



TOWN OF  
**HALTON HILLS**  
*Working Together Working for You!*

## REPORT

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**TO:** Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

**FROM:** Heather Kaufmann, Community Development Supervisor –  
Community Partnerships and Sport Development

**DATE:** April 9, 2025

**REPORT NO.:** CSE-2025-018

**SUBJECT:** Parks By-Law Exemption Request at the Georgetown  
Fairgrounds

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### RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. CSE-2025-018 dated April 9, 2025, regarding the Parks By-Law Exemption request at the Georgetown Fairgrounds, be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Council rescind the 2024 exemption granted to the Halton Hills Minor Baseball Association and Halton Hawks Girls Fastpitch Association permitting the use of amplified sound during regular games and practices at the Georgetown Fairgrounds;

AND FURTHER THAT amplified sound be permitted only for special events and tournaments, on a case-by-case basis, and subject to conditions as set by the Commissioner of Community Services;

AND FURTHER THAT walk-up music and in-game announcements using amplified sound be prohibited for all regular league play and practices at the Georgetown Fairgrounds;

AND FURTHER THAT Terms and Conditions for all park and field rentals be updated to explicitly outline noise-related requirements and consequences for non-compliance;

AND FURTHER THAT staff continue to monitor noise levels at the Fairgrounds during the 2025 season and maintain communication with both residents and user groups to ensure compliance and address concerns when they arise;

AND FURTHER THAT staff explore the feasibility of future capital upgrades (e.g., electrical installation on alternate diamonds) through future budget processes, if required by sport user groups.

## **KEY POINTS:**

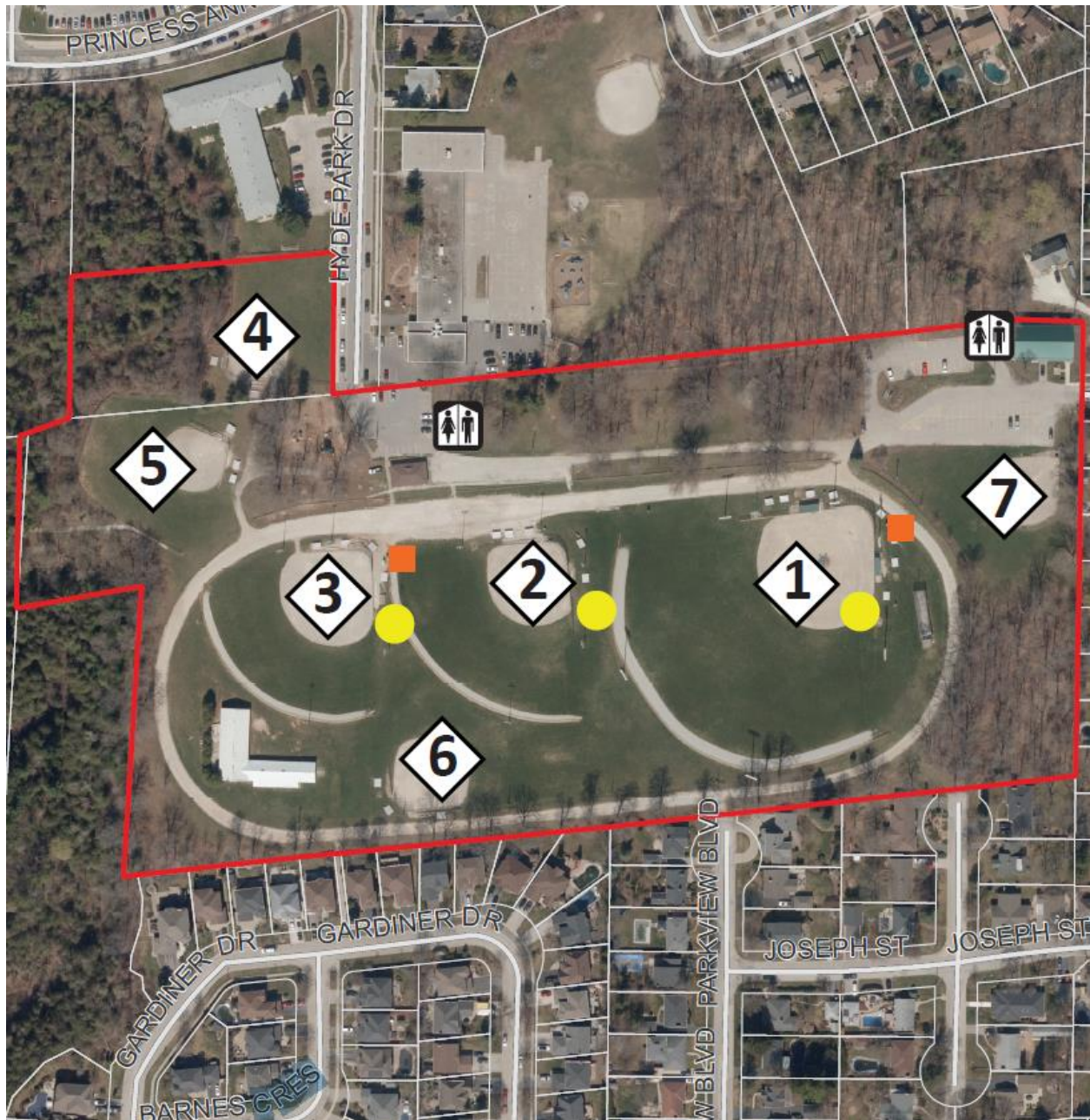
The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- The Georgetown Fairgrounds is a key recreational site used by Halton Hills Minor Baseball Association (HHMBA) and Halton Hawks Girls Fastpitch Association (HHGFA). However, Diamond #6 (Barn Diamond) has been the subject of resident complaints due to amplified sound during games and practices.
- Council granted an exemption in May 2024 to allow amplified sound (e.g., walk-up music, announcements) at the Fairgrounds, provided that sound levels remained within limits set by the Noise By-law (63 dB daytime, 50 dB after 5 p.m.).
- Despite the exemption, noise complaints continued throughout the 2024 season. Monitoring confirmed multiple instances where decibel levels exceeded allowable limits, especially during evening games, and sound was sometimes used outside permitted hours.
- Relocating teams from the Barn Diamond was explored, but deemed unfeasible due to field size requirements and the need for electricity to power pitching machines.
- HHMBA and HHGFA have requested continued exemption for the 2025 season to allow amplified sound at all diamonds to maintain a vibrant game atmosphere. The season is set to begin on April 28, 2025.
- A review of Oakville, Burlington and Milton showed that although their by-laws allow for event-specific sound permits, none have granted exemptions for routine baseball practices or games. Walk-up music and regular amplified announcements are not permitted.
- Of 47 local resident responses to a survey, 64% did not find the amplified sound disruptive, while 36% did. Responses were mixed, with some supporting music under noise by-law limits and others calling for stricter controls or a return to tournament or event only sound use. The survey results show that there are local residents being impacted by the use of amplified sound beyond the actual complaints received.
- Staff recommend revoking the general exemption for regular play, allowing amplified sound only for permitted special events, prohibiting walk-up music during regular games and practices, strengthening permit conditions (to the satisfaction of the Commissioner of Community Services), and considering future capital improvements if relocation is pursued.

## BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

### 1.0 Background

The Georgetown Fairgrounds has served for many decades as an important recreational and community gathering space, hosting a range of seasonal sporting events and activities. Among the primary users of this facility are the Halton Hills Minor Baseball Association (HHMBA) and the Halton Hawks Girls Fastpitch Association (HHGFA), who regularly use the Fairgrounds' ball diamonds for practices, league games, and tournaments. Below is a map of the current setup at the Georgetown Fairgrounds outlining the location of each diamond.



Of the seven diamonds located at the Fairgrounds, the Barn Diamond (Diamond #6) has consistently generated noise-related complaints from residents whose properties back directly onto the field. The nature of the complaints primarily relates to the use of amplified music and loud announcements during regular practices and games. These concerns have persisted over several years despite various efforts by the Town to monitor the issue, enforce applicable by-laws, and collaborate with community sport organizations.

## **2.0 Previous Council Decision**

Under the Parks By-law No. 2013-0062, the use of amplified sound is not permitted in Town parks unless specifically authorized by permit through the issuance of a special event or activity permit. In early 2024, both HHMBA and HHGFA submitted a formal request to Town staff seeking an exemption from this by-law for all diamonds at the Fairgrounds. The purpose of the request was to permit the use of music as a way to enhance the game-day atmosphere for players and spectators, in keeping with Baseball Ontario's encouragement of such practices.

In May 2024, [Report RP-2024-015](#) was brought forward to Council to address the issue. Council approved the exemption for both sports organizations, permitting the use of amplified sound at the Georgetown Fairgrounds, subject to compliance with noise thresholds outlined in the Noise By-law - 63 decibels during the day and 50 decibels after 5:00 p.m.

