

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

DATE OF MEETING: February 7, 2006

ATTENDEES: Park Board Commissioners

Commissioner Korina Houghton
Commissioner Allan De Genova
Commissioner Spencer Herbert
Commissioner Heather Holden
Commissioner Loretta Woodcock

Park Board Staff

Piet Rutgers	Director of Planning and Operations
Jim Lowden	Director of Stanley District
Lori MacKay	Director of Vancouver East District
Rudy Roelofsen	Manager of Facility Development
Philip Josephs	Manager of Revenue Services
Susan Gordon	Arts and Multiculturalism
jil weaving	Community Arts Programmer
Carol Sogawa	Recreation Services Coordinator, QE District
Michel Desrochers	Research Planner
Mike Mackintosh	Supervisor of Parks, Queen Elizabeth District
Barbara Joughin	Recorder of Minutes

Delegations

Darryl Condon	Architect
Stuart Rothnie	Architect
Angus Wakefield	Wakefield Acoustic Ltd.
Richard Mayencourt	Vancouver Skatepark Coalition
Calen	Vancouver Skatepark Coalition
Richard Campbell	Better Environmentally Sound Transportation
Evan Sahmet	
Alan Buium	
Jake Kerr	
Louise Longridge	
Steve Gustavson	Little Mountain Baseball
Dalyce Epp	Technical Writer

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm, with the following Agenda:

1. Concession Strategy Study
2. Hillcrest/Nat Bailey Design Development
3. Arts and Seniors Project
4. China Park South Update
5. Heronry Plan – Stanley Park

1. Concession Strategy Study

Jim Lowden presented the draft Concession Strategy Study Final Report to the Committee. He described the Park Board's current direct service delivery approach that has been in place for over 50 years. The Board provides and maintains concession facilities, establishes menus, sets prices and operates a central warehouse system that supplies a majority of the products used by the 15 concessions in the system. A report to the Board in March 2005 identified a number of issues associated with this approach to concession operations. Most facilities are seasonal facilities and many require physical upgrades; the net revenues from the system (12-15% margins) are not enough to justify this capital investment; menus offer traditional take-out snacks with few healthy options, and trends suggest that the public is not satisfied with current product selection. The Board approved the development of a food plan strategy, and the JF Group was engaged in May 2005 to prepare a Concession Strategy.

The draft report highlights the findings of the research phase of the study, evaluates various strategic options available to the Board, presents an analysis of preferred options, and recommends an implementation plan, in order to achieve the following results:

- the delivery of food and beverage products and services at a quality and standard that meets or exceeds the expectations of park and beach clientele;
- optimized gross revenues, profit margins and financial certainty of the Board's concession operations;
- a business model that is adaptable to meet the circumstances of the various concession locations.

Several questions provide a framework for a review of the Park Board's food and beverage services. Should the Park Board remain in the business of direct food service delivery? Who should make menu and pricing decisions, and who purchases the products that supply the system? Direct provision of food is not part of the Park Board's mandate, and the Concession Strategy introduces some options for change. Staff identified several upcoming opportunities to apply a more entrepreneurial model, but noted that this will be a long term process.

Delegations

Paul Faoro, CUPE 15, asked when the consultant's report would be available to the public (immediately); if warehouse staff participated in the study (yes); and about the selection process for the consultant. Staff informed the group that the study required a consultant familiar with the economics of recreation. CUPE 15 indicated that it would like to discuss the impacts of the proposed strategy on warehouse staff and staff said this discussion could start within the next three weeks.

Discussion

- A member of the Committee asked if there is financial benefit from using the central warehouse system, and staff advised that internal distribution saves 10-20% on food and supply costs through volume discounts and reduced deliveries.
- The group discussed some implications of applying different models to the delivery of concession services, including licensed operations, partnership arrangements, and hybrids.
- A member of the Committee requested information about the number of fulltime staff employed in the warehouse. Staff replied there are 2-4 FTE staff and noted that any changes

to existing positions would happen over a long term period because a new opportunity can only be brought to market every one or two years.

- A Commissioner asked what challenges might present when applying different business models across the city. Staff noted a prevalent Vancouver bias against commercialism in parks, the potential difficulty of finding operators willing to assume all risks and capital costs, and creating workable environments for future neighbours as well as the Park Board.

Next Steps

The Concession Strategy study will be reviewed by the Board, staff and stakeholders, and comments and suggestions returned to the Planning Committee for additional review.

