

February 26, 1997

SUBJECT: EAST VANCOUVER FARMERS' MARKET

CONSIDERATION

THAT the Board consider the request of the East Vancouver Farmers' Market Society to conduct a Farmers' Market on the Trout Lake parking lot from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM on twenty consecutive Saturdays from May 31 to October 11, 1997, subject to the conditions described in this report and, with all arrangements to the satisfaction of the General Manager.

POLICY

The Board has a regular practice of giving annual approval to a variety of organizers and non profit societies for use of parkland to conduct events, subject to conditions established by the Board and, with all arrangements to the satisfaction of the General Manager.

The Board annually approves a special event fee schedule which is based on the complexity and duration of the event.

PURPOSE

This report describes:

- the history of the East Vancouver Farmers' Market Society
- the details of the Market operation
- the issues raised by this request
- the conditions which require consideration if their request is to be approved.

BACKGROUND

The East Vancouver Farmers' Market Society (the Society) has applied to the Park Board to use the parking lot adjacent to the Trout Lake Community Centre (the Centre) in order to set up a Farmer's Market (the Market) on 20 consecutive Saturdays which will operate from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM starting May 31st with the season ending on the Thanksgiving weekend, October 11, 1997. The Society has an established patronage in the Trout Lake area.

The Market has operated in the neighbourhood for two years, 1995 and 1996, on the Croatian Cultural Centre parking lot. The property's CD-1 zoning does

not allow for this type of activity and therefore raises By Law compliance issues for the City. For two years the City withheld enforcement on this nonconforming use and asked the Society to find public property for the Market in 1997. On May 16, 1996, The Standing Committee on Planning and Environment approved unanimously the following two motions:

- A. THAT staff be instructed to withhold enforcement of CD-1 By-Law No. 5411 with regard to the East Vancouver Farmers' Market at the Croatian Cultural Centre, 3250 Commercial Drive, until after Thanksgiving.
- B. THAT staff be instructed to explore additional sites for permanent farmers' market operation.

The organizers were advised to establish communication with the Park Board.

DISCUSSION

History

The East Vancouver Farmers' Market Society was established in 1995. It's mission statement is: to foster community health and economic development through the creation of a venue where community members have greater access to safe, healthy, locally produced, environmentally friendly food and where B.C. growers and craftspeople can market their goods directly to urban consumers. The members of the Society are local residents and professionals who share the desire to create a.."regular community event which celebrates the growing, harvesting and sharing of local food, while demonstrating a respect for the people who do this work". (Appendix A).

In 1995 the Society developed a pilot project which ran for 11 (Saturdays) weeks and averaged an attendance of 900 people over a 4 hours period. In 1996 attendance was 1500 over 5 hours and ran for 24 weeks. The Market involved 100 different growers, artisans and preparers of food. They also had a toy exchange and a drop in table for backyard gardeners with a surplus to share. Two tables were reserved for community agencies to interact with the public.

The Society reports that about 60% of those who attend the Market live between Wall, Nanaimo, 33rd, and Fraser, 80% live east of Main Street, many walk. People stay on the average of an hour.

The Society, in keeping with its community based goals, has developed alliances with a number of local agencies. Three of these organizations, the Vancouver Health Board, Kiwassa, and Reach Community Health Centre, have programmes to enhance the level of awareness of good nutrition, eating habits and food preparation. The Society offers incentives, food coupons and education which, in turn brings the participants to the Market. The Society also has a number of other initiatives designed to educate and bring the community together.

Details of Operation

The Society is seeking Board approval to operate the Market on the Trout Lake Community Centre parking lot. Their set up will displace up to 40 spaces, about a quarter of the lot. The Market will operate for twenty Saturdays, starting May 31st until October 11, 1997, from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM. The area will be left clean and there will be no permanent structures or stored items.

The total number of vendors is limited to 40; up to 24 farmers, 8 artisans, 8 food preparers. All participants sign an agreement and meet criteria related to quality, variety and Society purpose. Only vendors who make, bake or grow their own product are permitted. The Agreement regulates pricing. All prepared goods are labelled and meet Environmental Health regulations. All agricultural methods are identified.

In 1996 the Society had a \$24,000 budget. There is a rental fee of \$25.00 for farmers and \$15.00 for the other two categories, a seasonal total of \$14,000. In 1996 the Society was able to pay a \$10,000 honorarium to the principle organizer. The budget (Appendix B) also covers insurance, publicity/posters, fees, program and administrative expenses. The Society had a Community Economic Development grant of \$16,000 in 1996 and is seeking additional funding for 1997. They also had a student grant. The rest of the preparation and the on site operation is handled by 12 Society volunteers (1500 hours).

Issues

This request raises a number of issues. They are discussed here in the context of special event requests.