## **3.0 Summer 2024 Monitoring and Complaints**

Despite the conditional by-law exemption, some residents continued to raise concerns through the summer of 2024. Reports described amplified sound exceeding acceptable levels and noted disturbances from music and announcements during games, practices, and pre-game warmups. In some cases, residents alleged that sound was used outside of the scheduled and permitted booking times. The Town received several formal complaints, primarily from two property owners within the vicinity of the Barn Diamond. In response to the ongoing complaints, Municipal Enforcement staff undertook regular monitoring of the Barn Diamond throughout the 2024 season. Staff were present at games on multiple dates to assess compliance with noise restrictions and to record decibel levels using calibrated sound meters. During this monitoring, it was observed that walk-up music - typically lasting six seconds per player - was being used during each player's turn at bat. Noise levels recorded during these games ranged between 48 and 69 decibels, with several instances exceeding the permissible limits, especially during evening periods. Enforcement of the Town's Noise By-law was challenged by the intermittent nature of the sound and fluctuations due to crowd activity, microphone usage, and weather conditions.

It has been difficult for Town staff to properly monitor and enforce noise levels at the Georgetown Fairgrounds. Enforcement officers can't be present at every game or respond immediately when a complaint is made. This makes it hard to confirm whether

the noise was above the decibel levels when someone reported it. Even when Town staff were on site, the volume of the sound changed depending on factors like how close the speakers were, the size of the crowd, or the weather. Because walk-up music and announcements are short and happen in bursts, they can exceed the limit but not last long enough for Town staff to take action. All of this makes it hard to consistently enforce the Noise by-Law.

#### **4.0 Stakeholder Meetings and Site Limitations**

On January 27, 2025, Town staff met with representatives from HHMBA to review the concerns raised and discuss potential options to mitigate the issue. During the meeting, the possibility of relocating the affected team to another diamond was explored. However, staff and association representatives agreed that the age group in question required a specific diamond footprint and access to electrical power for pitching machines, both of which are only available at the Barn Diamond. Installing electrical infrastructure onto another diamond would represent a capital investment of approximately \$10,000, which is not currently included in the Town's budget.

On February 10, 2025, Town staff met directly with two of the residents who had filed the highest number of complaints to share monitoring findings, provide an update on ongoing dialogue with HHMBA, and seek their input on possible solutions. During this meeting, residents reiterated their concerns, stating that their quality of life was being negatively impacted during baseball season, particularly during weekends and evenings. They expressed frustration that the exemption had not resulted in the expected level of noise control and asked for a reassessment of the decision to allow amplified sound at the Barn Diamond. The focus of specific complaints received from residents to date has been on the use of amplified sound on the Barn Diamond.

#### **5.0 2025 Exemption Request from Halton Hills Minor Baseball Association and Halton Hills Girls Fastpitch Association**

For the 2025 season, the Halton Hills Minor Baseball Association (HHMBA) and the Halton Hawks Girls Fastpitch Association (HHGFA) have submitted a joint request to the Town seeking a continued exemption from the Parks By-law to permit the use of amplified sound at all ball diamonds located at the Georgetown Fairgrounds. The letters of request can be found in Appendix A1 and A2. This exemption would allow for the use of amplified music and announcements during practices, games and tournaments.

Both associations have indicated that walk-up music and game-day announcements contribute positively to the atmosphere of youth sport, enhancing the player experience and aligning with practices recommended by Baseball Ontario. The 2025 season is scheduled to begin on April 28, with games and practices occurring regularly on weekday evenings and weekends. To support a respectful and community-minded approach to amplified sound, HHMBA and HHGFA have committed to establishing an internal committee to oversee music use at games. This committee would be responsible for reviewing and approving permitted music selections to ensure they are

appropriate, align with the values of the organizations, and reflect community expectations. This added oversight is intended to help maintain a positive atmosphere while addressing concerns raised by nearby residents. The request reflects the associations' desire to maintain consistency in their programming, while acknowledging the need to operate within defined noise limits.

## **6.0 Practices in Neighbouring Municipalities**

As part of the Town's review, staff examined how neighbouring municipalities in Halton Region, specifically Oakville, Burlington and Milton, manage the use of amplified sound in municipal parks and at outdoor sports facilities. In each of these municipalities, the general practice is to prohibit the use of external or amplified sound systems in public parks unless explicitly authorized through a formal permit process. Standard terms and conditions for park and sports field permits make it clear that no external sound systems are permitted without prior approval.

