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For its 60th birthday, the East York Baseball Association got an unexpected gift from the City of Toronto in mid-February: a bill for \$53,000.

The tab is for the new user fees on playing fields introduced in the 2012 budget, a fee dubbed by one player as an uncool "tax on kids."

There was "no heads up, no consultation, no explanation," said Andrew Pace, president of the East York Baseball Association.

"How are we supposed to pay this . . . it's not fair to turn our volunteers into tax collectors," Pace told the meeting.

The league just installed lights on one of its baseball diamonds, which their volunteers also spend \$20,000 a year maintaining. But this new cost means they might not be around next year to use them, he said.

Pace, along with volunteers, parents and players from affected children, seniors and youth leagues including baseball, netball, lacrosse, ball hockey and soccer, spoke at a Tuesday evening town hall, asking city councillors to waive user fees for this year.

About 17 councillors attended, said Councillor Paula Fletcher, one of the meeting's organizers.

Some of the speakers want the fee cancelled entirely, others want to be consulted on what it should be for 2013, and then given enough time to budget for the cost.

The user fees are expected to raise about \$1.5 million for the city, but could cost players an extra \$20 to more than \$100 depending on the sport and team.

Low-income families will be hit hardest, said Abdirahman Aden, of the Initiative for Youth Excellence Service, a soccer league that caters to a low-income community.

The playing field fees stem from a September policy passed by council that highlights the importance of charging rates that reflect the cost of providing services.

City staff will present a report to council April 10 detailing how leagues can offset fees, including flexible payment plans and a protocol on how to better inform leagues of changes in the future.

A two-thirds vote from city council will allow councilors to reopen the budget for debate.