



REPORT FIN-2026-025

TO: Mayor and Members of Council

PREPARED BY: Mary Hasan, Director of Finance/Treasurer

PRESENTED BY: Mary Hasan, Director of Finance/Treasurer

MEETING DATE: October 21, 2026

SUBJECT: 2027 User Fees and Charges By-law

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT Report FIN-2026-025 entitled 2027 User Fees and Charges By-law be received; and

That Council direct staff to incorporate Minor Variance, Minor Variance Deferral, and Consent Consultation fees as [administration plus third-party cost recovery/flat] fees as outlined in report [Report FIN-2026-021/Report FIN-2026-025]; and

That Council give three readings to By-law No. 2026-060 being a by-law to adopt the User Fees and Charges By-law as [presented/amended].

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to:

- 1.) Provide a summary of the results from the Public Information Meeting (PIM) held on September 16, 2026, regarding the proposed 2027 User Fees and Charges.
- 2.) Present the results of the community engagement survey conducted through the Township's online engagement platform, [EngagePuslinch.ca](https://engagepuslinch.ca).
- 3.) Identify updates to the proposed User Fees and Charges By-law arising from Council's direction.
- 4.) Outline additional updates to the By-law based on new or updated information.

5.) Seek Council's approval to enact the 2027 User Fees and Charges By-law.

Background

Table 1 summarizes the materials received by Council to date as part of its deliberations on the 2027 User Fees and Charges.

Table 1: Reports and Presentations Provided to Date for 2027 User Fees and Charges

Report	Council Meeting/PIM
REPORT FIN-2026-021 - 2027 Proposed User Fees and Charges	September 16, 2026
2027 Proposed User Fees and Charges PIM Presentation	September 16, 2026
REPORT FIN-2026-025 – 2027 User Fees and Charges By-law	October 21, 2026

PIM

A PIM was held on September 16, 2026, at 6:30 p.m., both in person and via electronic participation, to receive public input regarding the proposed 2027 User Fees and Charges By-law.

Township staff's recommended amendments to the proposed 2027 User Fees and Charges By-law are outlined in this Report. The minutes of the PIM are included in the October 21, 2026 Council agenda package.

Staff will advise Council of any additional comments or questions received before the Council Meeting on October 21, 2026.

Community Engagement Survey – Engage Puslinch

Attached as Schedule A are the results of the community engagement survey conducted through [EngagePuslinch.ca](https://engagepuslinch.ca), for Council's information. The survey was open from September 1, 2026, to September 28, 2026, at 12:00 p.m.

A total of 3 surveys were completed, with 18 visits to the engagement page as part of the 2027 User Fees and Charges engagement process. For comparison, the 2026 engagement received 18 completed surveys, with 78 visits to [EngagePuslinch.ca](https://engagepuslinch.ca).

A comprehensive Frequently Asked Questions document was also prepared, consistent with the previous year, and posted on [EngagePuslinch.ca](https://engagepuslinch.ca) to provide residents with background information on the annual budget process and User Fees and Charges.

User Fees and Charges Updates Resulting from Council Direction

Council, at its meeting held on September 16, 2026, passed Council Resolution No. 2026-289, as outlined below:

That Report FIN-2026-021 entitled 2027 Proposed User Fees and Charges be received; and

That the Alcohol Risk Management Policy be brought forward to Council for consideration based on the recommendations outlined in this Report regarding security guard requirements and facility capacity limits; and

That Council direct staff to proceed with holding a Public Information Meeting on September 16, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. to obtain public input on the proposed User Fees and Charges By-law as outlined in Schedule A to Report FIN-2026-021; and

That staff report back to Council with the results of the public engagement process and Council's feedback into the final proposed 2027 User Fees and Charges By-law for consideration.

Planning Act Applications

Council requested further information on *Planning Act* application fees and third-party cost recovery, including whether applicants could be provided with estimated cost ranges or thresholds by application type to improve cost predictability and customer service.

At the September 16, 2026 Council Meeting, staff outlined the challenges of estimating third-party costs. Proponents are encouraged to undertake Township pre-consultation to identify the reports and studies generally required to support a *Planning Act* application. Applicants should obtain cost estimates from their retained consultants. The Township cannot reliably estimate third-party review costs based solely on required studies, as costs depend on the quality and complexity of submissions and may involve multiple rounds of review.

