

Minutes of Meeting
Planning Committee, Vancouver Park Board

DATE OF MEETING: April 4, 2006

ATTENDEES: Park Board Commissioners

Commissioner Korina Houghton, Chair
Commissioner Spencer Herbert
Commissioner Heather Holden

Park Board Staff

Piet Rutgers	Director of Planning and Operations
Jim Lowden	Director of Stanley District
Philip Josephs	Manager of Revenue Services
Alyson Thorpe	Recording Secretary

Delegations

Allan MacGillivray	Prince of Whales
Trevor Figueiredo	Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Society
Elizabeth Snow	Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Society
Paul Faoro	CUPE 15
Brenda Coombs	CUPE 15
Daniel Frankel	Marine Mill Bistro

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

1. Approval of Minutes of March 21, 2006 Meeting
2. Use of Harbour Green Park Dock - Delegation
3. Motion Re: Naming Canada Line Station
4. Concession Strategy Study

1. Approval of Minutes of March 21, 2006 meeting

The minutes of the March 21, 2006 meeting were approved as presented.

2. Use of Harbour Green Park Dock

Jim Lowden informed the Committee that a proposal has been received for the use of the dock at Harbour Green Park, and provided background information about the dock's history and purpose. The 300 foot long dock at Harbour Green Park was provided by the developer of the park as part of the approved park design. Its purposes are to offer:

- a different pedestrian experience and an opportunity to access the water;
- limited seating and tables and seating;
- a future landing for Stanley Park ferry (to reduce tourist car traffic into the park)
- time limited day moorage for private boats in Coal Harbour;
- a reception dock for visiting private boats (customs and immigration);
- limited commercial activity (charter pick up and drop off).

Limitations on usage of the dock include no overnight or all-day moorage, and no moorage for uncrewed boats longer than 40 feet. The dock has not had a high level of marine usage since it opened three years ago.

Delegation

Allan MacGillivray operates Prince of Whales, a whale watching charter company out of Victoria. His company would like to launch a high-end marine adventure tour from Vancouver to Victoria this summer on a double-deck Zodiac boat that is Coast Guard certified for 75 passengers. He proposes that this day passenger boat leave Vancouver at 7:30 am each morning, and arrive back in Vancouver at 8:30 pm. The four hour journey to Victoria will include 2.5 hours running time and 1.5 hours of sightseeing and whale watching, for a one-way adult fare of \$150. Overnight moorage in Vancouver has been arranged, but a moorage location is needed for passenger pick up and drop off.

He requested that the Park Board allow his company to use space on the dock at Harbour Green Park as a loading zone for 20 minutes twice a day, at 6:45 am for passenger pickup and at 8:30 pm for passenger drop off.

Discussion

- A Commissioner asked if a customer waiting area is needed and the delegate said that customers will be encouraged to prepay and payment will be taken on the boat when necessary. The boat has washrooms on board, and no alterations to the dock are required.
- It is expected that most people will come by taxi or get dropped off, and there is paid parking available nearby. Day-long street parking is not an option for customers.
- A member of the Committee asked if noise would be a problem for neighbours and the delegate said the boat's engine is quiet even at full speed and it would be coasting and idling only. There are no loudspeakers or stereos used on board.
- There is no request for signage on the dock at this time. A member of the public suggested that a sign reserving the portion of the dock required at boarding times may be required.
- Commercial activities at the dock provide revenue generating opportunities for the Board. Fees have not been determined for this proposal but could be about \$100/day for departure and arrival.
- The Committee requested that a public consultation process be followed. Staff said that a description of the proposal can be quickly mailed to the condominiums along that frontage with an invitation to residents to respond by mail, phone, or fax within a three week period.
- The group discussed the need to manage future demand for dock space if this initiative becomes highly successful. Staff noted that city-owned docks traditionally offer general rather than exclusive access. The delegate commented that loading zones on public docks are common.
- Charter staff estimate whale sighting success to be 85-90% on a route between Vancouver and Victoria during May through September. Whale sightings are most likely around Pender and San Juan Islands, in Haro Strait and off Victoria, but the time of day is not a factor.
- Staff suggested that the Board approve the proposal as a one year pilot project, after which time the operator could measure its success and any negative impacts on the community would be known. A member of the public suggested that a seasonal term to the pilot would be appropriate.

Next Steps

The Planning Committee requested staff to undertake a public consultation process, compile the results, and prepare a report for the Board to review.

3. Motion Re: Naming Canada Line Station

The Roundhouse Arts and Recreation Society has requested that the Park Board formally support the naming of the Canada Line station nearest to the Roundhouse as the Yaletown-Roundhouse Station. At the regular Board meeting on March 20, 2006, a motion was put forward on this matter. The Board referred the motion to the Planning Committee for discussion and authorized the Planning Committee to make a decision.

The motion was read by Commissioner Herbert,

Whereas the Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Society has requested that the Park Board formally support the naming of the Canada Line station nearest to the Roundhouse as the Yaletown-Roundhouse Station;

Whereas the Roundhouse has a petition with over 700 names supporting this station name;

Whereas the Main Street Skytrain station was renamed Main Street Science World, and the Stadium Skytrain station was renamed Stadium Chinatown;

Whereas the Roundhouse is a hub for the City as a “public” arts facility specializing in community cultural development, and such events as Black History month, Asian Heritage month, Diwali, and the Winter Solstice celebrations draw thousands of people of all cultures each year;

Whereas the Roundhouse was built in 1886, and became a central hub for the CPR operations in Vancouver when the CPR’s rail yards were moved from Yale to this location - thus the name Yaletown arose;

Therefore be it Resolved that the Park Board formally endorse the Society’s request, and ask that City Council support the goal of having the Yaletown Canada Line station named Yaletown-Roundhouse Station.

