



Date: November 6, 2003

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: PARK BOARD COMMUNITY MEETINGS

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board receive this report for information.

BACKGROUND

In February, the Park Board passed a motion to hold six of its regular meetings scheduled for the 2003 calendar year at Park Board facilities around the City. The Board made a decision to take some of its meetings out into the communities to increase public participation and make it easier for residents to attend meetings which are normally held at 2099 Beach Avenue.

Meetings were set for 7:00 pm at the following facilities representing a cross section of the city geographically and demographically:

March 24	Sunset Community Centre, 404 East 51st Avenue
April 28	VanDusen Botanical Garden, 5251 Oak Street
May 26	Trout Lake Community Centre, 3350 Victoria Drive
June 23	Mount Pleasant Community Centre, 3161 Ontario Street
November 17	Strathcona Community Centre, 601 Keefer Street
December 15	Coal Harbour Community Centre, 480 Broughton Street

Based on completion of the first four events, the following report will document the experience of holding public board meetings out in the communities.

Activities to Raise Public Awareness and Attendance

Regular Park Board meetings are normally publicized via the Park Board web site, through the Agenda (Phone) Line and through printed agendas posted in special sign frames at all Park Board facilities. For each of the board meetings held at community locations, extra measures were put in place to promote the event and invite the public. Print advertisements ran in the *Vancouver Courier* community newspaper in each case, and other papers were added as required to reach specific ethnic populations in the various neighborhoods: Punjabi and Chinese media for Sunset, Jewish and Chinese for VanDusen, Thai for Trout Lake and Thai and Chinese for Mount Pleasant. In addition, a news release was disseminated and editorial coverage sought to broaden the message.

A “Join Us!” flyer was developed for each community centre to display and distribute to their local users; centres where the meetings were being held also displayed a notice about the event on their outside reader board signs. As well, a feature box on the Park Board web site home page and information on the Agenda (Phone) Line highlighted the date and location of the community board meetings.

Pre Meeting Reception

The community board meetings were seen as an opportunity to further strengthen ties with the community centre associations. Before each event, association board members hosted a small reception for Park Board Commissioners and senior staff to meet and greet each other. In some cases, key community leaders including youth were also invited.

Meeting Room Set Up

The meeting rooms were set up to resemble the configuration at 2099 Beach Avenue, with Commissioners at a head table flanked by audio-visual support and staff, media and literature tables, and the public in theatre style seating.

Briefing Materials

Staff prepared background information on each community prior to the meetings to brief Commissioners regarding neighborhood demographics, history and local issues.

Handouts

Available for the public at each meeting were Leisure Guides/Annual Reports and Park Partner brochures. The individual community centres also included a selection of their program information at the hand out table.

Meeting Agenda

Regular Park Board agendas were in place for the community board meetings and attendees had an new opportunity to speak beyond that of signing up as a delegation: an open question period was included (at the end of the meeting at Sunset; immediately following the Chair's Report at other locations) where the public could ask any question or offer any comment on Park Board issues. This proved to be relatively popular at all of the meetings. On the back of the printed agendas for the public, information entitled 'Getting to Know the Vancouver Park Board' was added. 'Ask Us!' comment cards were also provided for those residents who wished to leave their ideas or questions in writing.

Attendance

Attendance numbers varied across the four meetings: Sunset 30 (est), VanDusen 35 (est), Trout Lake 45 and Mount Pleasant 60 (with a large youth contingent). In addition to various delegations speaking to the Board on specific agenda items, a number of local residents attended, some of whom just listened to the proceedings, and some of whom took advantage of the question and answer period to talk to the Board directly.

Costs

Additional costs were incurred to hold the meetings outside of 2099 Beach Avenue, some one time and some ongoing.

One time costs:

New directional and information signage	\$ 250
Photography for first meeting	100

Ongoing costs - total for four meetings:

Ads in various weekly and ethnic print media	4,330
A/V services	7,490

Total Costs: \$ 12,170

At an average of \$3,000 per meeting, total costs will be approximately \$18,000 for the series of six meetings in 2003.

Staff are reviewing alternate strategies to provide the high level of audio/visual services needed to host the meetings off site. With different room sizes and configurations at the community centres, the requirements vary. One option for this a/v service is to buy Park Board projectors, microphones, speakers and other equipment and train staff to run the shows. Another possibility includes finding a lower priced, community based service for the meetings.

CONCLUSION

This report summarizes activities, attendance and cost of holding board meetings at Park Board facilities around the city. It is prepared for the Board to consider plans for meetings in 2004 and advise staff to prepare a schedule accordingly. Several community centres have expressed interest in hosting future meetings in their neighborhoods.

Prepared by:

Communications
Vancouver Park Board
JC