Council also asked staff to explore whether smaller residential applications, such as minor variances and lot line adjustments, could use a flat fee based on average costs, with actual third-party costs recovered for more complex applications, such as commercial zoning or rezoning. Council also asked whether third-party costs could be recovered retroactively if an application becomes more complex such as a commercial zoning or rezoning application.

Even minor applications vary in complexity. Flat fees provide cost certainty for the applicant but can result in under- or over-recovery of costs, as applications are charged the same amount regardless of complexity or the number of Township consultants required to review them. This approach may result in costs being subsidized by taxpayers rather than recovered from applicants. Staff recommend administration fees plus applicable third-party costs for Minor Variances, Minor Variance Deferrals and Consent Consultations.

Should Council approve a flat fee for Minor Variances and Consent Consultations, staff recommend the following flat fees:

- Minor Variance - \$2,145
- Minor Variance Deferral - \$742
- Consent Consultation - \$1,750

Optimist Recreation Centre Gymnasium Rental Rate

Council requested further information regarding the current gym rental rate and annual consumer price index (CPI) increases, including whether the current fee may discourage use.

Staff had recommended that the gymnasium rental rates be increased by CPI only in Report FIN-2026-021 presented to Council at its September 16, 2026 Council Meeting.

Following further review of the Township's historical gymnasium rental rates, rental revenues, facility size and functionality, and municipal comparator rates, staff recommend maintaining the previously proposed CPI-based increase for the 2027 gymnasium rental rates.

While the Optimist Recreation Centre gymnasium is smaller than some comparable municipal facilities, the Township's current rental rates reflect this difference and provide an affordable option for community and recreational use. In addition, the Township maintains reduced rental rate categories to support eligible community organizations and users.

Table 2 summarizes the gymnasium rental rate trends from 2024 to 2027 Proposed.

Table 2: Gymnasium Rental Rate – 2024 to 2027 Proposed

TYPE OF REVENUE/USER	Unit/Descr	2024 Rate (no tax)	2025 Rate (no tax)	2026 Rate (no tax)	2027 Proposed (no tax) – Report FIN-2026-021
Gymnasium - Non-Resident Rental or Commercial Rental	Per Hour	N/A	N/A	\$53.39	\$54.78
Gymnasium	Per Hour	\$36.07	\$42.00	\$42.71	\$43.82
50% Reduced Rate - Gymnasium	Per Hour	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$21.91
75% Reduced Rate - Gymnasium	Per Hour	\$8.96	\$10.50	\$10.68	\$10.96
90% Reduced Rate - Gymnasium	Per Hour	\$3.57	\$4.20	\$4.27	\$4.38

Table 3 provides a comparison of gymnasium rental revenues prior to the COVID-19 closures and to 2026 year-to-date.

Table 3: Gymnasium Revenue Analysis

	Actual Revenues						
Description	2019 (pre- COVID)	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 Year to Date	2026 Budget
Gymnasium	\$26,469	\$19,116	\$27,107	\$31,484	\$35,404	\$23,574	\$33,084

Historical rental revenue has increased from \$26,469 in 2019 to \$35,404 in 2025, representing an increase of approximately 34%. Although rental activity and revenue have declined during portions of 2026, there is insufficient information at this time to determine whether the reduction is attributable to rental fees or other factors affecting facility utilization.

The Township has received no negative feedback from users regarding the fee increases implemented since 2024, while gymnasium rental revenues reached their highest recorded levels in 2024 and 2025.

Given that the proposed 2027 CPI adjustment represents an increase of approximately \$1.11 per hour for resident rentals, staff do not believe a reduction in the rental rate is warranted based on the information currently available. Staff recommend maintaining the 2027 CPI-adjusted rate of \$43.82 per hour for residents and \$54.78 per hour for non-resident and commercial rentals, together with the existing reduced rental rate categories.

Staff will continue monitoring rental utilization, revenues, and user feedback throughout 2027 to determine whether any adjustments to the gymnasium rental rate structure should be considered as part of the 2028 User Fees and Charges review.

