

Minutes of Meeting
Planning and Environment Committee, Vancouver Park Board
2099 Beach Avenue, Vancouver

DATE OF MEETING: May 3, 2005

ATTENDEES: Park Board Commissioners
Commissioner Loretta Woodcock
Commissioner Suzanne Anton
Commissioner Eva Riccius

Park Board Staff

Piet Rutgers	Director of Planning and Operations
Jim Lowden	Director of Stanley District
Mark Vulliamy	Manager of Research and Planning
Barbara Joughin	Recorder of Minutes

Delegations

Margery Duda	Mount Pleasant Pool Committee
John Petrie	
Sheila Cole	
John Phipps	
Terry Jevne	
Patricia Thompson	Stanley Park Ecology Centre
Phil Aldrich	AldrichPears Associates
Gerry O'Neill	AAA Horse and Carriage
Michele Salmon	
Jeff Salmon	

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm, with the following Agenda:

1. Approval of the revised minutes of March 1, 2005 meeting
2. Approval of the minutes of April 12, 2005 meeting
3. Mount Pleasant Pool Update
4. Stanley Park Dog Offleash Consultation Process
5. Stanley Park Ecology Centre Interpretive Centre Vision
6. Tree Contest

1. Approval of the revised March 1, 2005 Meeting Minutes:

The motion on page 2 of the minutes of March 1, 2005 was revised from “that the Park Board negotiate an agreement with the Southlands Riding Club . . . “ to “ that the Committee instruct staff to negotiate an agreement . . .”. The revised minutes of the March 1, 2005 meeting were approved as presented.

2. Mount Pleasant Pool Update:

Mark Vulliamy presented an update on the planning process at Mount Pleasant Park and spoke about the community's request to retain pool and childcare services and recreational programming at the current site when the new community centre opens at #1 Kingsway. The Planning and Environment Committee asked staff to review options for retaining the existing Mount Pleasant pool on October 7, 2003, and a planning review group subsequently developed three options for the renewal of Mount Pleasant Park:

Option 1 – make a bigger and greener park, demolish pool and building (~ \$1 million)

Option 2 – keep existing pool operating as long as possible (~ \$1.2 – 1.5 million)

Option 3 – new pool and indoor program space in the park (~ \$4.7 – 5 million)

The options were reviewed in a public process and the results indicated strong local support for retaining the pool and other services in Mount Pleasant Park. Staff noted that all three directions explored during the planning process increase the amount of green space in the park.

Vancouver's Aquatic Renewal Plan (the Plan) outlines a strategy for reconfiguring Vancouver's aquatic facilities and services to meet the current and future needs of city residents in a fiscally responsible manner. It notes that the outdoor pool in Mount Pleasant Park is approaching the end of its functional life, and recommends that the pool not be replaced. The plan projects the capital investment required for all aquatic services and facilities based on the removal of Mount Pleasant Pool from service. Replacing the Mount Pleasant Pool impacts these cost projections, and staff explained that the difference would have to be carried in some way. In addition, the Board has stipulated that new or upgraded facilities must be in place before existing pools are closed (unless significant additional operating costs are incurred), and the new aquatic centre at Riley Park will not be in place before the opening of the new Mount Pleasant Community Centre at #1 Kingsway.

Projects planned in the future will increase the amount of community centre space in Mount Pleasant / Riley in relation to area population, and the level of service will become higher here than in most other areas of the City. The provision of a satellite community centre at Mount Pleasant is not supported by demand or population growth. Staff noted that it will be a challenge to reconcile the neighbourhood's desire to retain or renew the pool (and other facilities) at Mount Pleasant Park with the needs and demands for the renewal of aquatic services across the City.

Delegations:

- Margery Duda said that the Mount Pleasant Pool Committee's preference is for Option 3, and told the Committee the community is happy to be included in the draft capital plan for \$4 million. She said that Option 2 is not a good way to spend public money that would be better spent on rebuilding a pool that would continue to serve the community in the future. The community favours extending the pool's season by one month which would result in a similar operating season as other outdoor pools in Vancouver.
- John Petrie told the Committee that the community's desire for a neighbourhood pool is the bottom line and that the pool should be part of #1 Kingsway, which is central and has transit accessibility.

