

Little chance of exemption from recreation user fees

By JIM MONAGHAN
Staff Writer

City councillors Tuesday all but turned down a request from a special Olympics group to waive the new user fees for recreational facilities.

They passed the request on to the finance committee, but there appeared little hope of an exemption for members of the Brockville Islanders.

"I think it would set a dangerous precedent," Councillor Doug Campbell said during the brief discussion.

Council recently introduced the \$115 surcharge for non-residents of Brockville and Elizabethtown township who use the city's arenas, pool and playing fields.

Dana Humphry and Tammy Elliott of the Islanders have asked the fees be waived for their mentally and physically handicapped athletes. The Islanders swim, bowl, play softball, floor hockey and soccer, and participate in equestrian events.

In a letter to council, Humphry said 23 of the 79 participants would be hit with the surcharge, bringing the total cost to the counties' only special Olympics organization to \$2,645.

But the councillors were unmoved.

Recreation director Les Kelly told them the city gave the group \$500 last year and charged it a reduced rate for the seven hours it rented the pool. Not all the money

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has been spent, he said.

Kelly recommended council provide another \$500 grant this year and charge the full rate for the pool, which would give the Islanders about nine hours in the water.

Humphry, though, was disappointed by council's response since the Islanders were hoping to organize soccer games on city fields next year and ice a hockey team and figure skating club.

That now appears out of the question. Other than selling a few Nevada tickets at the 1000 Islands Mall, the group has no sources of revenue other than donations, she said.

"We'll be going hat in hand to the public. That's our only option."

She said a suggestion from councillors the group try to persuade other municipal councils to underwrite the user fees is impractical and unlikely to be successful.

"That will take a lot of time and Tammy and I are the only administrative volunteers left. But we'll have to try — otherwise there will be no more special Olympics in Leeds and Grenville."