Arena Floor and Gymnasium - Full-Day Rental / Eight-Hour Rental

Council asked whether a further discount should apply to full-day rentals.

The proposed full-day rental rate is based on eight hours of rental time, although a full-day rental provides access to the facility for up to twelve hours (10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.).

The proposed full-day rate charges for eight hours while allowing up to twelve hours of access.

Table 4 below illustrates the effective hourly rates for a twelve-hour rental compared to the standard hourly rental rates.

Table 4: Comparison of Standard Hourly Rates and Effective Full-Day Hourly Rates

	Gymnasium	Arena Floor
Resident - Standard Hourly Rate	\$43.82	\$55.00
Resident – Effective Hourly Rate Based on 12-Hour Rental	\$29.21	\$36.67

Staff recommend maintaining the proposed full-day rate, as an additional discount would further reduce the effective hourly rate.

Optimist Recreation Centre Ice Prime Rental Rates

Council directed staff to compare the proposed non-resident ice prime rental rate of approximately \$252 with municipal comparators, including the City of Guelph's full-ice minor hockey rate of approximately \$180.

As outlined in Report FIN-2026-021, staff have already recommended a reduction to the proposed 2027 rental rate. Prime Ice rental hourly resident rates, net of HST, have changed as follows:

- 2022 - \$171
- 2023 Rate - \$184
- 2024 Rate - \$234
- 2025 Rate - \$241
- 2026 Rate - \$245 resident / \$306 non-resident
- 2027 Proposed Rate - \$202 resident / \$252 non-resident

The City of Guelph's 2026 standard ice rental rate is \$281.22/hour for prime time (Monday–Friday: 6-8 a.m. and 4-11 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday: 6 a.m.-11 p.m.) and \$147.64/hour for non-prime (Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–4 p.m.) The approximately \$180/hour rate referenced at the PIM may reflect the 42.5% youth facility subsidy provided to eligible youth groups, including Guelph Minor Hockey Association, rather than the standard rental rate.

The Township does not currently have any non-prime rental time to provide a subsidy rate given the free programming offered during non-prime times. Therefore, any subsidy would be required to be provided during prime times. Currently, the Township does not offer reduced rates during prime times based on previous Council direction.

The Township's proposed 2027 non-resident prime ice rental rate of \$252.00 per hour is approximately 14% lower than the City of Guelph's 2027 proposed prime ice rental rate of \$286.84 per hour. Given the differences in facility size and functionality, a 14% differential is adequate. The amount of \$252 recommended was based on the benchmarking analysis completed as outlined in Report FIN-2026-021.

Staff recommend maintaining the proposed prime ice rental rate to reflect the outdoor operating conditions, the unique nature of the Township's outdoor arena and the lack of comparable facilities in other municipalities. The proposed rate also recognizes that rental costs can be shared among participants, helping maintain affordability. Maintaining the rate supports cost recovery, responsible financial stewardship, and the long-term sustainability of this asset.

Staff will continue monitoring rental utilization, revenues, and user feedback throughout 2027 to determine whether any adjustments to the ice prime rental rate structure should be considered as part of the 2028 User Fees and Charges review.

Site Alteration

The Site Alteration fees have been updated in the By-law schedule based on report CAO-2026-011 presented to Council at its meeting held on October 7, 2026.

User Fees and Charges Updates Based on Updated Information Available to Staff

Staff have incorporated the following updates into the User Fees and Charges By-law based on updated information:

Commemorative Bench Program

The Township recently implemented the Commemorative Bench Program and completed its first commemorative bench donation and installation. Staff reviewed the proposed 2027 fee to reflect current costs and support cost recovery. The previously proposed fee was \$2,565.00 (net of HST), as reported to Council in Report FIN-2026-021.

Table 5 compares the estimated costs identified in Report FIN-2024-033, with current estimated 2027 costs.

