TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation

FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT: RECREATION SOFTWARE RENEWAL

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board receive this report for information.

BACKGROUND

The Park Board Strategic Plan, under the section Technological Support, sets out the action "to facilitate permit processing and recreation program participation, using internet and telephone technologies."

The Park Board and its partner Community Associations jointly or separately operate 22 community centres, 8 ice rinks, 9 indoor pools, 6 outdoor pools, and 14 fitness centres. A number of software packages are used at these sites for activity planning and registration, membership database management, facility booking, and revenue handling.

Park Board revenue in 2002 from rinks, pools, fitness centres and field bookings totaled approximately $7.5 million. Annual Community Association revenues total $11 million. Associations program 26,000 activities per year and have 107,000 members with 800,000 point of sale transactions processed at the sites on a yearly basis. These statistics are approximate and represent the amount of revenue and information processed through the software systems.

In 1993 - 94 the Board and Community Associations went through a process to select a standard recreation software system. This process led to the selection of the RecWare system as the standard package, along with the companion point of sale software ProApp, by Marathon Systems.

Of the 22 community centres, 17 are now using RecWare, 4 are using a package known as Iris, and 1 centre (Ray-Cam) has no computer registration system. In addition, the RecWare Facility Scheduling program is used at the administration office for field and special event bookings, a software package called EpiSuite is used to produce and track photo identification cards for flexipasses and Leisure Access Cards, and a software package called MaxFacility is used at Kerrisdale Arena to book 4 of the Park Board arenas.

The RecWare registration module and ProApp point of sale module meet the majority of our current needs, however, we need to plan for future needs and look at our software upgrade path and options. Objectives of this review include:

1. Internet registration. Several Community Associations are keenly interested in being able to offer this service to their customers. This option is already available in other municipalities including North Vancouver, West Vancouver, Surrey and Richmond. Customers and potential customers increasingly expect that they will be able to use the internet to register and avoid travelling to a centre and lining up.

2. Long term viability of our software solution. Both of our main software packages - RecWare and ProApp - are discontinued versions of the vendors' software. There is a risk of discontinued support in the future.

3. The potential to centralize some of our business processes. Administration such as implementing price changes could be done centrally, statistics could be more easily gathered, and customers could conveniently register for programs at more than one location.

4. The potential to decentralize access to rink bookings and field bookings. Currently rink booking sheets are not available online and are faxed to 3 of our ice rinks. Field and special event booking cannot currently be done at the district level due to limitations in the current software.

5. The potential to combine registration, point of sale, facility scheduling and photo ID in a single system. This would eliminate the need for error prone duplicate entry and maximize our ability to retrieve data.

DISCUSSION

Progress to date

In the spring of 2002, the desirability of offering internet registration was raised at an Association President's meeting. Agreement was reached to develop a process to review the available options. A steering committee consisting of representatives from recreation staff user groups and management, information technology staff, and Association board members developed the terms of reference (Project Charter - Appendix A) for the investigation which outlined the scope, guiding principles, deliverables project risks and timeline for the committee.

The project goal statement - " to identify and endorse a recreation systems solution that best meets the needs of the Vancouver Park Board and all Community Centre Associations"- was endorsed by the Association Presidents at their meeting of March 7, 2002.

A market scan identified eight vendors who sell recreation software. A Request For Information (RFI) was sent to those eight vendors - seven responded. Capabilities of vendors/software were compared to our broad needs and guiding principles. After reviewing the responses as well as presentations and software demonstrations, and doing some initial reference checking, it was determined that 5 of the 7 vendors either could not handle our financial structure where revenue is split between multiple entities (Park Board and Associations), or had systems that were not proven in municipalities of similar size.

Two vendors were then left for further analysis - The Active Network (software package Safari), and Telus Enterprise Solutions (software package BookIt). Short presentations / demonstrations by these vendors were held for Association representatives the evening of October 23, 2002. Additional presentations / demonstrations were held for staff groups in arena booking, field booking, photo ID, and VanDusen Gardens.

In parallel, detailed requirements were developed by recreation and IT staff based on capabilities of current systems, meetings with recreation staff groups, and research into capabilities of current software in the market. These requirements were sent to Recreation Coordinators and Association Presidents for their feedback. An evening meeting was held October 9, 2002 so Association representatives could comment, ask questions or state concerns. This feedback was used to revise the statement of requirements.

Based on these requirements, a Request for Proposal (RFP) was developed and sent to the two vendors on February 14, 2003, with a closing date of March 14, 2003. The RFP asks for the vendors to quote on their full, city-wide solution, but states that our initial award will be for a pilot implementation only. The pilot will include two community centres and one Park Board centralized function (field booking) and is expected to take place between the fall of 2003 and the spring of 2004. The pilot will enable staff to test the internet registration fund allocation to the Park Board and two associations, as well as some key software enhancements that we are asking the vendors to include. Staff have asked for an expression of interest from Associations wishing to be one of the pilot sites by March 31, 2003.

It is also worth noting that if there is no package currently available that substantially meets our needs and is an improvement to our current systems, at a reasonable cost, then the recommendation will be to continue with the current environment for now.

Consultation activities

The project team has made considerable efforts to involve Associations and staff groups in the process, including expanding the initial project timeline (as defined in the Project Charter) to allow for these consultations. These activities include:

- creating a staff web page which includes the project goal statement, charter, detailed requirements document, meeting dates and minutes, and other key documents and meeting summaries
- providing project updates at Association Presidents' meetings
- attending meetings of programmers, facility clerks and recreation coordinators to update them on the project and receive feedback

- memos to Association Presidents with draft versions of the detailed requirements definition document for their feedback
- evening meetings for Association representatives to attend and be involved:
  - Sep 19, 2002 - Business Process Subcommittee
  - Oct 9, 2002 - review of detailed requirements definition document
  - Oct 23, 2002 - presentations by short listed vendors
- phone calls to Associations who were unable to attend the special meetings above to solicit their feedback

Cost and Funding

A cost-sharing methodology is being developed to allocate appropriate portions of the project cost to the Park Board and the individual Associations. This arrangement will be similar in principle to the one used to fund the existing system.

The Park Board 2003 - 2005 Capital Plan included an allocation of $200,000 toward the system. The remainder of the funding is expected to come from the cost-sharing arrangement with the Associations.

Accurate costs will not be known until the RFP responses are received and a vendor is chosen.

Issues

The nature of our joint operating agreements and cost-sharing arrangements dictate that each Association will decide if and when to buy into the new system. On the existing system we achieved approximately 80% buy-in (18 out of 22 centres that use an automated system). While our goal is to get 100% buy-in over time, there is an expectation that some associations will be reluctant to adopt a new system.

There are a number of areas where Associations follow different business rules or models. Some examples would be different refund policies, different ages for definition of seniors, different policies for honoring memberships from other Associations, and different registration dates. Introducing internet registration will make some of these inconsistencies more visible to the public. Staff have brought together a focus group of Association representatives to discuss these areas to determine whether they can or should be addressed prior to implementing a new system.

SUMMARY

A process is underway to recommend a new standardized, integrated recreation system that will also support internet registration, as a means to enhance customer service. Staff will report back to the Board later this year with a request to approve a conditional award of contract to a vendor for a pilot implementation.

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