



April 14, 2000

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: PARK RANGER PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board approve the initiation of a Park Ranger program for the Stanley District as outlined in this report.

BACKGROUND

Currently the Board funds auxiliary staff during the summer months to carry out a number of outdoor, park-based, client contacts to assist, monitor, educate and control various individuals, groups and activities. These activities include:

- a) bike patrol
- b) water park monitor
- c) film shoot monitor
- d) special events monitor
- e) playfield monitor

Further, the Board supports and assists a number of volunteer groups who interact with downtown park clients including:

- a) the Stanley Park Ecology Society
- b) the ICBC parking lot patrol
- c) the volunteer skate patrol

DISCUSSION

There is a growing expectation, reinforced by a corporate focus on customer service, that unstructured outdoor recreation in parks will be managed as part of park stewardship. With growing competition for space and the increase intensity of activity in many public spaces in the downtown, park users are expecting us to moderate and balance competing interests. Examples include the diversity of seawall interests, busking versus neighbours, the granting of exclusive use of public domain to special interests, i.e., film shoots, picnics, and runs/sports events.

The Board's involvement has increased in these areas of interest over the last decade in an ad hoc, add-on basis. The above noted activities generally have had different management reporting relationships, which has worked against coordinated scheduling, mutual support and backup for shifts and responding to incidents. From a bylaw enforcement perspective, we have also lacked a uniform, single voice relationship with parking enforcement and police. Given no new funding opportunities to add more individual services to meet growing demand, staff intends to enhance service through consolidation efficiencies, particularly, a single management stream, integrated priority setting and coordinated staff deployment.

The roles and auxiliary staff financing for bike patrol, water monitor, special events monitor and picnic and field monitors will be blended to create a single, unified group of park rangers. The ability to fill more than one role on any park shift and coordinated deployment will provide better coverage over longer hours for our high demand park areas. There will be a single 'park ranger' image and uniform which will become generally recognized by park users as a point of information and assistance. Some rangers will be on bicycles, others on foot and some will drive park ranger small pickups. All will be in phone contact with a central desk, which in turn will connect with towing, police, lifeguards and volunteer groups.

The consolidation is also seen as an opportunity to expand and reinforce the volunteer efforts in the Park - ecology walks, talks, information service - and to build a park host image of persons conspicuously available to help out with advice, history, direction and even a band aid.

CONCLUSION

Service consolidation and a higher visual profile in the park will provide us with better customer support in the areas of information and education and a broader coverage for conflict resolution.

Prepared by:

Stanley District
Board of Parks & Recreation
Vancouver, B.C.
JL/ss