Table 5: Estimated Costs for the Commemorative Bench Program

Cost Component	2024 Donation Policy / Council Report (net of HST)	Proposed 2027 Cost (net of HST)
Bench	Bench similar to those at Puslinch Community Centre (PCC) Park and Boreham Park, with aluminum construction and an oil paint/natural finish. Included in the estimated total program cost of \$2,500.	Fully assembled “Traditional” style bench similar to those at the PCC Park and Boreham Park, with an aluminum frame and composite decking, selected for durability and low maintenance. \$1,445
Concrete Pad	Included in the \$2,500 estimate.	Concrete required for the installation pad. \$361
Maintenance	Maintenance over the 10-year period was included in the \$2,500 estimate.	No maintenance is anticipated during the first five years, with minimal maintenance anticipated in years 5–10, excluding unforeseen weather damage or vandalism. Routine inspections will be conducted twice annually in conjunction with playground inspections and absorbed within the operating budget. \$0
Installation cost	Included in the \$2,500 estimate.	Approximately 20 hours of staff time for site preparation, construction of the concrete pad, and installation of the bench and plaque. A vendor installation cost of approximately \$900 would apply to installation of the bench only and would not include site or concrete pad preparation. \$1,081
Plaque	3" x 6" silver aluminum plaque. \$331, included in the \$2,500 estimate.	Bronze plaque, consistent with existing outdoor donation plaques, the Township’s plaque vendor recommendation for outdoor installations, and Section 13(e) of the Donation Policy. \$515
Total	\$2,500	\$3,402

Recreation and Community Wellness Advisory Committee Recommendations

The Recreation and Community Wellness Advisory Committee received Report FIN-2026-021 - 2027 Proposed User Fees and Charges for information at its meeting held on September 15, 2026. Comments were raised regarding the proposed 2027 User Fees and Charges By-law; however, no amendments were recommended as a result of the Committee's discussion.

Financial Implications

The fees approved through the 2027 User Fees and Charges By-law will be incorporated into the 2027 Operating Budget.

Strategic Plan Alignment and Implications

Strategic Priority #4: Good Governance, Financial Stewardship, and Organizational Excellence
This report supports Strategic Priority #4 by promoting responsible financial management, transparent decision-making, and long-term municipal sustainability.

Objective 4.2: Maintain Financial Stewardship

User Fees and Charges apply the Township's established fee methodology while considering service-delivery costs, cost recovery, comparator rates, facility utilization and local operating conditions.

Regular review of user fees supports predictable budgeting, legislative compliance, appropriate allocation of service costs, and a measured approach to fee adjustments, helping to avoid significant or unexpected changes in future years.

Action 4.2(d): Continue to Provide Financial Stewardship

The annual review of User Fees and Charges supports Action 4.2(d) by ensuring anticipated revenues are appropriately reflected in the operating budget, fees remain aligned with Council-approved policies and service levels, and Council receives transparent information to support financial decision-making.

Applicable Legislation and Requirements

The following legislation provides authority relevant to the Township's User Fees and Charges By-law:

- Section 391(1) of the *Municipal Act, 2001*;
- Section 7(1) of the *Building Code Act, 1992*; and
- Section 69 of the *Planning Act*.

Engagement Opportunities

The Township provided the following opportunities for public and stakeholder input on the proposed 2027 User Fees and Charges:

- Recreation and Community Wellness Advisory Committee Input;
- social media posts and advertisements through the Township's social media channels;
- information on the Township website and Budget webpage at puslinch.ca/government/budget/;
- a community engagement survey through EngagePuslinch.ca, open from September 1, 2026 to September 28, 2026 at 12:00 p.m.;
- Wellington Advertiser advertising;
- a PIM on September 16, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.; and
- a media release promoting the EngagePuslinch.ca community engagement survey.

Attachments

Schedule A - Community Engagement Survey Results – Engage Puslinch

Respectfully submitted:	Contributors:	Reviewed by:
Mary Hasan, Director of Finance/Treasurer	Andrew Hartholt, Chief Building Official Connie Smith, Financial Assistant Daniel Hernandez, Taxation and Revenue Coordinator Justine Brotherston, Director of Corporate Services/Municipal Clerk Kari Pond, Procurement and Agreement Coordinator Laura Emery, Manager of Corporate Services/Deputy Clerk Michael Chant, Fire Chief Michelle Cassar, Deputy Treasurer Mike Fowler, Director of Public Works and Capital Projects Management Sarah Huether, Director of Community Services and Human Resources	Courtenay Hoytfox, Chief Administrative Officer

