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REPORT TO SALT SPRING ISLAND LOCAL COMMUNITY COMMISSION MEETING OF THURSDAY, MAY 21, 2026

SUBJECT Synthetic Ice Rink Donation

ISSUE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to review potential sites and implications regarding the proposed donation of a synthetic ice rink to the Capital Regional District (CRD).

BACKGROUND

Seasonal ice facility development has previously been identified as a potential recreational program on Salt Spring Island (SSI), however, it has not been advanced as a priority due to the significant capital and operating costs, as well as environmental considerations associated with construction and mechanical refrigeration systems.

At its April 16, 2026 meeting, the SSI Local Community Commission (LCC) received a presentation from the Salt Spring Island Healthy Living Society (SSIHLS) proposing the donation of a used modular synthetic ice rink system (Appendix A). The system includes boards, sub-flooring, netting, and synthetic ice tiles forming a 40ft × 80ft CAN-ICE surface. The product requires no refrigeration, can be operated year-round, and can be assembled within approximately seven hours.

Maintenance requirements are limited to routine cleaning and water removal, and the material is reported not to shed microplastics. The tiles have an estimated lifespan of 10 years and can be inverted once worn, extending their useful life by a further approximate 10 years.

The rink was previously owned by the Victoria Hockey Legacy Society and used intermittently for special events. It has since been acquired by an anonymous donor, who is covering the estimated \$100,000 purchase cost. KidSport Greater Victoria has additionally committed to covering transportation costs, estimated at \$10,000, to deliver the system to SSI.

Installation of the synthetic surface would require the CRD to identify or construct a suitable firm, level base, such as concrete, asphalt, or compacted aggregate. Potential sites include the Phoenix property, Portlock Park and Rainbow Recreation Centre, as they meet applicable zoning and regulatory requirements and are already developed for active recreation uses. The rink could be delivered to SSI and temporarily stored in a seacan as site preparation is completed.

Operationalizing the facility would require determining an appropriate site and establishing an operating model, programming schedule and fee structure or revenue split. Additional infrastructure and equipment needs include installation of a storage building, acquisition of skate rental inventory (skates, helmets, pads, skating assists, etc.), and purchase of skate sharpening equipment. Preliminary information provided by SSIHLS suggests that revenue generated through skate rentals and programming could offset operating costs; however, this has not been independently validated.

SSIHLS has advised that the donor and the Victoria Hockey Legacy Society are seeking confirmation of interest or commitment within approximately one month (May 2026 at time of writing), reflecting a compressed decision timeline.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

That the Salt Spring Island Local Community Commission identifies Portlock Park as the preferred site for a temporary installation of the synthetic ice rink and direct staff to report back on detailed costs associated with installation and operation as well as potential funding partners and a recommended operating model.

Alternative 2

That this report be referred back to staff for additional information.

IMPLICATIONS

Site Considerations

When evaluating potential locations, consideration should be given to existing site conditions, including parking availability, washroom facilities, accessibility, and lighting. Portlock Park (Appendix B) appears to meet most of these requirements, with additional accessibility upgrades already underway.

Location	Site Overview	Skate Shop	Sales and Admissions	Parking	Washrooms	On Bus Route	Lights
Portlock	Existing 50x 90ft. concrete pad	Renovate existing Office	Renovate existing Office	~50 parking stalls	Male, female	Yes	Yes
Rainbow	Site would need to be cleared and leveled	New build required	Existing reception in RRC lobby	~50 parking stalls	Male, female, accessible	Yes	No
Phoenix	Existing 45x 90ft. concrete pad	New build required	New build required	~10 parking stalls, could be expanded	Porta-potty required	No	No

While the current master plans for the Portlock and Rainbow sites do not allocate space for a synthetic ice rink, plans could be revisited to incorporate a permanent location, should the LCC choose to proceed with the proposed installation. It has also been noted that the synthetic ice rink is relocatable and could be moved in the future if a more suitable site is identified.

Financial Implications

While the capital acquisition cost is described as zero to the CRD, the following potential costs should be considered:

- Site preparation (grading, surfacing, drainage)
- Storage (seacan), seasonal relocation or winterization
- Utilities (lighting, washrooms, skate shop, admissions booth, parking)
- Staff time (administration, agreements, operations, repairs and maintenance)
- Updates to park Master Plans (Portlock Park/Rainbow Rec)
- Maintenance and repairs (replacement of damage boards, netting, synthetic sheets, etc.)

Operational risks include lower than projected revenue projections requiring operating reserve funding to offset. As with newer technology there are risks/unknowns around longer-term maintenance needs and life-cycle cost of the asset.

There have been some reports of synthetic rinks being underutilized as the skating experience is not the same as ice. Synthetic ice takes more effort (has more friction) than skating on ice and can be undesirable for some users and potentially impact revenue projections.

Operating Models

Options for operating the facility include:

- License of Occupation on CRD land, fully operated by SSIHLS
- Partnership model with shared responsibilities
- CRD operated facility

Whichever operating model is chosen, maintenance and cleaning of the surface must be a top priority to preserve the operating integrity of the rink. If maintenance schedules are not adhered to, performance of the surface reduces drastically and can impact user experience.

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

One of the priorities from the 2019 Salt Spring Island Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan for Parks, Water Access and Trails is to “provide a diverse mix of outdoor athletic facilities”. Community and stakeholder engagement conducted in the creation of this strategic plan identified that new and innovative programs will be supported by residents and when asked about specific new programs of interest, a seasonal ice rink is one that received multiple mentions.

A framework has been created, within the 2019 Strategic Plan (Appendix C), to help guide decision making for new recreation initiatives or proposals.

Social Implications

Ice skating is a unique and valuable physical literacy skill that enhances fundamental movement skills, motor skills and promotes balance, coordination and agility. Skating and playing hockey are also a culturally significant activity that is a part of the Canadian identity.

Currently those wishing to learn to skate or to play hockey must travel off island to facilities on the mainland or Vancouver Island.

The addition of this ice surface provides an exciting opportunity for children, youth and adults to learn the fundamental movement skill of skating and to participate in the iconically Canadian recreational activity of ice hockey without having to travel off island. It also provides year-round access to unique outdoor activity on SSI.

Environmental Implications

Synthetic ice has minimal environmental impact compared to traditional ice as it does not require energy, water or refrigeration systems. The plastic ice tiles can be reused/repurposed (practice area/shooting area), resold to another organization or recycled at the end of their lifespan (recycling process variable depending on available recycling depots). This brand of synthetic ice is also reported to be free from microplastic shedding.

CONCLUSION

The proposed synthetic ice rink represents a unique, low-capital opportunity to introduce a new recreational amenity on Salt Spring Island; however, it carries a range of operational, financial, and location considerations that require further analysis. While suitable locations exist, each presents varying levels of readiness, infrastructure requirements, capital investment and alignment with existing plans. The short timeline associated with the proposed donation limits the ability to complete a comprehensive evaluation and increases potential risk to the Capital Regional District. Direction from the Local Community Commission will determine whether staff proceed with detailed feasibility work or defer consideration of the opportunity at this time.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Salt Spring Island Local Community Commission identifies Portlock Park as the preferred site for a temporary installation of the synthetic ice rink and direct staff to report back on detailed costs associated with installation and operation as well as potential funding partners and a recommended operating model.

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ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix A: Salt Spring Island Health Living Society Community Rink Presentation
- Appendix B: Portlock Park Site Rendering
- Appendix C: Salt Spring Island Strategic Plan Decision Making Framework