

**Minutes of Meeting  
Finance Committee, Vancouver Park Board  
2099 Beach Avenue, Vancouver**

**DATE OF MEETING:** June 20, 2005

**ATTENDEES: Park Board Commissioners**

Commissioner Anita Romaniuk, Committee Chair  
Commissioner Heather Deal  
Commissioner Loretta Woodcock  
Commissioner Suzanne Anton

**Park Board Staff**

Anita Ho	Director of Corporate Services
Lori MacKay	Director of Vancouver East District
Ron Caswell	Manager of Operations, Vancouver East District
Norman Mills	Manager of Information Technology
Howard Normann	Supervisor of Golf Operations
Alison Dempsey	Business Services
Barbara Joughin	Recorder of Minutes

**Delegations**

Joseph King	Rogers Wireless
Milt Bowling	
Lorna Gibbs	Everett Crowley Park
Bill Tracey	System Engineering Ltd.

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 pm. The Agenda for the meeting was as follows:

1. Review of meeting minutes of March 21, 2005
2. Rogers Cell Tower – Fraserview Golf Course
3. Golf Course Advance Booking Pilot
4. 2005 Operating Budget – May Statement

**1. Review of meeting minutes of March 21, 2005:**

The minutes of the Finance Committee of March 21, 2005 were adopted as presented.

**2. Rogers Cell Tower – Fraserview Golf Course:**

Lori MacKay told the Committee that staff were reporting on the results of a public consultation on a proposal from Rogers Wireless for the installation of a 45 meter monopole antenna tower at Fraserview Golf Course. She said that staff are not making a recommendation but are requesting direction on next steps. Ron Caswell outlined the public consultation elements and results, and identified benefits and issues associated with the proposed installation. In total, 30 responses were received (open house comment forms, PB Comment and project voicemail) with 25 opposed, 2 in favour, and 3 not sure.

Most comments were related to health concerns. Other concerns included negative impacts on the environment and aesthetics, and commercialization in parks. Staff identified the benefits of placing a cellular tower in Fraserview Golf Course as providing additional revenue for the Park Board and improved cell phone reception in the area. Staff summarized where cell phone towers are situated (all on existing facilities) in the Park Board system, and noted that this proposal is unique because it is a very tall free-standing tower.

#### Delegations:

- Joseph King told the Committee that Rogers Wireless proposed a cell tower site at Fraserview Golf Course to improve coverage in the area for their customers, and displayed panels illustrating tower elevations and photo perspectives. He said there were precedents set for telecommunication sites located on public land, and the proposed site is almost ideal for a cell tower. He noted that they were proposing a tapered monopole design to minimize visual impacts and would operate within the parameters of existing health standards set for radio frequencies by Health Canada.
- Milt Bowling expressed concern about potential health risks associated with long term exposure to non-thermal radio frequencies (RF), and told the Committee that the current exposure guidelines in Safety Code 6 are based on acute, heat-based exposure, and do not apply to the effect of long term exposure to RF signals on living cells. He questioned the efficacy of monitoring and regulating RF towers, and asked the Committee to weigh the costs of long term risks against the benefits of short term gain.
- Norma Gibbs presented local residents' concerns about long-term exposure to electromagnetic frequencies. She told the Committee there was insufficient notice about the open house and a lack of in-depth public consultation, and commented that the area is a flyway for migrating birds that could be affected by a cell tower. She encouraged the proponents to find another location for their tower.
- Bill Tracey told the Committee that he is a consultant to Rogers Wireless on the safety of RF signals from the proposed antenna. He said that Safety Code 6 provides adequate levels of protection, and referred to the City of Vancouver's 2000 report on the Master Access Agreement for antennas on city property that concludes that the installation of cellular antennae in the community does not pose an adverse health risk. He expressed confidence that the antenna installation proposed by Rogers meets the legal requirements with an additional margin of safety. He said the maximum exposure of the public is far below the level at which potentially harmful effects might begin, while the benefits of cellular and mobile radio communication are highly valued.

#### Discussion:

- The Committee questioned the delegations about signal coverage needs, and technologies in general and in this area, and were informed that cellular antennas are often installed on existing buildings but are also placed on towers as necessary. Tower height varies according to site and the dynamics of the surrounding area. In the city, there is a grid of radio frequency towers of approximately every two kilometers. This site has tall trees that interfere with signals and the topography is sloped, so a tall tower is required.
- The Committee asked questions related to the safety of cellular antenna towers, how

safety is regulated, and by whom. Safety Code 6 defines the legal limits of acute thermal exposure but the biological effects of RF levels too low to produce heating are not well established or understood, and Health Canada does not address long term exposure or provide recommendations towards restricting human exposure to low intensity, non-thermal electro-magnetic fields.

- The Committee requested clarification on the proponent's insurance coverage for damage caused by radio frequencies emitted by cellular towers, and were told that Rogers Wireless has insurance coverage.
- Committee members inquired about details of the public outreach and staff described how the neighbourhood was informed about the open house. About 320 brochures were distributed in the area immediately adjacent to the proposed tower site. A delegation suggested that newspaper ads need to give people more than three days notice.
- A member of the Committee asked how the Park Board would be kept notified of any change or modification to tower technologies, and staff responded that the lease agreement would include terms that any changes in technology or expansion of services or access would be subject to Park Board approval.