2. Hillcrest / Nat Bailey Design Development

Piet Rutgers reviewed recent activities in the design of the Olympic facilities at Hillcrest and Nat Bailey Parks. In May 2005 the Board approved the Riley, Hillcrest, and Nat Bailey Parks Master Plan for building massing and siting for the Aquatic Centre and Legacy facilities. On January 16, 2006, the Board passed a motion that the final form of development reduces the extent of building and parking lot intrusion into Hillcrest Park, and that all or a portion of the 100 parking stalls east of the Little League diamond be relocated elsewhere on the site in a manner that acknowledges the interests of neighborhood residents and Ontario bikeway users. On January 31, 2006, City Council approved the application to rezone Hillcrest and Nat Bailey Stadium Parks from RS-1 to CD-1, with the following conditions.

- design development reduces the extent of northward intrusion of proposed buildings into Hillcrest Park;
- design development relocates some or all of the 100 parking spaces east of the Little League diamond to elsewhere in the site;
- design development further considers the optimum configuration of the playing fields
- staff consider traffic calming measures in the adjacent community;
- staff further review implications for the Ontario Greenway for report back prior to occupancy of the Olympic facility.

Piet Rutgers introduced the consulting team of Darryl Condon and Stewart Rothnie, and Jim Waugh, VANOC. Darryl Condon provided background information about the site, identified the project's guiding principles, and described the current master plan, including its recommendations for a total of 960 parking stalls (520 permanent, 440 overflow). He introduced the design issues (minimize encroachment into Hillcrest Park; maintain existing foot routes) and described the current site plan, which combines two projects into a single building for direct operational benefits, a smaller footprint, and less volume. The plan proposes a building that responds to existing routes, joined by central inner street, with two public entrances and a plaza between Nat Bailey Stadium and the new facility. He noted that the building could be recessed to reduce its bulk and profile. It would have 600 temporary seats in Olympic mode, which would be replaced by a hockey ice area, library, activity area, and a curling ice area. The lower floor would house the ice rinks and pool, and the upper floor a library, fitness area and administrative offices.

The consultant presented three play field options and requested the Committee's feedback and direction on playing field configuration. The design proposes parking surround Nat Bailey

Stadium, with 150 stalls between Nat Bailey Stadium and the new facility, 115 stalls on the Ontario Street side (an increase from 80), 105 on the Midlothian side, and 390 temporary stalls. He said the proposed design consolidates parking while providing the same number of stalls, with no net increase of traffic on Ontario Street. It also consolidates traffic entries, which are reduced to two on Ontario Street, and does not include a service route or a connective route through the site from Midlothian to Ontario Street.

Delegations

- Richard Campbell, Better Environmentally Sound Transportation, told the Committee that Ontario Street is the most important north/south greenway in Vancouver and that fear of traffic is the main reason people don't cycle more. He said that traffic on Ontario Street must be reduced or eliminated by allowing no access to facilities or parking from Ontario, and suggested that the temporary parking stalls be moved up to the site at Peverill and Ontario, with access through the parking plaza.
- Evan Sahmet, a member of the parking and traffic committee, said that the community worked hard last year to move the parking away from Ontario Street, and now it is back. He is concerned about parking on the Ontario Street greenway, and noted that because that corner is a point of access for kids going into park, less parking on this corner is safer.
- Alan Buium said that while he appreciated the new drawings and found the changes to be positive, he shares concerns about compromising Ontario Street and said that the proposed 115 stalls on Peverill will be problematic. He suggested that parking be placed behind the stadium, and suggested that multi-level parking would be an investment in the future.
- Jake Kerr commended the consultants for a very promising start to addressing the identified issues. He concurred with residents about traffic and parking concerns on Ontario Street, and noted that parking remains an issue for Nat Bailey Stadium.
- Louise Longridge said the community worked very hard to move the parking lot away from Ontario Street and she is devastated to see it back again. She said that the design should incorporate green space or a berm for the neighbours.
- Steve Gustavson, Little Mountain Baseball, told the Committee that the original master plan had five baseball diamonds and a t-ball field, and the current proposal has eliminated two fields. He said that the parking allocation is not sufficient to meet the projected demand, and noted that placing walkways through fields will create user conflicts between baseball players and pedestrians.

Discussion:

- A Commissioner inquired if tree loss can be minimized by including trees within the proposed glass corridor and the consultant noted that it is possible to preserve this important value by organizing major circulation routes with regard to the existing line of trees.
- The group acknowledged that parking placed adjacent to Ontario Street remains a concern, and discussed different ideas and suggestion for numbers and location of permanent and temporary stalls. A member of the Committee inquired about the timeline for the traffic management study, and staff advised that it should be completed by 2007.
- A member of the Committee highlighted the importance of ensuring that an egress from a parking lot onto Ontario Street does not affect the bikeway, and the consultant noted that the traffic management study would address the issue. Another member of the Committee asked how increasing parking stalls adjacent to Ontario Street from 80 to 115 will impact traffic on Ontario Street, and the consultant answered that the traffic consultant said there would be no

increase in current traffic levels with the addition of up to 35 more stalls.

