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From: Sarah Morrison [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, October 3, 2024 10:15 AM
To: E_Clerks
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Accessible Inclusive Ball Park

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Dear City of Cambridge Councillors and Parks Department,

I'm writing today on behalf of my husband and myself, our 10 year old autistic son and his Buddy League & Challenger Baseball teammates, families and volunteers.

It is my understanding that motions have been made to start the initial process of a revitalization to the current Kinsmen Diamond.

The need for a fully accessible and inclusive ball diamond with accessible washrooms should not only be a strong consideration it should be an urgent necessity in the City of Cambridge.

Every child, youth and adult has the right to play sports in an environment that isn't unsafe and an inconvenience to access. These individuals already have to face and endure so many hurdles in their everyday life that doing something fun and active shouldn't also be so defeating to access.

Imagine trying to get a wheelchair or other mobility devices through loose gravel down an incline on uneven ground, it's like pushing a full Costco sized shopping cart through snow and ice chunks for an able bodied person. Not only do you risk doing damage to these incredibly expensive motorized/ or manual wheelchairs but it's defeating before you even get to the dugout (and a dugout that you may or may not even fit into.)

And then to find out you need to use the washroom that is hard pressed for an average sized able bodied person to fit within and maneuver around. There is not even one stall that is suitable for a wheelchair let alone an adult sized change table.

Therefore eliminating some of our athletes the ability to even entertain the idea of joining our league or similar organizations. And not limited to our athletes but other community members of all ages and abilities that may enjoy the simple outing of taking in a ball game as a spectator. Those in seniors homes, group homes or other care facilities that like to plan recreational outings would also benefit from an inclusive and accessible ball park.

At the very least one accessible family and caregiver bathroom needs to be added at the Kinsmen diamonds for basic human needs.

Everything from paved accessibility parking spots within close proximity to the diamond. To paved paths to accessible washrooms with adult sized change tables, accessible concessions and seating, and improved accessibility spectator areas.

And on my sons behalf a strong suggestion of adding a paper towel dispensers to the washrooms, hand dryers for a sensory sensitivity are extremely overwhelming.

The current state of the aforementioned diamond is in deep need of a revitalization. Many games have been canceled due to flooding each and every summer on the infield and dugouts especially, the spectator wood bleacher seating is difficult for some to climb and get seated safely, it's deteriorating, there are no safety rails. The view is obstructed by the dugouts for the first several rows of bleacher seating. The gravel pathways are washed out at times and uneven making it tricky for even the most level footed individual. It's overdue.

Programs such as Buddy League/Challenger Baseball have such a meaningful impact on our community.

You see, it goes far beyond the physical diamond.

What Buddy League means to us is having a safe space for our family to belong, with other families, caregivers and volunteers who understand the day to day challenges and celebrations. It's given our family a community, it's given us hope and guidance for the future, it's given our son Hudson an accepting place to be himself, with no judgement. It's given him a place to be celebrated, succeed, grow and learn new things, social opportunities, a sense of belonging and a feeling of what being on a team is truly about. It's given him meaningful friendships with his teammates and coaches.

The program is rapidly growing and has reached record numbers of athletes year after year. This should indicate the intense need in our city to provide a safe, inclusive and accessible space for all needs and abilities.

Please strongly consider putting priority and urgency behind this initiative and creating a space that everyone can enjoy.

Sincerely,
Sarah Morrison