2027 User Fees and Charges Engagement Survey

SURVEY RESPONSE REPORT

01 September 2026 - 28 September 2026

PROJECT NAME:

2027 Budget Process: Proposed Uses Fees and Charges

**Q1. Are there any Township services that you think should be funded directly through user fees?
If yes, please provide examples and explain your reasoning.**

Anonymous

9/12/2026 08:46 AM

We have many recreational opportunities within the township which are subsidized by our taxes. We attract some people from surrounding areas that do not pay taxes in Puslinch. Many live in Guelph. I suggest that those who live outside of our "tax area" pay a greater fee than those who are residents and pay taxes in Puslinch. I think those who attend from Puslinch township get a discount on the enrollment fees. I agree that those who come from nearby areas should be allowed to continue to use our services because many of them were born and raised in the Township and feel that Puslinch is their home (although they live elsewhere).

Anonymous

9/13/2026 12:08 PM

I don't think any user could give enough money to offset a township service. I would rather see it rented instead of sitting empty. For example, the hall often sits empty unless being used for a funeral service or community function.

Anonymous

9/22/2026 03:25 PM

Yes. Services that primarily benefit specific users rather than the community as a whole should be funded through user fees where practical. Examples include:

Planning and development applications (rezoning, severances, site plans, permits).

Short-term rental registration and licensing, if applicable.

Special event permits.

Additional animal control or by-law enforcement services related to specific properties.

Large-scale document requests or specialized records searches.

This approach helps ensure that the costs are paid by those directly benefiting from the service rather than all taxpayers.

3 responses · 0 skipped

Question type : Essay Question

Q2. Do you believe any current user fees or service levels should be increased or expanded? If yes, give examples and rationale.

Anonymous

9/12/2026 08:46 AM

I appreciate that life is more expensive these days, especially for growing families. The local Optimist Club subsidises many events in the Township. Sport activities is healthy for all of us. I hope that the rental fees for our facilities for OUR taxpayers can be left the same until the economy straightens out.

Anonymous

9/13/2026 12:08 PM

I feel that any church/non profit (optimist, fall fair) that is Puslinch-based should have a substantial rental fee reduced, even on a weekend, as these events are providing a service to the community, which also uses a tremendous amount of time and volunteers from the community. All of the events are a payback to the community and use tax dollars efficiently. Having volunteers run the activity provides free marketing for Puslinch.

Anonymous

9/22/2026 03:25 PM

Yes, where fees do not recover a reasonable portion of the Township's actual costs.

Planning and development-related fees should be reviewed regularly to ensure developers and applicants cover the administrative and technical review costs.

Fees for repeat by-law complaints that require extensive Township resources could be considered.

Recreation or facility rental fees should be adjusted periodically to reflect operating costs while remaining affordable.

Any increases should be gradual and benchmarked against neighbouring municipalities to remain competitive and fair.

3 responses · 0 skipped

Question type : Essay Question

Q3. Are there any Township services that you think could be reduced or adjusted? If yes, please provide examples and explain your reasoning. Reducing or adjusting services is one way to manage costs, but it can also directly impact the community.

Anonymous

9/12/2026 08:46 AM

Again, I think it would be fair to charge visiting users to pay slightly higher fees.

Anonymous

9/13/2026 12:08 PM

I do not think any Puslinch non-profit or community group that uses 100% of its funds for the betterment of the community should have its fees raised again in 2027. I feel that they are paying back to the greater Puslinch community in a bigger way than having to constantly worry about increasing all their fees again. It is a very poor PR move. It would be better for council/staff to reach out to each group and ask them to state how much of the money stays in this area and for what purpose. All groups are going to continue to seek more relief in fees to offset the cost to families. If need be, have non-Puslinch members pay more due to no taxes being paid. I do not agree that it should just be Puslinch; children who are allowed on a team, as the school population, are reflective of the prices of a home in this area. Instead, grants should be looked at and applied for to offset the costs.

Anonymous

9/22/2026 03:25 PM

I would prefer maintaining core services such as road maintenance, winter maintenance, public safety, and parks.

