

DATE: February 25, 1998

**SUBJECT: INSTALLATION OF SPONSORSHIP SIGNAGE BY MINOR BALL ASSOCIATIONS IN PARKS**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT the Board adopt the guidelines for "sport" signs in parks as outlined in Appendix A.**

**POLICY**

These guidelines were adopted by the Board as a part of the Corporate Sponsorship Program:

Signage: There will be no freestanding billboards or fixed signs in parks other than readographs at community centres.

Minor Sports: Associations are permitted to be sponsored by local businesses, merchants. Corporate recognition on Park Board property, other than on uniforms, must be approved by the Board.

**BY-LAW:**

No Person shall, without permission of the General Manager first had and obtained post, paint, affix any advertisement, poster, or advertising card of any kind in any park.

**BACKGROUND**

The Park Board does not have a specific policy for field users' signage in parks. Past practice has allowed field users to erect "Registration" and "Home of the Sports Association" signs as well as "Thank you" boards which list supporters of the association (see Appendix B). The "Thank you" signs are not "commercial or corporate" in nature - i.e., no corporate logos. In addition, the businesses are not paying the sport associations for the right to advertise on the park but rather they are being recognized for their contributions to the association. These signs have primarily been erected by minor baseball/softball associations and are located on backstops.

The Park Board has allowed the organizers of special events including tournaments to erect "corporate" signs during their events.

Volleyball and tennis tournament organizers have been permitted to erect one "corporate" banner per sponsor during their event. In return, the tournament organizers are remunerated for "advertising" the event's sponsors.

Historically, the South Hill Sports Association and more recently the Victoria Drive Little League and have installed more "corporate" signage on their outfield fences. These signs range from 2 by 3 foot to 4 by 8 foot signs and have included company addresses, phone numbers and corporate logos. This has prompted formal requests from other sport associations interested in erecting similar "corporate" signs in parks.

## DISCUSSION

The introduction of field user fees, decreases in government funding or services, the potential loss of fund raising opportunities and higher league operating costs has resulted in sports associations looking for alternate funding sources. The selling of sponsorship space represents a new source of revenue for these associations and this has prompted Little Leagues' request to install signs on outfield fences. However, the introduction of "corporate" field sport signs on parks raises equity, commercialization, visual and maintenance issues:

ISSUE	COMMENT
Equity between User Groups	Other sports have similar financial concerns and could make similar "sign" requests. Neighbourhood parks could become inundated with sponsorship signs.
Commercialization of Parks	There is acceptance/tolerance of the "Registration" and "Thank you" boards. However, sport signs of a more "corporate" nature may be viewed as the "commercialization" of parks.
Visual Impact	Additional signage will have a visual impact on a park. In the past, residents have voiced concerns regarding the visual impact a chain link outfield fence has on a park. Placing signs on this fence will further interrupt site lines, making the fence stand out rather than blend in with the park' s scenery.
Field Maintenance	The placement of permanent signs on outfield fences may interfere with the operation of field irrigation systems.

## Community Consultation

In 1995, a City of Vancouver survey regarding the public acceptance of various sponsorship opportunities indicated a mixed opinion regarding the acceptability of signs in parks. Similar public opinion regarding "corporate" signage in parks was expressed in the consultation process for the Park Board' s Corporate Sponsorship Policy. The Park Board chose to exclude freestanding "corporate" sponsorship signs in parks in its Sponsorship Policy.

The Community Associations were asked to comment on Little Leagues' proposal for more "corporate" sign on outfield fences. The Associations were given the options of status quo, temporary (removed daily) or permanent "corporate" signs on outfield fences. Only six Associations commented on the proposals and their responses were equally split between the three options.

The signage issue has been discussed at two meetings between representatives of minor baseball/softball and staff. There is similar mixed support for corporate signs on outfield fences.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the rationale outlined in the Board' s Corporate Sponsorship Signage Policy, staff recommend against allowing sport groups to permanently install "corporate" signage at sport facilities. Staff recommend a continuation to the current practice of installing "Home of the Association" and "Thank You" signs with no corporate logos at ball diamonds. Staff also recommend that field users be allowed to erect "corporate" signs/banners when they are using fields or diamonds.

These signs or banners would be displayed (e.g., taken down/roll up shutters) when the facility is not in use, similar to Special Event sign guidelines.

It should be noted that Victoria Drive Little League' s and South Hill Sports Association' s existing "corporate" signs would be exempt for the 1998 season.

Given that the Board will likely receive requests from other sport groups for signs, staff are also recommending that the Board to adopt "sport sign" guidelines outlined in Appendix A. Implementation of the guidelines will ensure the equitable treatment of field users, other users of the park and park neighbours.

Prepared by:  
Recreation Division  
Board of Parks and Recreation  
City of Vancouver

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## Appendix A

### **Guidelines for "Sport" Signs in Parks**

Field users may erect "home of...", "registration" and "thank you boards" during their season of play. In addition, they may display "corporate" signs/banners when they are using fields or diamonds (similar to Special Event sign guidelines).

All field sport signs will be subject to the following guidelines:

The wording, size and placement of all signs/banners in parks must be

approved by the General Manager prior to their installation. Field sport signage may not be appropriate in all parks.

All signs/banners must have a professional appearance.

All signs/banners must be attached to an existing structure (fence or backstop, etc.) or building. Freestanding signs are not permitted.

The placement of signs or banners must not interfere with the maintenance of the playing field or diamond.

The Park Board reserves the right to remove any field sport signs.