

Town of Whitby

Staff Report

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Report Title: Proposed Future Use of Luther Vipond Memorial Arena

Report to: Committee of the Whole

Date of meeting: March 23, 2026

Report Number: CMS 05-26

Department(s) Responsible:

Community Services Department

Submitted by:

John Romano, Commissioner,
Community Services

**Acknowledged by M. Gaskell,
Chief Administrative Officer**

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1. Recommendation:

1. That Council supports the continued operation of the Luther Vipond Memorial Arena (LVMA) for floor-based programming, consistent with recent community engagement; and
2. That Council approve a new in-year 2026 capital project in the amount of \$85,000, for LVMA refrigeration system decommissioning and roof repairs, to be funded by the Asset Management Reserve.

2. Highlights:

- Luther Vipond Memorial Arena (LVMA) has reached the end life for arena operations. In fall 2026, ice programs will be relocated to the Fieldgate Sports Complex (FGSC) twin-pad arenas.
- A consultant led community engagement process was undertaken to identify potential short-term future use of the facility with 1,324 participants offering input through surveys, interviews and consultations.
- As a result of this consultation, staff recommend, in the short-term, maintaining LVMA in its current state to support indoor floor-based activities, including lacrosse, ball hockey and soccer, until there is greater clarity regarding the volume and nature of user demand.

- The estimated cost to ensure the facility remains safe, functional, and available for community use is \$85,000, which staff recommend be funded from the Asset Management Reserve.
- Long-term future use of LVMA will be determined after demand is assessed and will be reviewed as a part of the Brooklin Memorial Park Master Plan.

3. Background:

Constructed in 1972/73, the Luther Vipond Memorial Arena (LVMA) has long supported recreational opportunities in Whitby, particularly in Brooklin, and is named in honour of Luther Vipond, a lifelong resident and Arena Manager from 1953 to 1979. The facility has hosted a range of activities, including ice sports, floor sports, and community events.

In 2019, a building condition audit determined that the arena is nearing the end of its useful life for ice operations. As a result, the refrigeration system is planned to be decommissioned, and ice-based activities will be relocated to other facilities, including the Fieldgate Sports Complex (FGSC), scheduled to open this year with new twin pad arenas.

In 2024, Council approved the [Parks and Recreation Master Plan](#), which identified community priorities to guide service delivery over the next ten years and beyond. Item #20 of the plan, called for the Town to “undertake a facility renewal strategy to assess the feasibility of updating and modernizing the Luther Vipond Memorial Arena (LVMA) for indoor programming and rentals, including continued support for the Brooklin Spring Fair, with input from community partners and the public and potential alignment with a broader vision for Brooklin Memorial Park.”

Through report [CMS 04 25](#), Council directed staff to undertake a community consultation process to identify potential short term utilization options for LVMA. This report responds to that direction and outlines recommendations resulting from that engagement.

4. Discussion:

Short Term Vision: Town-Run Floor-Based Activity Rentals

Based on the insights gathered through the community engagement process, staff are recommending both short-term and long-term strategies for the future use of the facility. Following the end of ice operations, staff propose maintaining LVMA in its current state to support indoor floor-based activities, including lacrosse, soccer and ball hockey until there is greater clarity regarding the volume and nature of user demand.

This approach allows the Town to continue programming the facility and provide recreation opportunities while preserving flexibility while longer-term planning for LVMA is completed. Under this model, LVMA would continue to operate as a Town-run facility, with Town staff responsible for scheduling, permitting and administration. This approach ensures equitable access for local sport groups and enables the accommodation of limited community events, such as the Brooklin Spring Fair and Durham Farm Connections.

Staff held discussions with the Whitby Football Club regarding a potential partnership; however, based on those discussions, it was determined that maintaining Town control

over permitting would better support the Town's revenue objectives and provide increased flexibility for the Town.

Community Engagement: Validation of the Proposed Direction

The proposed focus on indoor, floor-based programming is strongly supported by community engagement conducted by SHCG Consultants between June and September 2025. This process included a public survey and targeted stakeholder consultations with residents, sport and community organizations, as well as Council and staff. In total, approximately 1,324 participants contributed feedback, providing a robust evidence base to inform future recommendations (Community Engagement Report – Attachment 1).

Survey Results - The survey results demonstrate strong community support for repurposing LVMA for indoor, non-ice uses:

- Resident Tenure - 80% of respondents have lived in the Town for 10 years or more
- Community Value - 75% strongly agree that community facilities are key contributors to quality of life
- Arena Repurposing - 88% support repurposing the arena for recreational uses
- Preferred Indoor Sports - Pickleball, lacrosse, ball hockey, fitness classes, walking
- Preferred Event Uses - Community group events, craft fairs, market events, trade shows
- Public Investment - 87% agree or strongly agree that public funds should be used to upgrade and modernize the arena

Through surveys, consultations, and stakeholder meetings, the following priorities were consistently identified:

- Enable year-round access for floor-based sports
- Maintain Town oversight of scheduling and permits
- Invest in facility enhancements and accessibility improvements
- Preserve the Luther Vipond legacy and community history of the site

This feedback directly supports staff's recommendation to operate LVMA as a Town-managed indoor floor-based facility in the short term.