Staff noted that it is not possible to add a pool to #1 Kingsway at this point because construction will begin on the project shortly.

Discussion:

- The Committee discussed the size of the draft capital plan in relation to the size of the actual capital plan that the City will approve for the Park Board, and the kinds of decisions the Board will need to make about what is included in the final plan. A member of the Committee said that this decision is challenged by what will be allocated to replacing Percy Norman Pool with the new aquatic centre in the same capital plan.
- Commissioner Anton suggested that the site be shut down and the decision about funding the redevelopment of the facility be deferred to the next capital plan. Staff referred to poor past experience with empty buildings, and Margery Duda said that because the potential for pool breakdown is a significant risk, the rebuilding of Mount Pleasant Pool needs to be prioritized due to the urgency of the project. She noted that other worthwhile projects do not face the same risk if they are not funded in the next capital plan.
- The Committee asked the delegation if there was an expectation in the community to replace the pool with a similar facility, and discussed the possibility of opening a smaller leisure pool. Margery Duda identified important pool elements as: room for laps, water sports and competitive swimming, and dive boards, which currently provide youth between 10-16 years with an important, safe recreational option. The Committee noted that a leisure pool would serve families well but would not provide space for water sports or competitive swimming, which will be provided at the new Aquatic Centre in Riley Park.

Next Steps include:

1. Capital Plan public review
2. Council sets Capital Plan envelope for Park Board
3. Park Board sets its Capital Plan priorities
4. Council review in September 2005

3. Stanley Park Dog Offleash Consultation Process:

Jim Lowden reported to the Committee that in November 2004 the Board received a 400 name petition requesting that an offleash dog beach be established north of Denman Street on English Bay, and that at the regular Board meeting on February 28, 2005, the Board requested that staff consult with the public regarding a proposal to create a dog offleash area on the beach section of English Bay. Signs were posted on the nearest potential beach site north of Denman Street from March 15 – April 15 to elicit response from those using the beach. The total number of responses received was 268, with 103 in favour and 165 opposed to the proposal. Opposition to the proposal primarily focused on concern about environmental degradation and disruption of water fowl feeding habitat. Staff told the Committee that they are prepared to write the petitioner to advise that due to the preponderance of negative opinion, the Park Board not develop a dog offleash beach in the area.

Delegations:

- John Phipps read a letter sent to the Park Board on April 6, 2005 from Beach Park Apartments at 2095 Beach Avenue stating opposition to a dog offleash area on the beach, and noting poor compliance with existing dog offleash bylaws and lack of enforcement. He asked that their thoughts be conveyed to the rest of the Commissioners.
- Sheila Cole told the Committee that dogs are unleashed from the car to the offleash area which creates concerns for people with mobility limitations. She described problems related to animal defecation and dog owner reactivity, and said that she does not want offleash areas

in the park at all unless they are fenced. She read a letter from Sherry J. regarding concerns about fecal matter in the sand and how parks and beaches are damaged when offleash areas are allowed.

- Terry Jevre spoke against the proposal and said that the close proximity of the proposed offleash area to the swimming beach will lead to confrontations between users.

Discussion:

- A member of the Committee asked if other areas in Stanley Park were considered for a dog offleash beach and staff advised that the petition specifically requested water access and no other sites have been identified.
- Staff will inform the public about the outcome of the public process by posting a notice on the Park Board website and notifying the WestEnder and the Courier newspapers.

Result

Commissioner Anton moved that the Planning and Environment Committee support the staff recommendation to not pursue the option of establishing an dog offleash beach at English Bay north of Denman Street, and the motion was approved.

4. Stanley Park Ecology Centre Interpretive Centre Vision:

Jim Lowden told the Committee that the Stanley Park Ecology Society (SPES) and Park Board staff have been discussing an expanded nature interpretation program for Stanley Park and the overall park system. The study to date has focused on what the SPES could do if it were not bound by its current physical and financial limits. The next phase of the study will assess the physical and financial aspects of developing this vision in Stanley Park. Staff estimates that it will cost about \$20,000 to complete the study, which is available in the district's 2005 budget. He introduced Patricia Thomson, Stanley Park Ecology Society Executive Director, and consultant Phil Aldrich, who were present at the meeting to report on the development of a vision for a nature interpretive program.