- A delegation said that conflicts between bikers and drivers looking for parking do not have equal implications as one involves potential bike injury or death and the other inconvenience. He reminded the group that Ontario Street is the only bike route but there are other vehicle accesses.
- A member of the Committee inquired about the missing t-ball diamond. The consultant told the group that it was easy to place due to its small size and it would be accommodated.

The consultant advised the Committee that they have heard from all sides on the issue of parking and traffic flow, and that they are seeking the best results for all interests. He acknowledged that the differing strong positions will need to be reconciled through compromise for an effective solution that minimized negative impact. He reminded the Committee that if parking is not convenient, parkers will default to convenience and park in the neighbourhood.

Next Steps

A stakeholder meeting is scheduled for February 9, 2006, and the drawings will be posted on the website by early next week. There will be a public information meeting in the community on March 7. The development permit application will be brought to the Board at its March 20, 2006 regular meeting.

Commissioner De Genova left the meeting at this time.

3. Arts and Seniors Project

Susan Gordon and Jill Weaving described the Arts for Life Project, a new three year project that will explore how involvement in the arts improves the health and wellbeing of vulnerable seniors in Vancouver and on the North Shore. Consultations in 2006 revealed the importance that Vancouver seniors place on their access to arts programming, and results from Gene Cohen's 2005 "Creativity and Aging" study show that seniors realize significant health benefits from involvement in community-based arts programs.

The project will document the impacts on participants' physical health, mental health and social connections; build new knowledge and expertise in the fields of seniors' wellness and recreation needs; and support community arts practices and programming. Research is needed to demonstrate the link between participation in the arts and health in the Canadian context, and to create a stronger case for diverse sources of funding arts programming.

Interdisciplinary activities offered through the project include:

- regular arts workshops to six groups of seniors (3 in Vancouver, 3 on North Shore)
- opportunities to attend performances and exhibitions
- showcasing the artwork created in the weekly workshops
- several themed workshops to explore key issues in the area of arts and health

The estimated project budget is \$238,000 for three years, including in-kind goods and services. The Park Board's annual contribution includes \$14,000 in staff time and \$9,000 for direct program costs. Project partners include Vancouver Coastal Health, the Sharon Martin Community Health Trust Fund, North Vancouver Recreation Commission, District of West Vancouver, District of North Vancouver, and Parkgate Community Services Society.

Discussion

- Commissioners expressed excitement about the project and the opportunity to lead efforts to link art with health.
- A Commissioner asked how changes in health will be measured and staff reported that research partners from the health sector are sought. The project will reference a list of health indicators from the 2005 Cohen study.
- Project staff will partner with existing groups to reach seniors who meet the criteria for participation.
- The Committee learned that for the purposes of the project, the age of seniors will be self defined due to different end-of-life demographics in different groups (for example, the Downtown East Side and the gay, lesbian, and transgendered communities).

Next Steps

Participating artists and seniors groups will be selected between February and April 2006 and the project will commence in May.

4. China Creek Park South Update:

Michel Desrochers presented an update on the process to create a better neighbourhood park at China Creek South Park, a 1.5 hectare park in Mount Pleasant at Broadway Street and Clark Drive. In October 2005, the Planning and Environment Committee reviewed proposed improvements to China Creek South Park, and asked staff to process the feedback received and return to the Committee with a new plan that emphasized the park heart and incorporated an understanding of its impacts on neighbours.

This park features a variety of mature trees, an open lawn, playground and basketball court, Nanook Daycare, and the first skateboard park in Vancouver. There are also additional wooden skate features in the skate park. Staff noted that China Creek South is a very difficult site to work with, as it is constrained by arterial streets on two sides, many “edges” (alley, yards, building backs,), the 10th Ave bike route, trees, and a daycare that may be enlarged. There is a budget of \$350,000 available for park redevelopment.

Staff noted the common features (playground, community garden, skatepark, basketball) and major differences (presence of skateboard park) that resulted from the public consultation process, and presented design ideas as revisions of Option 1 (skatepark stays in place) and Option 3 (skate park is relocated to another park and/or skate spot remains for younger skaters) to the Committee for consideration. It was noted that it is a preferred choice to preserve open space in the northern section of the park.

Delegations

- Angus Wakefield, Wakefield Acoustics, presented a draft proposal to bring the existing skate park within noise limits and preserve an important historic Canadian skate park with a European-style plexiglass sound wall that could drop the noise levels about 15 dB. He said noise reduction can also be achieved by replacing the asphalt paving with concrete.
- Richard Mayencourt, Vancouver Skatepark Coalition, commended staff for their work and spoke against any plan to move the skate park, which is regarded as a historic landmark and provides a positive area for kids to play and learn sport. He told the Committee that 250

people signed a petition against removing the skate park, and said there is fear that the skate park will be lost if it is removed because it will be too expensive to rebuild and the money will not be available. He noted that the skate park allows low income kids to do sports and deters crime, and requested that the Board not take their skate park away.

