

north shore news

District of North Vancouver considers renaming William Griffin

Maria Spitale-Leisk / North Shore News

June 12, 2015 09:26 AM



Construction work underway at the site of the old William Griffin Recreation Centre. The new one will likely be renamed. Photo Mike Wakefield, North Shore News

William Griffin's name will likely not be over the front doors when the new recreation centre on West Queens Road opens.

Some District of North Vancouver councillors struggled to recall who Griffin was and his contributions to the community, when deciding what to name the new facility during a committee of the whole meeting May 25.

Griffin was a one-time district alderman — that's all council could come up with. Relying on information from a former councillor, Mayor Richard Walton characterized Griffin as a "very likeable bachelor." But beyond that, he added, Griffin's name would not exist in district corporate records.

The North Shore News canvassed some longtime North Vancouver residents and historians who were also hard-pressed to remember Griffin and why the pool, built in 1975 at 851 West Queens Rd., was named after him.

A British expat, Griffin served on district council for a decade and was "one of Capilano's best-known oldtimers," according to his obituary, dug up in the North Vancouver Museum and Archives. Griffin died at the age of 72, while mowing his lawn, in 1965.

In moving forward with a new name for the centre, Walton proposed "Delbrook," because it pays homage to the geographical history of the area, along with the former high school. With the consolidation of William Griffin and Delbrook centres, "that name will die, apart from the street level. And I think it should continue," said Walton.

Mosquito Creek is another name that's being considered by council to replace William Griffin. The sports field adjacent to the rec centre on Queens, meanwhile, should retain the Griffin name, suggested Walton.

When deciding on a name for a new public facility, under revamped district policy, council can honour a well-respected, well-recognized community member, but only if that person has been deceased for at least two years.

Last year the district renamed the Grant Connell Tennis Centre to the North Vancouver Tennis Centre, at the request of Connell himself, who said his real-estate business was negatively impacted over perception that he owned and operated the public tennis facility.

But, in this case, it appears council will be going with a geographical tribute for the new swimming pool and surrounding facility — either Delbrook or Mosquito Creek — when they decide in the coming weeks.

North Shore Historical Society president John Stuart said it makes sense to give public facilities a geographical marking because people would know exactly where it is within a block or two. “Historical reference is always good because the geographical area tends to stay there, and that’s often useful,” added Stuart. “It was (named) William Griffin rec centre or pool for a good reason then, and there may be a good reason to name it something else now. Time moves on.”

© 2015 North Shore News