Maintenance Requirements to Support Continued Use

To ensure LVMA remains safe, functional, and available for ongoing community use, staff recommend addressing immediate asset management needs. These include:

- Decommissioning of existing refrigeration system; and
- Completion of asset management required roof repairs.

These actions are necessary to ensure the building is in a state of good repair and can support its continued use as an indoor floor-based recreation space.

Permitting

Once the required maintenance work is complete, the permitting of rentals by sport organizations and limited events would continue to be administered through Recreation Client Services. Staff conducted an analysis of the costs associated with permitting rentals, including maintenance, utilities, and staffing, and determined that rentals are financially viable with a minimum two-hour booking during prime-time hours. These rentals would be supported through a mixed staffing model utilizing a combination of full-time, part-time and temporary staff to effectively support facility rentals.

Staff also held preliminary discussions with local sport organizations that have expressed interest in potential use of the space, including lacrosse, soccer, ball hockey, cricket, and baseball. Based on these discussions, it is anticipated that the space could be booked for approximately 20 to 40 hours per week for six months of the year, generating estimated weekly revenues ranging from \$1,931.60 to \$3,863.20. During an additional three-month period, bookings are anticipated to average 10 to 15 hours per week, with associated weekly revenues estimated between \$965.80 and \$1,448.70. Additional booking hours and revenues are also anticipated for tournament use (e.g., the OLA Festival) and special events such as the Brooklin Spring Fair and Durham Farm Connections.

Practices in Comparable Municipalities

This approach is a similar practice across other municipalities to utilize unconditioned arena spaces for indoor floor-based sport programming when a dedicated fieldhouse or conditioned sport facility is not available. Sports such as ball hockey, lacrosse, dodgeball, pickleball, and dry-floor training frequently operate in these environments, particularly in aging single-pad arenas transitioning out of ice operations. The interim approach proposed for LVMA aligns with these widely adopted municipal practices.

Facility Limitations

The LVMA building does have functional limitations due to the absence of full heating and cooling throughout much of the arena facility. While staff have reviewed potential upgrades to improve building conditioning, capital investments of this scale are not recommended until the long-term use is determined. These limitations may affect user comfort and reduce operational flexibility during certain periods of the year. As a result, rentals would generally not occur between December and February, subject to weather conditions; however, limited flexibility may be considered for groups that express interest in using the space during this period.

Long-Term Vision

The long-term future use of LVMA will be determined after the opening of the Fieldgate Sports Complex, in coordination with the Brooklin Memorial Park Master Plan, with community consultation set to begin in 2029, design in 2030 and construction in 2031. This process

will review the vision of the park and surrounding amenities, including further evaluation of long-term opportunities for the arena facility.

Overall, the proposed interim approach allows the Town to respond to community and sports organization feedback, maintain operational flexibility, and make the necessary investments that support continued use of the facility while longer-term planning is undertaken.

5. Financial Considerations:

Subject to Council approval of this report, LVMA will operate as Town-run floor-based activity rental facility as noted in the Discussion section of this report. Based on conservative assumptions on rental demand/hours of operation and costs, it is anticipated that the facility’s annual operations will range from break-even to showing a small surplus of approximately \$20,000.

Further, subject to Council approval of this report, a new 2026 in-year capital project be established to decommission the refrigeration system and repair the roof, in the amount of \$85,000 funded from the Asset Management Reserve Fund:

Table 1: Estimated Asset Management Improvements:

Decommissioning - Refrigeration Equipment	\$45,000
Roof Repairs	\$40,000
Total Capital Budget Required	\$85,000

6. Communication and Public Engagement:

In June 2025, the Town launched the connectwhitby.ca/luthervipond webpage to provide residents with information about the project and highlight opportunities for community involvement and feedback. Outcomes from this report will be shared through the webpage, with key decisions communicated through Town news updates and direct outreach to sport organizations and event permit holders.

Discussions occurred with Whitby Football Club, regarding a lease agreement however are not recommended at this time.

Whitby Minor Lacrosse, Whitby Football Club, Whitby Fire Girls Ball Hockey, Baseball, Cricket and Pickleball Groups were all contacted to discuss their interest in booking floor time given the limitations of the space.

7. Input from Departments/Sources:

A project team was assembled to facilitate the Community Engagement for the future use of Luther Vipond Memorial Arena and included staff from Community Services and

Communications & Creative Services. Staff from Finance was engaged to confirm the financial funding required for the recommended asset management improvements.

8. Strategic Priorities:

The recommendations within this report connect to the following pillars found in the Community Strategic Plan:

- Pillar 1 – Whitby’s Neighbourhoods: Safe, Healthy and Inclusive
 - Providing accessible and inclusive municipal services and programming
- Pillar 2 – Invest in infrastructure and assets
 - Implement recreational infrastructure enhancements as identified in the Sports Facility Strategy and the Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- Pillar 4 – Whitby’s Government: Accountable and Responsive
 - Delivering exceptional customer service and community engagement
 - Ensuring fiscal accountability and responsibly planning for growth

9. Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Luther Vipond Memorial Arena Community Engagement Summary