



Date: October 4 ,2005

TO: Board Members – Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Fundraising and Development

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board receive the Progress Report and direct staff to report back on an action plan for future fundraising and development.

POLICY

All small gifts accepted by the Park Board will be maintained for 10 years in their original location or in an area near their original location, after which the disposition of the gifts is at the sole discretion of the Board.

BACKGROUND

At the Board meeting of June 2004, the Board approved the following strategies to improve the fundraising initiatives.

Gifts for Parks Program

- A. Increase fees for benches, picnic tables, flag poles, water fountains, bike racks and trees effective July 1, 2004 to reflect inflationary increases and hereafter adjust the prices annually as required; introduce a price premium on waterfront and feature park locations.
- B. Establish the length of the donation contract at 10 years for all newly donated park amenities, with a grandfathered 10 year clause for existing amenities.
- C. Create a one-year contract Fundraising/Development Consultant position to enhance the current Gifts for Parks Program, coordinate grant applications, implement and promote new fund raising initiatives, both directly for the Park Board and with its community partners. The classification and compensation of this position is subject to review by the General Manager of Human Resources.
- D. The costs of a one-year contract Fundraising/Development Consultant position and other collateral marketing materials and services to be covered by the Park Amenity Reserve Account up to a total of \$110,000.

DISCUSSION

The one-year temporary full time Fundraising/Development Consultant position was evaluated as an exempt position at Pay Grade 9 by the General Manager of Human Resources. The position was filled in December, 2004.

This report outlines the accomplishments, new initiatives and lessons learned from the fundraising efforts for the Park Board over the last nine months.

Accomplishments:

(A) Improved the Existing Gift for Parks Program:

Stream-lined the donation process and improved customer service: Maps outlining the readily available sites were prepared for high demand locations such as Stanley Park and the seawall. Donations are now being secured at time of interest instead of placing donors on a 'waiting list'. A donor tracking system has also been developed to follow-up on all donation inquiries. One point of contact is provided for all donor inquiries and personal visits and meetings are made for each inquiry. Our thank you letter and tax receipting process has been streamlined to ensure a five day turnaround on donations. To maintain an ongoing relationship with donors, stewardship reports such as the Annual Report, are being sent to all current and past donors. Overall, the Gifts for Parks Program donation process has been simplified, waiting time to secure donations has been reduced and ongoing contact with our donor base is occurring.

(B) Development of New Initiatives:

1. Developed and implemented the Tai Chi fundraising campaign: A campaign was developed to solicit Tai Chi users and obtain their support for the completion of three of seven Tai Chi Arbours as part of the Queen Elizabeth Plaza Redevelopment. \$80,000 has been raised to date. A proposal from the Tai Chi groups has also been submitted to Western Economic Diversification Canada and Canadian Heritage-Cultural Spaces Canada for matching funds.
2. Researched, identified and submitted grant applications: Five proposals and letters of interest have been submitted. To date, two proposals have been declined. The Vancouver Foundation declined our request for programs for youth & special needs children due to the Park Board's status as 'government', while the Endswell Foundation declined our request for a pilot project that would introduce new sustainable practices to protect green spaces and habitats due to budget limitations. Two proposals are awaiting responses – one to Ronald McDonald House Charities Canada for programs and equipment for children with illnesses and disabilities and a submission to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities for a pilot project to develop and implement a group walking program for residents to increase physical

activity 20% by 2010. One proposal has been funded. The Fisher Foundation has funded \$7,500 towards the purchase of a golf cart for people with disabilities at McCleery Golf Course.

3. Developed a Park Board donation advertisement - This advertisement was placed in the gift planning supplement distributed by VanNet community newspapers to a circulation of 260,000 high income and senior populations throughout Vancouver and the Lower Mainland.
4. Enhanced partnership support for fundraising - Provided fundraising consultation to community partners and associations to assist them in developing their fundraising programs. Worked with staff at Van Dusen Botanical Garden to streamline the garden's commemorative gift program and improve donor relations. Provided advice to assist Kitsilano Community Centre Association and Renfrew Community Centre with fundraising campaigns and major gift solicitation. Worked with community and special interest groups to develop new partnership relationships to address concerns brought on by the Tai Chi community regarding the Queen Elizabeth Park Redevelopment Project and concerns from the BC Sculpture Society regarding maintenance of donated public art at Van Dusen Botanical Gardens.
5. Professional and organized approach to fundraising – The Board's fundraising activities in the past have been dealt with in a passive way. With dedicated and experienced staff and a plan in place, the fundraising activities are now conducted in a professional, active and supportive manner. This has resulted in an increase in public awareness (over 500 new donors in nine months), community involvement and support to partners which will not only raise our potential in fundraising but also the future success of the Board as a public service provider.

(C) Results:

From January to September 2005, \$600,000 was raised, and 505 new donors were added to our base of support. Included in the 505 new donors are 169 bench gifts, 317 Tai Chi gifts, two major gifts, twelve tree gifts and five other designated gifts. 520 existing donors were approached for bench renewals and 100 renewed. 1,600 donors (past and existing) were contacted and provided with the Annual Report. A total of five organizations were contacted for grant applications.

The above results illustrate not only the financial contributions in nine months but also the significant step made in building relationships with donors throughout North America.

Lessons Learned:

As a result of the experiences over the last nine months, we were able to clarify the Board's strengths and weaknesses in our current and future fundraising efforts.

- 1. Donor interest in the commemorative bench program remains strong.** Pent up demand is currently being met by offering donors existing sites in new parks or sites that are not renewed. On average, the Park Board receives 40 walk-in or scheduled visits per month. In addition, there are 200 phone calls or email inquiries per month.
- 2. Donors are also interested in giving to the Park Board in other ways.** From January to the end of August, 2005 the Park Board has received a number of expressions of interest from donors interested in making gifts to the Board in other ways and for other purposes. For example, the Park Board has received donor inquiries relating to special project funding such as one time major gifts for Stanley Park. Donors have expressed interest in preserving points of interest such as Brockton Point Lighthouse and Lost Lagoon Fountain. There has also been interest in one time major gifts for Queen Elizabeth Park such as the naming of Tai Chi Arbours and funding interpretive signage. There have also been a number of inquiries from individuals who wish to leave estate gifts for the preservation of shore line parks such as Jericho Beach Park and Stanley Park. Some donors have expressed interest in designating gifts for seawall upgrades, lighting and pathway upgrades for wheelchair access.
- 3. We have a better understanding of what donors want.** We have learned that most donors give with a specific purpose in mind. They expect that their donation will be used for that purpose and they want to see results. They expect projects to be completed in a timely manner and they expect reports back on the use and benefit of their donated funds. Donors want to be recognized for their gifts. Donors expect to be well supported and they want to feel free to ask questions when making a donation and receive prompt and truthful answers.
- 4. We need a comprehensive donor database.** The Park Board's current donor database does not include all donations to the Park Board. For example, donor information and gift history are not being captured for gifts such as commemorative trees. Donors who funded special projects such as Il Giordano/Hastings Park, Victory Square and English Bay Bikeway were also not captured. Although the current database is being updated, it may not meet the future fundraising needs of the Park Board, e.g., donor segmentation, moves management and tracking donor actions.

CONCLUSION

Significant improvement has been made to the Gifts for Parks Program. Based on the last nine months experience, it is also clear that there is strong interest in our donation programs. To take advantage of the opportunities of additional fundraising, staff will develop and report back to the Board with an action plan to accelerate the fundraising program to the next level.

Prepared by:
Corporate Services
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
Vancouver, BC
AH