

May 7, 1998

SUBJECT: CORE SERVICES - RESIDENT OPINION SURVEY

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- A. *THAT the Board approve the commissioning of a Residents Opinion Survey and focus groups to assist in defining the “core services” of the Board.*
- B. *THAT the Acting General Manager be authorized to approve a contract, not to exceed \$60,000, with a firm to administer the Opinion Survey and focus groups, the source of funds to be the Corporate Sponsorship Fund.*

DISCUSSION

Core Services Study

One of the key concepts dealt with in the Organization Review was “preserving the core while stimulating progress”. The Review describes this concept as follows:

The strategic decision that are made, and how resources are allocated, must give first priority to preserving the core. The operating and capital dollars that remain once this has been done can be devoted to stimulating progress; to developing and offering programs and services that add customer value.

Understanding the concerns and opinions of residents is an important part of defining the Board’s core services. The Board has established a practice of conducting a residents survey once every 10 years, the last in 1990. This report is recommending that the survey be done in 1998 .

The determination of the Board’s core services will also involve extensive discussions with partners and stakeholders. It will be grounded in the data collected from the residents survey.

The objectives of the study would be:

1. To obtain current public opinion on a series of benchmark questions about the use and quality of parks and recreation services, generally based upon questions asked in the 1990 survey.
2. To ascertain public preferences for leisure pursuits beyond those provided by the Board.
3. To probe public perceptions about what should be the Board’s core services and the strategies to sustain these services.

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4. To measure expectations about future parks and recreation service delivery in light of the projected population growth of, and demographic change in the City as well as the increasingly limited financial resources.

In addition to the residents survey, a series of focus groups would be organized to probe perceptions and attitudes with regard to the definition and protection of core services and future service delivery. These focus groups will be made up of three separate constituencies:

- Vancouver residents (users and non-users) randomly selected.
- Representatives from the Board's various partners and stakeholders
- Active park and recreation users.

Parallel to this opinion seeking process, staff will update our community statistical profile, done last in 1990. This gives a detailed demographic and recreation facility profile for each community including growth analysis and facility user indicators.

In conjunction with the opinion survey, these two bodies of information will provide the objective backdrop against which allocation decisions can be considered. Also, these two information sources will, as they did in 1990, provide background for the 1999 capital planning process.

Ideally the determination of core services would precede decision-making on the anticipated 1999 budget reduction exercise. Unfortunately, the time line for the completion of the core services project will likely extend beyond the current September deadline established by the City. Nevertheless, information collected during the early phases of the core services study will be useful in developing principles to guide the budget reduction exercise. In addition, it may also be possible to make subsequent adjustments or refinements to budgets as information from the core services project becomes available.

Regarding the City's 1999 Operating Budget Initiatives, management staff have already developed a list of possible initiatives to reduce the Board's 1999 Operating Budget by the estimated target amount. However, this list should not be considered as the final product. The input of partners and stakeholder are required to refine this list and to generate alternatives, prior to Board approval. Staff are preparing a separate report recommending a process for dealing with the City's 1999 budget exercise.

This report recommends that this survey and related processes be funded from the Corporate Sponsorship Fund. Although firm prices are not currently available, they are expected to be no more than \$60,000. It is important that this study be started as soon as possible. As a result the report is also recommending that the Acting General Manager be given authority to award a contract , not to exceed \$60,000, to do this work.

JUSTIFICATION

The survey and focus groups will provide important information to the core services study, a process which will assist in directing the resources of the Board in the future.

Prepared by:
General Manager's Office
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