 in capital upgrades; the club contributed \$40,000. The club pays no rent or user fees, and the City covers all utility costs.
- **Niagara-on-the-Lake Tennis Club:** Membership-based model (\$195/year); guest fees \$5 (max 5 visits/year). Capital costs funded by the Town and supported by a Trillium

Grant. The club pays only for electricity (~\$1,500/year) and is not charged rent or user fees.

Financials Analysis

2024 Financial Summary		
FETC Revenues		
Bingo Revenues	\$ 34,855.40	
General Revenues	\$ 46,456.55	(membership, grants, sponsorships, donations, Jumpstart and interest)
	\$ 81,311.95	
FETC Expenses		
Jr. Program	\$56,637.83	(lessons, equipment, youth user fees)
Remaining Expenses	\$ 13,942.14	(adult user fees, insurance, website, office supplies, site maintenance and bank fees)
	\$70,579.97	
FETC Net income	\$ 10,731.98	
TOFE Expenses		
CNP	\$ 2,476.13	
Water/Wastewater	\$ 22,031.93	* approximately \$20k attributed to the seasonal watering of the Hard Tru clay courts.
Site Maintenance	\$ 3,046.94	plumbing, mechanical and fire extinguishers
	\$ 27,555.00	

All of which is respectively submitted.

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