Impact:

- Displacement of up to 40 parking spaces: in the summer there is not usually a requirement for the full parking lot, especially in the earlier part of a day. The primary user on Saturday morning is Little League. In the Fall, once hockey season starts, parking could become a problem.
- Increase in traffic and parking: 1500 visitors over 5 hours (300/hr) will have some impact. The numbers that arrive by car will create an additional loss of parking. Given past experience at the Croatian Cultural Centre, organizers and Trout Lake staff believe that the site is adequate to meet these demands.
- Visual impact/local support: the market will certainly have a presence. The organizers report that before the 1995 pilot project they did a door to door market survey and received a lot of positive support. Residents for a two block radius will be notified to determine a response prior to Board consideration. There are a number of support letters on file including one from the Trout Lake Community Centre Association. (Appendix C)

Sales:

- Commercial activity on parkland: the Board has a practice of permitting

sales of event related items and some refreshments when the organizer is a registered non profit society. Occasionally the primary purpose of an event is to present a specific type of product for sale. The summer Circle Craft Fair is such an example (4 days). Some community centres have operated regular outdoor flea markets and there are a number of equations with other events that can be made. In this instance, however, the sale of produce, normally seen as a commercial activity, is a departure from Park Board experience. The fact that it occurs over a season, albeit only 5 hours a week, is another departure. In order to permit this activity the Board will need to accept the stated intent and purpose of the Society and its event, that is, a focus on activity designed to foster community economic development and to build a stronger community. This definition could easily be compromised if the operation of the Market just focused on sales.

- Competition with the private market: there are no produce stores close to the Trout Lake Centre. While the Market is quite different from most other stores in the vicinity, the small green grocer might consider it to be competition. The Centre does have a concession but the products are different from the Market. The Board does not totally refrain from competition with private enterprise.
- Gross sales: over the 1996 season (24 days) the Market grossed \$140,000, \$120,000 of which was produce. This represents \$5,000/day for an average of 20 farmers/day, \$250 average per farmer/day. Given the different growing seasons and the criteria for selection, the same farmers do not attend all summer. The organizers describe this daily gross in sales as a small supplement that helps a small farmer to continue agricultural activity. This is another area to monitor in terms of the fine line between the community building focus and maximizing the profit margin.

Site:

- Alternative sites: a number of other sites within the Market catchment area have been identified for use instead of the park. Most of these sites do not afford public washrooms and running water, two Environmental Health requirements. Most of the sites are not large enough and/or they are on private property. Most would trigger the same issues as the Croatian Cultural Centre. Permission for use has also been an issue. After considerable search the organizers have found no other suitable location. (Appendix D)
- Zoning: if the Society were to create a permanent structure and operate a market every day over the summer, it would certainly become a land use issue and trigger a re zoning application requirement. If the Society had been developed by farmers and vendors, the stated purpose and intent of the Society would appear to be in a conflict of interest position, and again, land use might be an issue. Given the limited operation of this Market (and it' s ancillary community participation) by a registered non profit society developed by community people, based on principles related to education, community development and community economic

development, the Market can be defined as a special event. The Planning Division and Permits and Licence Division of the City Community Services Department have stated that this activity, so constituted, does not trigger a zoning issue for the Park Board given the history of permitted activity on parkland in association with special events. (Appendix E)

- o Precedent: regardless of the zoning issue, the Board needs to consider the principle involved in permitting this type of activity on parkland. To many people this weekly event will look just like any other Farmers' Market. It could trigger more requests for commercial activity. Given the above described issues and concerns a number of conditions have been developed which will assist the Board to monitor the ongoing operation of the Market. These conditions will also serve as criteria for the consideration of any similar type requests.

Conditions

If the Board approves this request staff recommend that the following conditions apply.

THAT:

1. Approval be subject to notification of a 2 block radius of Trout Lake Park with no significant negative response
2. The Directors of the E.V.F.M Society be resident of the City and not be a vendor participant (or relative of) and that a current membership list is on file with the Board.
3. The goals and activity of the registered non profit Society are community development based.
4. The Society has a Participation Agreement with vendors satisfactory to the Board and any changes to this agreement or any other aspect of the operation be reviewed in advance with the Board
5. A current operating budget be on file with the Board
6. The parking situation be monitored and documented with the understanding that if a major conflict arises because of additional parking requirements once the rink opens, some solution will need to be found in order for the Market to continue to October 11.
7. The Market operation, activities and size, the length of season, the number of vendors, gross sales and complaints from the neighbourhood be documented, reviewed, and evaluated, particularly as they relate to the mission statement of the Society, and particularly with respect to a continuation of the permit in a future year.
8. The Society pay the FEST special event fee, that is, in 1997, \$355,

but not the fee for the set up that is in excess of a month (20 days on site), and, pay staff monitoring charges resulting from above normal monitoring requirements, and, pay for any damage, clean up or garbage removal related to the set up of the Market.

9. This approval is not precedent setting and that any future requests will be evaluated based on the specifics of the new request, the Trout Lake experience and the above described issues and a similar set of accompanying conditions.
10. An Advisory Committee be established through the Trout Lake Community Centre with representation from the Society to assist in the monitoring of the activity, impact and problem solving, as required.

CONCLUSION

The Market would appear to make a positive contribution to the community but the sale of agricultural material is a departure from the usual type of permitted events.

Prepared by:
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