
Turf field gets boost from land sale

School District 43 approves sale of 1.2 acres of land to Coquitlam in exchange for amenities

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Turf fields, such as this one at Dr. Charles Best secondary school, can withstand rainy weather conditions and now one will be built at Centennial secondary school after School District 43 approved the sale of a 1.2 acre parcel of land at Glen elementary school to the city of Coquitlam in exchange for a field and other amenities.
Photograph By MARIO BARTEL

School District 43 has approved the sale of a 1.2-acre parcel of land at Glen elementary to the city of Coquitlam in exchange for a turf field at the new Centennial secondary, an enhanced playspace for Glen students and other amenity improvements.

It reduces land costs, construction, maintenance costs and maximizes the use of public assets," said Coun. Craig Hodge, the chair of the city's sports advisory committee.

But while the chair of SD43's board of education, Kerri Palmer Issak, said the land sale also supports the district's vision and has been done in the past to get school improvements, two Port Moody trustees wondered whether SD43 is giving away an asset at a bargain price.

Keith Watkins and Lisa Park voted against the sale, arguing that if the property at the corner of Glen Drive and Westwood Street is rezoned for a highrise, the value would be high and there could be impacts on the school.

Indeed, the property could be rezoned by the city for higher density but a public consultation would be required. As well, the city stated in an email to *The Tri-City News* there are currently no plans for the land.

The land price has not been made public because it's currently under negotiation but trustees were assured that financial benefit of a turf field at Centennial, including ongoing maintenance and replacement by the city, plus improvements at Glen Park that can be used by students during the day, is good value for the property.

The deal was approved at the Tuesday, Nov. 28 board of education meeting after several trustees expressed support, noting that the Glen parent advisory council was consulted and supported the initiative.

"What I heard from that community is the need for a playground," said Port Coquitlam Trustee Judy Shirra while Coquitlam Trustee Barb Hobson said the turf field at Centennial "will be a benefit for the community for years to come."

Building a turf field costs \$3 million and \$850,000 to replace it at the end of its life, and a new one for Centennial is good for the district and the community, said Hodge, who noted a similar arrangement was made to get a turf field at Dr. Charles Best secondary while Pinetree secondary students use a city field at Town Centre Park.

"We provide them for community use, which is primarily for sports use on evenings and weekends, and the school gets the benefits during school hours," he said.