In addition, all permit holders are required to adhere to local municipal by-laws, including applicable Noise and Nuisance By-laws and Parks By-laws. These by-laws contain provisions that prohibit any activity that may constitute a nuisance, including unnecessary or excessive noise that disrupts surrounding neighbourhoods. The purpose of these regulations is to protect the quality of life of nearby residents while maintaining access to public recreational spaces.

Although exemptions for amplified sound may be permitted under specific circumstances, typically for large-scale, sanctioned events such as community fairs, festivals or sporting tournaments, Town staff confirmed that in practice, none of the three municipalities have ever approved or granted an exemption for the use of amplified music during regular baseball activities. This includes walk-up music or other in-game sound commonly requested by local baseball associations. Despite occasional inquiries, amplified sound has never been permitted for routine games, practices, or league play in these communities. Staff do not have any information as to whether the practice occurs in these municipalities despite the regulations that are in place.

## **7.0 Community Consultation**

Given the persistence of noise-related concerns and limited available alternatives for relocation, staff reviewed the Town's position on amplified sound at the Georgetown Fairgrounds. A community consultation was conducted in March 2025 to gather input from area residents, intended to focus on those living in the immediate area of the Fairgrounds, to determine the extent and validity of the concerns.

The consultation process involved a direct mailout to 140 homes, each containing a unique QR code linking to an online survey. Although 143 responses were submitted, this included some from individuals outside the immediate area who engaged with the consultation on the Town's Let's Talk Halton Hills Platform. Survey responses were reviewed using postal codes to verify that participants resided within the designated



consultation area. Any responses submitted from outside the identified neighbourhood were excluded from the final analysis to ensure the integrity and relevance of the data. The full report with validated local data can be found in Appendix B.

As noted above, staff refined the data set to focus only on responses from the targeted neighbourhood area using postal code data. Within this data, a total of 47 relevant responses were received.

38% of local respondents indicated that they occasionally hear amplified sound, such as music or announcements, from Georgetown Fairgrounds Park during summer baseball activities. Another 30% reported hearing it frequently, suggesting a significant portion of the community is aware of the sound. Meanwhile, 19% of participants stated they have not noticed any amplified sound at all. Only a small group (13%) said they rarely hear it, highlighting a wide range of experiences among nearby residents. The most commonly reported type of amplified sound was announcements using a microphone (44%), followed closely by amplified music during games (41%). A smaller portion of local respondents (15%) indicated they had experienced amplified sound occurring outside of permitted hours.

27% of local respondents reported noticing amplified sound on weekends during the day, while 23% said they do not hear it at all. Weekday evening periods between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. were also a common time for amplified sound, noted by 22% of participants. Fewer respondents reported hearing sound later on weekday evenings (18%) or on weekend nights after 5 p.m. (10%).

The majority of local respondents (64%) indicated that they do not find the amplified sound at Georgetown Fairgrounds Park to be disruptive. In contrast, 36% of participants reported that they do find it disruptive. This suggests that while concerns do exist, most community members are either tolerant of or unbothered by the current sound levels.

Among local respondents who find amplified sound disruptive, Diamond 1 (Hardball) was identified as the most frequently heard source, followed closely by Diamond 6 (Barn) and Diamond 2 (Softball). These three diamonds appear to be the primary locations where amplified sound is most noticeable. 31% of respondents feel that amplified sound at the Georgetown Fairgrounds does not impact them at all, while another 31% find it occasionally disruptive. A smaller portion, 18% combined, experience it as frequently and very disruptive to their home environment.

Over half of the local respondents (51%) believe the Town should allow amplified sound at the Fairgrounds Park, but ensure it complies with maximum levels set by by-law. Another 22% support a complete prohibition of amplified sound, while 18% prefer a more targeted approach by prohibiting sound only at locations where it causes disruption. Only 9% of respondents favor allowing amplified sound at all locations with no restrictions, indicating that most residents support some form of regulation or control.

The consultation data suggests that while there is broad support for community sport and events, some residents are directly affected by noise and continue to have concerns.

## **8.0 Recommended Approach**

Based on the monitoring conducted in 2024, feedback from directly affected residents, policy review of neighbouring municipalities, and results of the March 2025 community consultation, staff recommend that the Town revise its current approach to the use of amplified sound at the Georgetown Fairgrounds. While there is demonstrated community value in allowing enhanced sport experiences through music and announcements, there remains a clear need to mitigate the impact on residents, particularly those whose properties back onto high-use fields.

In developing this report, staff explored several potential approaches to address the ongoing noise concerns while supporting community sport. The following options were considered:

### **1. Maintain the Existing Exemption (Current)**

- Despite the exemption, noise complaints persisted, and monitoring confirmed by-law violations. Enforcement proved difficult, and the exemption conflicted with best practices in neighbouring municipalities.