Instead, the Township should:

Look for efficiencies through technology and process improvements.

Review administrative processes for potential savings.

Prioritize service levels based on community usage and value.

Service reductions should be considered only after efficiency opportunities have been exhausted, as reductions can negatively impact residents' quality of life.

3 responses · 0 skipped

Question type : Essay Question

Q4. Do you have any further comments or feedback that you would like Council to consider on the proposed User Fees and Charges?

Anonymous

9/12/2026 08:46 AM

Thank you for providing Complimentary Euchre for local seniors on Thursday afternoon. Again, it would be nice to see those from outside the township pay a small token fee (\$2.00) per afternoon. The Euchre players is a good opportunity for the local seniors to get out and mix with each other. It is a good for mental health and a good source of volunteer activity for other local events.

Anonymous

9/13/2026 12:08 PM

No amenity will ever pay for itself unless a fee is charged to reflect the changing costs, and then it can only be accessed by a certain economic level. Not everyone in this township has an unlimited source of income. Due to the smallness of the township and the 7500 people that live here, the council will never be able to satisfy all the taxpayers. With social media completely embedded for all individuals (not just the younger generation), the need for social engagement has never been stronger, and that is why I feel strongly that the fee increase should be revisited. Meeting with all community stakeholders before an increase in fees would be beneficial.

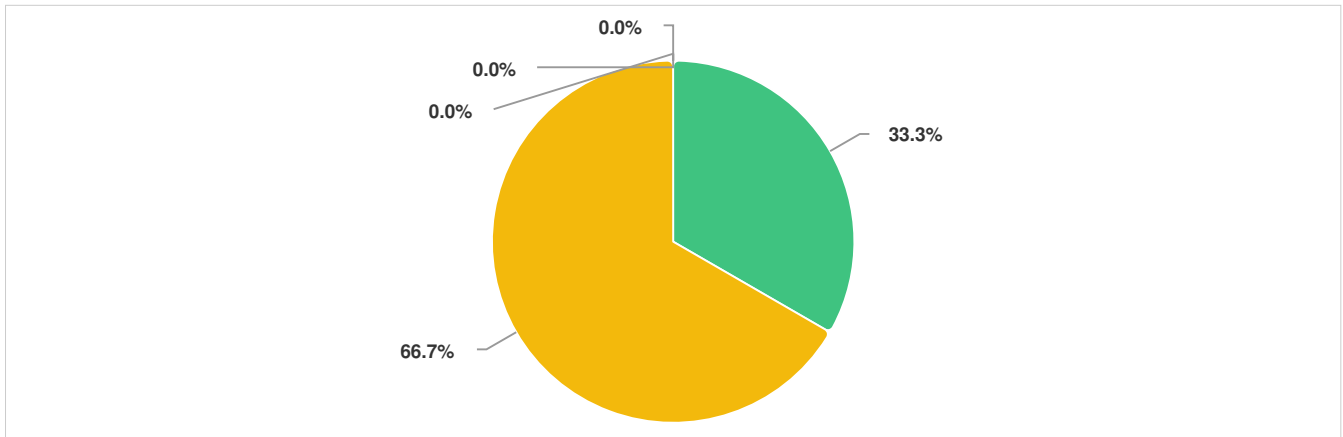
This is a very poorly put-together survey. I do not feel the average ratepayer has enough working knowledge of these fees unless they are involved in an activity or work for the township.

Anonymous

9/22/2026 03:25 PM

I support a user-pay approach where a specific individual, property owner, developer, or business receives a direct benefit from a service. However, essential municipal services that benefit the entire community should continue to be funded primarily through property taxes. Fee increases should be transparent, supported by cost recovery analysis, and compared against neighbouring municipalities to ensure fairness and competitiveness.

Optional question · 3 responses · 0 skipped**Question type** : Essay Question

Q5. What is your age?

Question options	responses	%
45-54	1	33.3
65+	2	66.7
Under 18	0	0.0
18-24	0	0.0
25-34	0	0.0
35-44	0	0.0
55-64	0	0.0

Optional question · 3 responses · 0 skipped

Question type : Radio Button Question