- Calen, the original builder of the skate park, said the problem is that when the skate park was built 20 years ago, the Park Board didn't take skating seriously and the location is not good. He noted that the skatepark was in place before existing neighbours lived there, and he suggested that the asphalt surfaces be replaced with cement and the street features of the skate facility be moved closer to Broadway Street.

Discussion

- A Commissioner would like to see more small children coming into the park, and suggested that a phased approach to developing the park and moving the skate features might be a way to address concerns about conflicts with neighbours and the daycare. It was noted as a possibility, but parents may become impatient waiting for a children's playground.
- The group discussed issues related to the skate park including its popularity with those who use it and the conflicts with those who do not. Staff noted the importance of finding skate park locations that are acceptable to residents for long term success, and said there is space for a skate park in John Hendry Park. Users of the skate park lack trust that it will be rebuilt elsewhere if it is removed from China Creek. The absence of washroom facilities was noted.
- The skate bowls are self-supporting structures that were built to float because they were located on an old landfill site. The bowls may be designated as heritage structures due to the "architectural interest" of their construction.
- Part of the noise generated by the skate park is a result of asphalt surfaces. A delegation offered to take baseline measures and analyze possible systems to evaluate whether noise can be brought within acceptable limits.
- A member of the Committee inquired about the possibility of daylighting China Creek in the southern section to help reduce traffic noise from Clark Drive. Staff advised that stream corridors that are longer than 15 meters are a better investment, and suggested that this may not be the right time to rebuild the south section of the park.

Next Steps

Staff requested that the Committee provide feedback and direction. Staff are to consult the community on two options, and a public meeting will be held in March 2006. A park design will be submitted to the Board for a decision in April 2006, and the upgrade is scheduled to occur throughout the summer and fall.

5. Heronry Plan – Stanley Park

Mike Mackintosh and Dalyce Epp provided the Committee with a summary of the Stanley Park Great Blue Heron Management Plan (the Plan). The purpose of the Plan is to present information about the species in Stanley Park; provide a planning document for this important Lower Mainland urban heronry; offer a guiding framework for parks staff activities; discuss measures to protect the nesting colony; recommend ways to safeguard the public; and address interpretive opportunities. Mike Mackintosh acknowledged all those who had contributed to the development and production of the Plan.

The Great Blue Heron is protected by federal (Migratory Birds Convention Act) and provincial

(BC Wildlife Act) laws. The Stanley Park heronry is Lower Mainland's oldest - there have been heron colonies in Stanley Park since before the first recorded observations in 1921. Since the colony moved to its present location adjacent to the Park Board administration building in 2001, it has expanded from six nests to more than 170 at the end of the 2005 nesting season. There are only a few breeding colonies in the Lower Mainland, and this colony represents about 5-6% of BC's total Blue Heron population.

Hérons can coexist with humans, however they are susceptible to unusual disturbances or events which can result in breeding failures or colony abandonment. The Plan reviews potential disturbance factors and precautionary measures, and recommends added fencing around nest trees to protect the heronry and reduce human risk. The Plan identifies timelines for regular park and forest maintenance activities to help minimize disturbances. In addition to the high noise and smell levels during breeding season, there are human health issues associated with the fecal matter that is produced at the heronry. The situation is currently within acceptable levels, and staff continue to monitor this seasonally with the Vancouver Coastal Health region. Tree health is also a concern.

Discussion

- Because the colony is very dense, the nesting habitat is degrading, and the health of the trees is compromised by the effects of copious amounts of fecal matter on soil pH and tree photosynthesis. A Commissioner asked for an estimate of how much longer nesting trees might survive. Staff are exploring different ways to mitigate the problem, including mulching below the trees and managing soil pH.
- It is not possible to do forestry maintenance in the heronry, therefore trees may become dangerous. It was noted that the Park Board has responded well to the overall situation, especially by installing fences in the nesting area, which have proven effective for both bird and human protection.
- There are strong opportunities for increasing public awareness about the natural history of the herons and interpretive signage can become a valuable park feature.
- A member of the Committee asked for information about monitoring the heronry, and staff described the current visual, non-invasive monitoring practices. The Plan recommends an expanded volunteer monitoring program, directed by the Stanley Park Ecology Society, that includes monitoring the colony's activities and health, nesting surveys, and directed studies.
- As the size of the heronry increases, so do incidents of distressed birds. Currently the system for rescue and rehabilitation of downed birds is incomplete, and staff identified the need to clarify and organize the procedure for handling injured birds.

Next Steps

The Board will receive the Heronry Management Plan at its regular Board meeting on February 27, 2006.

6. Next Meeting

The meeting adjourned at 10:50 pm. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 21, 2006.