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NEWS LOCAL

City reviewing box seat addition

By Elaine Della-Mattia, Sault Star

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Essar Centre

City staff is investigating ways to develop more box seats at the Essar Centre.

The news came to light at Monday's council meeting after councillors Matthew Shoemaker and Ozzie Grandinetti introduced a motion asking staff to bring forward a plan that would see additional box seats created at the city's premier multi-purpose centre.

They also want staff to investigate what potential sources of funding may be available to help make it happen.

Council was told Monday that the file is already “very active” and staff is looking at converting office space at the south western corner of the rink into about six private boxes.

Tom Vair, the city’s deputy CAO of community services and enterprise division, said the city is reaching out to those who have been on a waiting list for some time to determine whether they are still interested in leasing a box. About 10-12 people remain on a waitir list for the private boxes.

Vair said that if council moves ahead with the project he doesn’t anticipate it will cost a lot of money. Staff from public works initially created the walls that form the offices and they could easily be changed, he said.

Windows and box seat finishing would also be required, he said.

At this point it’s unknown what infrastructure funding programs are available that may qualify for upper level government funding, Vi said.

Essar Centre’s box seats have been sold out since the downtown facility was built in 2006.

The initial plan developed when the facility was first built was to create additional box seats on the east side of the building by “punching out” the wall that’s currently there when funding became available.

Boxes were not created around the circumference of the rink when it was first built due to costs.

The issue was last visited about five years ago when consideration was given to build the additional box seats on the eastern side c the rink. At that time, cost estimates were between \$5 million and \$6 million to create about 10-12 boxes and council decided not to proceed.

In January, a consultant who has completed the ice utilization review will also report his conclusions to council.

Council may then need to prioritize the projects.

Ward 1 Coun. Steve Butland noted that council will have to determine where, if available, any infrastructure funding should be spen He noted that the replacement of the aging McMeeken Centre is also on the radar and an ice utilization study should be presented council soon.

“We will have to think about where we can spend money for the most benefit of our taxpayers,” he said.

Meanwhile, the city will also be issuing a Request for Proposals after the holidays to determine if it can find a naming rights partner for the multi-use facility.



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