



September 14, 2001

**TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation**  
**FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation**  
**SUBJECT: Communication Plan**

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Board approve the implementation plan of the communication initiatives which includes communication goals and strategies over the next 3 to 5 years and re-organization of the Communication Unit to include the establishment of one Manager of Communications , two Communication Coordinators and one Graphic/Web Designer positions.**

## **POLICY**

The Global Budget arrangement with the City allows the Board to establish staff positions at its discretion if funds are in place.

## **BACKGROUND**

At its meeting of January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2000, the Board passed a motion approving the retention of Optimum Public Relations to carry out a system-wide communication audit. At its meeting of January 29, 2001, the Board adopted the Strategic Plan, a plan that sets the goals for our organization and is a product of the ideas and suggestions of Park Board employees, partners, organizations and other stakeholders. To assist in the organization's efforts to work in a synchronized manner towards common goals, the Board, at its meeting of March 26, 2001, received the Communication Plan prepared by Optimum Public Relations and approved staff to report back with an implementation plan following a consultation process.

## **DISCUSSION**

The consultation process was initiated with the creation of a summary of the lengthy Communication Plan (Appendix 1). Then, both the summary and the unabridged Communication Plan were posted on the staff and public website. In addition, a hard copy of the summary was made available to all staff and external stakeholders with a covering letter requesting feedback. External stakeholders received reminder correspondence in early July as their July 31st deadline approached to further elicit outside response.

### **Internal Feedback:**

During the first week in May, the Communication Plan was taken “on the road” to five different work sites. At these meetings, which were extensively publicized, staff explained and summarized the Plan which had been available to employees in advance. Attending staff then broke out into smaller work groups to discuss the Plan’s principles, goals and objectives and to record responses to a questionnaire.

In total, 187 staff attended the two hour communication feedback workshops with an additional 31 individual questionnaires returned. Common themes were expressed repeatedly at the five workshops and are summed up as follows:

- Staff feel strongly that internal communication processes should take precedence over the development of external communication processes recognizing that both are important.
- Staff are supportive of extensively “branding” the diverse facilities and print materials with the Board logo to better identify to the public the core services of the organization.
- Park Board staff want to be treated like other valued Board stakeholders.
- Staff want effective “two way” communication and feedback mechanisms.
- Staff desire meaningful recognition for their work through informal means such as talks with supervisors and/or visits from senior management staff.
- Staff want to be fully apprized of the Board events and activities to enable their efforts as Park Board ambassadors.

Please refer to Appendix 2 for the summary of questionnaire responses outlining group and individual responses and a list of ideas from staff.

### **External Feedback:**

Thirty eight (38) Communication Plan summary documents were sent to external partners and stakeholders of the Park Board to solicit further comment on the consultant’s recommendations. In all, 10 questionnaires were returned with responses that generally mirrored those of the internal audience feedback. Most stakeholders expressed gratitude for being asked to comment once again but concurred that the Consultant had captured their ideas in the initial process through selected focus groups and surveys which were in turn included as goals and objectives in the Plan.

### **Implementation Plan**

The impetus of the Communication Plan is to link key internal/external initiatives set out in the Park Board Strategic Plan to specific actions, thereby enhancing staff/public awareness and support for the broad range of quality programs and services provided by the Board throughout the City.

Incorporating responses from both internal staff and external stakeholders, the following implementation plan is established:

<b>Goals Internal</b>	<b>Objective/Tactic</b>	<b>Time-line</b>
<b><i>1. Improve staff knowledge (in a timely way) of Park Board Policies/ Projects.</i></b>	a. Establish information distribution protocols b. Publish bi-monthly newsletters c. Develop a staff re/orientation program d. Establish a Park Board ambassador program	2002 2002 2001-2002 2002
<b><i>2. Improve and Fine Tune Communication Skills of Management Staff and Commissioners.</i></b>	a. Conduct communication training sessions for Board of Commissioners and management staff b. Provide Board of Commissioners and management staff communication strategies on an as needed basis	2002  2001-ongoing
<b><i>3. Provide Mechanism for Staff Feed Back.</i></b>	a. Create effective and accessible tools to enable staff to communicate within the organization.	2001 - ongoing
<b>Goals External</b>	<b>Objective/Tactic</b>	<b>Time-line</b>
<b><i>4. Establish Park Board Public Identity with an emphasis on Knowledge of Basic Services.</i></b>	a. Establish publication standards b. Implement publication standards in all work units c. Produce annual publications to promote value of Board's services. d. Establish a Park Board identity at all major Park Board facilities in conjunction with new signage program.	2002 2002-2004 2001-ongoing 2003-ongoing
<b><i>5. Plan and develop Communication Strategies for promotional related Initiatives, Projects and Services.</i></b>	a. Evaluate and streamline current donation programs. b. Expand investment in marketing of income-generating campaigns, services and programming.	2001-2002 2003-ongoing

<b>6. Develop Pro-active Media Relations to support Park Board Policies/Projects.</b>	a. Develop a media strategy b. Develop a communication staff policy c. Develop a crisis communication protocol	2001-2002 2001-2002 2002
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The above implementation plan is essential to better promote the Park Board's myriad of services and programs to all its audiences.

### **Staffing Requirements**

One of the major limiting factors in communication identified by the Consultant is the lack of financial and human resources to support the communication function. Currently, there are two positions in the Communication Unit (one Public Affairs Manager and one Information Assistant. Both positions are covered within the CUPE 15 collective agreement). Comparing other similar-sized organizations, the Consultant found that the communication functions of the Board are severely under-staffed and severely under-supported financially. When comparing the Board to other similar-sized organizations, the highly decentralized communication process and the coordination of vast number of partners and stakeholders in service delivery, the two position resource base cannot accomplish all that is expected of it.

In order to determine the appropriate staffing and resources level of the Communication Unit, staff reviewed the staffing mix and resource level of other Board and City departments and considered skill/capabilities and resource requirements of the above goals and objectives. Staff recommend that the Communication Unit be staffed with four positions - one Manager of Communications, two Communication Coordinators and one Graphic/Web Designer positions. The core responsibilities and roles of the Communication Unit include:

- establishment and implementation of internal communication processes,
- communication training and support to the Board of Commissioners and management staff,
- development and implementation of proactive media relations,
- establishment and support of graphic standards, style and presentation format.

The proposed staffing will provide skill/capabilities and resources to implement the Communication Plan. The roles in coordinating among our widely decentralized staff and city wide stakeholders and partners and the establishment of communication policies, protocols and standards will be more effectively performed under a centralized structure.

The following outlines the current and proposed staffing and budget for the Communication Unit:

	Current	Proposed
Staffing	1.0 Public Affairs Manager (unionized) 1.0 Information Assistant (unionized)  \$116,200	1.0 Manager of Communication (exempted) 2.0 Communication Coordinators (unionized) 1.0 Graphic/Web Designer (unionized)  (subject to HR review) \$282,600
Other costs	Supplies, publications \$ 65,200	Supplies, publications \$100,000
Total	\$181,400	\$382,600

The Job Profile (Appendix 3) for the Manager of Communication has been reviewed by the City Human Resources Department and the job functions were considered to be consistent with those of exempt positions. The current Public Affairs Manager and Information Assistant positions will be reclassified to two Communication Coordinators and the current vacant Cash Register Technician in Corporate Services will be converted to a Graphic/Web Designer position. With the implementation of point of sales and SAP systems, the procedures in accounting revenue have been significantly streamlined. The Cashier Unit have been managing without the technician position for one year and confirmed that the new process is working. Please refer to Appendix 4 and 5 for the job profiles of the proposed positions. Salary pay grades for these positions will be subject to classification by the City Human Resources Department.

The recommended additional staff and supplies budget to the Communication Unit will increase the Unit's budget to .8% of the Board's total net budget which is closer to the industry's standard of 1-2%.

Funding for the proposed changes will be available in Corporate Services budget in 2002 after repayment of a loan from the City's Property Endowment Fund.

## **SUMMARY**

Public surveys disclose that residents are not aware of the mandate and roles of the Board and many of the Board's high-quality programs or its breadth of service. In order to build a service focused organization, measures must be put in place to ensure a broad range of communication mechanisms to disseminate pertinent information to the staff and public. Implementing recommendations from the Communication Plan will require additional resources in the Communication Unit which in the long term will benefit park and recreation users while building support for further Park Board initiatives.

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