Members of the Committee commented that: liability is a concern; towers should not be installed in parks; Safety Code 6 requirements are not convincing and the Royal Society says the risks are unknown; there appears to be coverage in the area right now for other carriers; and there are biological risks versus economic benefits. One member requested more time to consider the large amount of information received, and another member expressed discomfort making a policy decision based on uncertain science. The Committee requested that additional information be provided on safe distances, insurance, and biological effects, in a concise format (ie bullets, online citations).

#### Summary:

The Committee received information on a proposal to install a 45 meter monopole antenna tower in Fraserview Golf Course from: Rogers Wireless; an engineering consultant to Rogers on the safety of radio frequency radiation; and members of the public. The item was deferred back to the Finance Committee for further review at a meeting no later than September 2005.

### **3. Golf Course Advance Booking Pilot:**

Lori MacKay told the Committee that staff are exploring ways to enhance golf revenues and are seeking direction to proceed with a pilot golf course advance booking project. Ron Caswell told the Committee that the proposed pilot project will help address two challenges faced by golf operations:

- Booking prime tee times at Vancouver golf courses, due to their popularity
- Meeting golf revenue targets for covering golf operating costs as well as contributing to Park Board general revenues

The pilot booking project will make tee times available in advance of the current five day advance booking period for up to 30 days, for a non-refundable premium of \$10 at

Fraserview and McCleery, and \$5 at Langara. Two tee times per hour will be made available for this advance booking service. Staff estimate that this pre-booking option will be used most during spring and summer, and has the potential to positively impact overall total rounds played and generate between \$35,000 – 60,000 per year. Howard Normann shared a survey of comparable golf courses that showed a range of booking premiums from \$2.00 – 20.00, and said that the pilot project will provide more golfers with the opportunity to play and create exposure to new users.

Summary:

Staff requested that the Committee endorse implementation of the golf course advance booking pilot project and the Committee agreed to endorse proceeding with the pilot. Staff will monitor and evaluate the trial and make recommendations for consideration in the annual Fees and Charges report scheduled for fall 2005.

**4. 2005 Operating Budget – May Statement:**

Anita Ho provided the Committee with an update on the City's financial position and advised that the City is forecasting a potential deficit for 2005 due to an increase in fuel costs and a shortfall in casino revenues. The City has requested that all Boards and City departments review their 2005 budgets for cost savings or delayed or cancelled expenditures that might help balance the overall 2005 City budget. The Park Board will report its five month operating statements and its financial position to Council on July 5, 2005.

Anita Ho reported the operating statements of the Park Board as at May 31, 2005. In the first 151 days of 2005 (41.4% of the year), 43.1% of the net budget has been spent. Gross revenues are \$10,264,776 (30.9% of budget), and gross expenditures are \$33,284,803 (38.4% of budget). Overall, net expenditures are 43.1% and are 1.7% above budget. Increased spending on park maintenance this spring represents the majority of the increase and staff project this will balance by year end. The impact of rising fuel prices is expected to be manageable within the Board's budget. Expenditures on income-generating programs are below budget and continued cost containment measures are required to maintain a balanced budget.

Revenues are below the May 2003 and 2004 levels, and although revenues are mainly collected during the summer, staff estimate that a \$400,000 shortfall will need to be managed to balance the 2005 budget. Poor spring weather has negatively impacted concession and golf revenues. Concession revenues are down 150,000 from 2004 but are expected to recover. Golf revenues are currently at 26.5% of budget and \$300,000 less than 2004. Lori MacKay told the Committee that golf is very sensitive to weather and golf revenues have suffered in a very cool and wet spring this year. She said staff are working proactively to implementing strategies to minimize the impact of poor weather, control expenditures and maximize revenues.

A member of the Committee noted that pricing as well as weather affects concession revenues and asked how prices are determined for concession products. Staff said that the Board has a pricing formula for mark-up on items. The group also discussed the impact of

implementing the ethical purchasing policy on concession revenues and noted that an assessment of the effect of the ethical purchasing policy on the concession budget will be most effective after the summer sales season.

Summary:

Staff continue to monitor revenues and expenditures and anticipate a revenue shortfall and an offsetting savings in gross expenditures, with a balanced budget at year end. Staff will report to the Board with the May operating statement at the July 11, 2005 regular Board meeting.

**5. Park Board Award of Merit**

Anita Ho shared with the Committee that the Park Board's public website won a national Award of Merit from the Canadian Public Relations Society in the 'electronic and interactive' category for strategic development and relevance to overall communications objectives. In addition, our submission "Come Home to Parks and Recreation" was a finalist against the Toronto District School Board's web site. The Committee congratulated communications staff for their success in designing and implementing such a user-friendly, effective communications tool. Norman Mills informed the Committee that visits to the Park Board website are up 71% from the same five month period last year.

**6. Next Meeting:**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 pm. The next Finance Committee meeting is scheduled for July 18, 2005 at 7:00 pm. Possible agenda items include:

- Train Finance Plan
- 2005 Operating Budget – June Statement