### **2. Rescind the Exemption Only from the Barn Diamond (#6)**

- While the Barn is the primary source of complaints, this would create inconsistency across the Fairgrounds, increase enforcement complexity, and potentially lead to further requests from other groups using different diamonds.

### **3. Allow Amplified Sound Only for Special Events/Tournaments**

- This provides flexibility for larger-scale sporting tournaments or celebratory events, while protecting residents during regular evening and weekend play. It also aligns with practices in Oakville, Burlington and Milton.

### **4. Allow Amplified Announcements but Not Music**

- The distinction between music and announcements can be difficult to monitor and enforce. Feedback from residents indicated that both were sources of disruption when used regularly.



**5. Relocate Affected Teams to Other Diamonds**

- The required age group that uses Barn Diamond needs a specific regulation-size diamond with access to electricity for pitching machines. Other diamonds do not currently meet these requirements and upgrading them would require an estimated \$10,000 in unbudgeted capital investment. Due to the total quantity of ball diamonds used at Fairgrounds, relocation of all users would not be feasible.

**6. Permit Use Only During Specific Hours or Days**

- Monitoring showed even short bursts of sound could exceed decibel limits. Residents also reported impacts during both permitted and non-permitted times, making time-based restrictions difficult to enforce reliably.

**7. Revoke All Amplified Sound Privileges at the Fairgrounds**

- A full prohibition could negatively impact the user experience for large tournaments and events. A more balanced approach is preferred.

Based on the options above and to recognize the desire for use of amplified sound, while balancing neighbourhood impacts, staff recommend the following:

**1. Rescind the 2024 Broad Exemption for Regular Use:**

Revoke the general exemption granted in May 2024 for the use of amplified sound at all diamonds during regular practices and games. This would align with the best practices from other Halton municipalities and intends to mitigate the concerns of affected residents.

**2. Introduce a Permit-Based Exception for Tournaments/Special Events Only:**

Permit the use of amplified sound on a case-by-case basis for special events or tournaments only, subject to written approval and conditions, including limited hours and direction of speakers away from residential properties. These exceptions should be noted clearly on rental permits. Staff recommend that the Commissioner of Community Services use the existing authority under the Parks By-law to grant these exemptions.

**3. Prohibit Walk-Up Music and In-Game Announcements for Regular Season Play and Practices:**

Disallow the use of walk-up music or in-game announcements using amplified systems during regular weeknight or weekend play/practices. This mirrors the current enforcement standards in Oakville, Burlington and Milton, where no exemptions have been granted for these uses, and is consistent with the existing Parks By-law.

**4. Enhance Permit Conditions:**

Reinforce existing Terms and Conditions of field rentals with clearer expectations around sound use (e.g., no external speakers, no sound amplification without permit, no amplified sound during non-permitted hours). Permit holders must

acknowledge and agree to these conditions in writing as part of their field booking. Permits will be revoked if there is a breach of the terms and conditions after two warnings have been issued.

**5. Consider Capital Improvements in Future Budgets:**

If long-term field reallocation is desired by sport groups, staff could explore the cost and feasibility of installing electrical infrastructure on alternate diamonds in future capital budgets. However, this is not proposed at this time.

This approach is designed to support community sport organizations for major events/tournaments while responding to the concerns of those most directly impacted by the sound from the Fairgrounds. While a majority of local respondents were not bothered by the use of amplified sound, there are a number of residents who are impacted, and this should be considered in any decision. It reaffirms the Town's commitment to maintaining vibrant, inclusive recreation opportunities, while also respecting residential quality of life and upholding the Town's by-laws.

**STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:**

This report identifies a safe and welcoming community as one of the Town's Strategic Priorities.

**RELATIONSHIP TO CLIMATE CHANGE:**

This report is administrative in nature and does not directly impact or address climate change and the Town's Net Zero target.

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

Public Engagement has been conducted as follows: Online Survey, and Stakeholder Meetings.

**INTERNAL CONSULTATION:**

Community Services staff and Municipal Enforcement staff were consulted in the preparation of this report. Their input helped inform the review of field usage, by-law enforcement practices, and proposed recommendations.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

This report is administrative in nature and does not have any financial implications. However, staff resources are required to respond to complaints, investigate noise levels, and manage neighbour inquiries, as well as working with community sport organizations.

Reviewed and approved by,

Kevin Okimi, Director of Parks, Community Development & Environment

Damian Szybalski, Commissioner of Community Services

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer