



Date: June 26, 2002

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Playing Field Renewal Plan

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board approve the recommendations of the Playing Field Renewal Plan (June 12, 2002) as a reference for future capital funding opportunities, and for decision making in relation to field maintenance and allocation practices.

POLICY

The “Infrastructure Renewal” section of the Park Board Strategic Plan (2001) calls for the completion of long range capital renewal plans and the development of facilities to serve population growth. The Strategic Plan, in its “Strategic Alliances” section, encourages cooperation with other City Departments and Boards to achieve excellence in civic governance.

BACKGROUND

The Playing Field Renewal Plan is a joint initiative of the Vancouver Park Board (VPB) and the Vancouver School Board (VSB), these two Boards together being the providers of almost all playing field space in the City. The Vancouver Field Sports Federation (VSFS), an umbrella organization of amateur sport associations dedicated to the maintenance and improvement of city playing field conditions, actively supported the plan development.

Development of the Renewal Plan was directed by a Project Steering Committee composed of elected Parks Commissioners and School Trustees, planning and programming staff from both Boards and two volunteer representatives from the Field Sports Federation. This cooperative venture was in itself a noteworthy achievement, which has laid a foundation for future sharing of resources and information between partners.

The end product is a benchmark analysis of the City’s entire playing field inventory, the levels of demand put upon these fields, and the resource and policy requirements to sustain our service delivery over the long term.

DISCUSSION

The core of the appended Playing Field Renewal Plan is a set of fifteen recommendations (pages 10 to 15) that outline strategic responses to the following key issues:

1. Actions to ensure a sufficient inventory of playing fields in relation to (a) current demand levels, and (b) increased pressures as a result of population growth and/or sports participation trends.
2. Commitments to ongoing maintenance and life cycle rebuilds to ensure that the playing field inventory can be sustained over the long term.
3. Exploration of new or enhanced funding sources to invest in field maintenance and capital requirements
4. Coordination of policies and practices between the Park Board and the VSB to achieve consistency from a user perspective. This harmonization will require a future review of field user fee policies, which are not currently consistent.
5. Monitoring and evaluation of plan implementation outcomes on a regular basis to ensure follow through on renewal objectives.

There are significant costs associated with implementation of the proposed renewal plan. The plan identifies that an increase of \$350,000 in VPB/VSB annual field maintenance is required to sustain the current field inventory. The estimated capital cost to restore under-utilized or unplayable fields to optimum condition would be another \$2.9 million over the next three Capital Plan cycles. The report also recommends the development of six new synthetic turf fields, having the collective playing capacity of 25 to 30 grass fields, to serve added demand due to population growth, gender equity in sports participation, and the impact of developmental efforts such as the MoreSport Program. This development would entail construction costs of approximately \$9 million.

The recommended increased investment in playing field renewal will have to be addressed in various ways. Capital Plan allocations will continue to be important, but other capital funding opportunities will also have to be brought to bear, especially to undertake a program of synthetic turf development. Maintenance expenditure on fields is funded through a combination of City tax revenues and income from user fees. The appropriate mix of these funding sources, to achieve an increase in annual field maintenance, will have to be determined in the context of future operating budget preparation.

The Playing Field Renewal Plan is on the agenda of the VSB for approval at its July 2nd meeting. The Board will be informed of the School Board's decision in this matter.

SUMMARY

The Board is asked to endorse, jointly with the VSB, the recommendations of the Playing Field Renewal Plan. The Renewal Plan provides the first benchmark of the entire public playing field inventory in Vancouver. The recommendations contained in the Plan will serve as a guide to future decision making with respect to field policy issues and capital investment.

Prepared by:

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