



Date: July 30, 2003

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: HELIUM BALLOON RIDE OPERATION AT QUEEN ELIZABETH PARK

RECOMMENDATION

THAT a decision on the proposed tethered helium balloon ride operation at Queen Elizabeth Park be deferred until September and be considered on a priority basis as additional information is available

BACKGROUND

A proposal by Flying Success Company to operate tethered helium balloon rides from a site in Queen Elizabeth Park was discussed at the meeting of the Community Services & Budgets Committee on January 26, 1998.

The Committee approved the helium balloon proposal in principle and directed staff to:

- (a) investigate the appropriateness of the proposal
- (b) initiate a public process regarding this proposal

DISCUSSION

(a) Appropriateness of the Proposal

The benefits of introducing a new, quality attraction to Queen Elizabeth Park and the resulting financial return to the Board warrant further consideration of this proposal. The benefits include the following:

- ▶ Increase in the use of the park by Vancouver citizens
- ▶ Innovative tourist attraction
- ▶ Compliment other activities in the park
- ▶ Maximize opportunities to see the view

(b) Public Process

A flyer (Appendix A), explaining the proposed operation, was delivered to approximately 500 residences along the south and west sides of the park, between Cambie and Ontario, and between 33rd and 41st Avenues. This information was also sent to the Riley Park Community Centre, the Lawn Bowling Club and Seasons in the Park Restaurant. Comments received from the public totalled 10 in favour and 14 opposed. (Appendix B).

Since the initial consideration by the Board of the balloon concept, two issues have arisen, which impact this proposal.

1) Queen Elizabeth Park Consultancy

The Park Board approved a consultant to facilitate a community consensus concerning the future of Queen Elizabeth Park. The consultancy process will involve interest groups, stakeholders, visitors, neighbours, Park Board staff and other agencies. The product of the consultancy will be a design and programming brief available in November, 1998.

The process is prompted by the GVRD advising the Board that seismic upgrading of the Little Mountain Reservoir will proceed in the foreseeable future, and that the Board's future use of the reservoir roof will have to be determined to finalise the structural loading requirements. The consultants will also address many issues that have been previously identified, such as the gradual loss of the scenic views due to tree growth, traffic problems, integration of the park into the neighbourhood, and the general vision for the future of Queen Elizabeth Park.

The consultancy is underway, and public surveys will commence shortly.

2) Emergency Communications Tower

The Board has been approached by BMS Communications Services Ltd., an engineering firm, to use Queen Elizabeth Park as a potential site for a new radio tower. The purpose of the tower is to complete an area wide radio system for Emergency Communications for Southwest British Columbia (EComm).

The site being discussed for the balloon operation is the vacant area of land between the putting green and the Lawn Bowling Club. The location currently being considered for the new radio tower is close to this site. As a result, the microwave transmission signals may be blocked, leading to intermittent gaps in coverage. There may also be safety issues resulting from lateral movement of the balloon. However, Flying Success has indicated that the balloon should not deviate more than 50 metres in any direction from its tethered point.

The proponents of the radio tower have had initial discussions with staff and are currently developing a more detailed report to bring to the Board.

A copy of a letter from Mr. Fred Edworthy of Flying Success Company to the General Manager, expressing his concern about a delay in approval of this proposal, is attached. (Appendix C). Mr. Edworthy stated that to start operating in May 1999, the process needs to commence immediately, to meet manufacturing and licencing requirements. If approval is delayed, Flying Success may choose to pursue other sites outside the Park Board property.

SUMMARY

Until the Board has the requirements of the proposed Ecomm tower site, and there is information as to the direction of the Queen Elizabeth Park study, it is appropriate to defer a decision on the balloon proposal.

Staff have negotiated an agreement in principle with Flying Success Company on the business terms under which it could operate. If Board approval of this operation is granted in the future, a license agreement will be executed with Flying Success.

Recent requests and planning issues regarding the future of Queen Elizabeth Park make it prudent to reconsider this proposal at a later date.

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