Patricia Thomson summarized the services that the SPES currently provides and gave a presentation on the SPES's vision for an indoor/outdoor nature interpretive centre for Stanley Park. The SPES has a mandate to connect people with nature through environmental education, and believes it can do much more with an expanded facility that will intrigue and excite visitors by showing the "secret sides" of Stanley Park. The SPES asked AlrichPears to facilitate a workshop to gather ideas from a diverse group of stakeholders, and to prepare a preliminary report.

Phil Aldrich described the process of developing a vision and goals from the concepts and themes that were generated at the workshop. He identified the principle concepts for a visitor's experience of nature, designed to increase awareness through a process of appreciation (Nature in Your Face, social relaxation), discovery (Trading Places, Wisdom Gone Wild) and action (Make a Difference). The themes that could provide the content for a visitor's experience include:

- Gateway to the Rainforest
- Secret Sides of Stanley Park
- Celebrating Nature

- Becoming a Nature Steward
- Keeping a Balance

Physically, the facility could include Exploration Gardens for whole-body play and nature appreciation, Nature Discovery House (revealing what is hidden), and a Project Place for action through research and stewardship projects.

The delegation listed possible programs and resources for a nature interpretive centre and throughout the park. The next step for the SPES is to carry out an independent business study to develop practical applications for the vision including a budget and analysis of long-term operational implications.

Discussion:

- A member of the Committee commented on the importance of creating something that draws children and other visitors back for return visits because it is fun, and encouraged the group to choose a name that reflects this.
- The group acknowledged the need for a nature interpretation centre in Stanley Park that provides people with more opportunities to learn and practice personal stewardship through meaningful interaction with nature than is currently available.
- Although there was general acknowledgment that this meeting was not the appropriate time to discuss the possibility of locating a nature interpretation centre at the site of the existing children's farmyard, a member of the Committee expressed concern about the possibility of losing this well-loved destination activity. The group asked if Stanley Park is the best location for a program that provides interaction with domestic animals, and a suggestion was made that it could be replicated elsewhere. A Commissioner asked if the SPES would include a petting zoo as part of their vision and Patricia Thomson replied that a petting zoo is outside the mandate of their organization.

Delegations:

- Gerry O'Neill said he wants to be invited to be part of the process and discussions because he would like his horses to be part of the plan, especially with regard to the possibility of building a better stable. He said that it is not fair to present one avenue only, and asked the Board to consider a tenant who has been here for 20 years before making a decision.
- Michele Salmon said she has been a child educator for 30 years and has seen how important interpretive centres are for children. She believes that children will care about the environment throughout their whole lives if they have meaningful contact with nature from an early age.
- Jeff Salmon said he is greatly in favour of establishing a nature centre in Stanley Park. He has researched nature centres all over the United States, and told the Committee that at one nature centre in New York City, 60% of the volunteers are youth aged 12-18 years. He has learned that nature centres provide a place for children to play, pretend, exercise, and have fun, and that simple things bring people back.

Next Steps:

On May 30, 2005, staff will request that the Board receive the Stanley Park Preliminary Vision for a Nature Interpretation Centre for information, and approve funds of \$20,000 for the completion of a study to develop site specific options and financial models for the project.

5. Tree Contest:

Piet Rutgers told the Committee about plans to present a contest to raise public awareness and support of our urban forest. "Tales of Vancouver's Trees" will invite the public to submit short writings about their personal experience and kinship to a favorite tree found in one of Vancouver's public parks or green spaces. The project will be launched on June 6, 2005. Submissions will be accepted between June 6 and October 6, 2005, with the winners announced on October 17, 2005 in time to receive prizes presented at a special Arbor Day event in Queen Elizabeth Park, tentatively set for October 29, 2005. The project budget is estimated to be about \$3500, and media sponsors will be sought.

6. Approval of the minutes of April 12, 2005 meeting

The minutes of the April 12, 2005 meeting were approved with the following corrections. The spelling of Oliver Matters last name was corrected and the delegations listed from Southlands Riding Club were removed.

7. Next Meeting:

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 pm. The next Planning and Recreation Committee meeting is scheduled for June 7, 2005, at 7:00 pm. Possible agenda items include:

- 21 Places: Planning Commission Presentation
- Harbourview Daycare at Burrard Park
- Fruit Trees Update
- Pandora Park Design Concept