Delegations

- Trevor Figueiredo thanked the Committee for hearing the issue. He said that it is important that the Roundhouse be included in the name of the proposed Canada Line Yaletown station to reflect the quality and character of the community and the importance of the Roundhouse to the community, both as a historical site and in its present day form. He told the Committee that more than 700 signatures on a petition indicate some of the widespread community support for this proposal. The Roundhouse is requesting that the Park Board formally support the naming request.
- Elizabeth Snow told the Committee that the Roundhouse is one of the Board’s key facilities and needs its support in this matter. As one of the partners operating the centre, a statement of support from the Park Board will strengthen the proposal to include the Roundhouse in the name of the station, and a vote to not support the proposal would send a strong negative message. The matter is urgent, as recommendations on naming Canada Line stations will be presented to the Greater Vancouver Transit Authority in April.

Discussion:

- A member of the Committee urged the Park Board to support the facility, the association, and the community on the naming request.
- A Commissioner requested that the delegation explain how this request is a reasonable exception to the station naming guidelines. The delegations told the Committee that the Roundhouse is an important geographical marker and a location for thousands of people every year. In addition, this request does not set a precedent, as there are already other hyphenated station names.
- The group discussed the form that the Board's endorsement could take and staff suggested that a letter indicating the Board's support be sent to City Council.

Resolution:

The Planning Committee, as authorized by the whole Board at its regular meeting of March 20, 2006, passed the following resolution,

That the Park Board formally endorse the Society's request, and ask that City Council support the goal of having the Yaletown Canada Line station named "Yaletown Roundhouse Station".

- Carried Unanimously

A letter will be sent to City Council requesting that City Council approve a motion to support the goal of having the Yaletown Canada Line station named the Yaletown-Roundhouse station.

4. Concession Strategy Study

In March 2005 the Board approved the development of a concession food strategy and a draft Concession Strategy Study final report (the report) was presented to the Planning Committee on February 7, 2006. The Committee requested that the report be distributed for comment and review and return to the Planning Committee. Jim Lowden summarized the consultation process that was followed after the report was distributed to CUPE 15, all concession operators, stakeholders in the park, and affected staff. He outlined the three main intentions of the report and presented strategies for going forward.

Intent:

1. Move from matriarchal system to entrepreneurial model
2. Source outside capital to pay for facility redevelopment and upgrading
3. Reduce or limit the risk to Park Board in improving the existing food service and facilities

Strategies:

1. Create new revenue streams from high potential sites to create a financial cushion to buffer further change, with no Park Board investment and 100% of risk to the operator – Harbour Green Park site (6500 sq ft restaurant and bar), English Bay site (1600 sq ft waterfront bistro at the foot of Denman);
2. Invest in productive but vulnerable sites to protect income streams – redevelop Aquarium Plaza site;
3. Access a broad financial range of potential tenant/operators – bundle sites to offer effectiveness of scale in terms of management, supply and investment return;
4. Develop business models for difficult or one-off cases to assess their viability – Sunset Beach (site ownership), Second Beach (support service costs), Third Beach (site remoteness).

Staff reviewed the financial performance of the Watermark Restaurant for the five month period ending December 2005. Gross sales totaled \$1,911,000, and the capital repayment on the new washrooms and lifeguard station was \$51,900. The net rent was \$86,630, annualized to \$208,000 after the capital repayment. The net profit from the previous concession was \$34,000.

In response to a request from the Committee and CUPE 15, staff prepared a comparative economic model for a 1600 sq ft bistro in English Bay as operated privately and by government. With projected annual sales of \$2,014,000, results show annual profits of \$182,000 from private operation and annual losses of \$83,000 from Park Board operation. Rent to the Park Board from a bistro tenant would be \$138,000 and wage costs are projected to be higher in the government model.

Delegations

- Daniel Frankel told the Committee that his core competency is operating food and beverage establishments. He thinks the Board's core competency is managing park land and rental properties and should not be diluted by trying to operate food and beverage facilities. He said that this proposal creates opportunities to provide better amenities to park users, create more jobs, and stimulate the economy, while minimizing the losses to the Park Board.
- Paul Faoro informed the Committee that CUPE 15 is very concerned with the privatization of public services and will work to ensure that worker rights are upheld. He said that the Park Board should be in the business of providing food services because being able to buy food products in parks is a service, and the Park Board has a responsibility to enhance public services and a mandate to ensure that every citizen in Vancouver is provided with these services. He believes the maintenance and redevelopment of food facilities is an issue now because the Park Board has not made food service a priority in its capital planning, and that it is wrong to turn public assets over to the private sector instead of properly maintaining and expanding them. He said the union will negotiate job rates for new positions created if the Board takes over some of the concessions, and will participate in creative ways of saving public sector jobs.
- Brenda Coombs told the Committee that the union had no input to the process until the final report was distributed and this is not appropriate to their partnership with the Board. As the bargaining union for the affected employees, the union should have been contacted about changes in employee conditions before management had discussions with employees. She requested a breakdown of projected staff wages of \$1,035,000 in the comparative bistro model, and expressed concern about the implications of private sector rates based on minimum wage. She noted that the warehouse allows the Park Board to provide better public service than would be available from a private company.

Discussion

- The group discussed the role of food provision in the Board's mandate and whether it is a core or peripheral service. It was noted that providing food in parks enhances the public's enjoyment of their park experience.
- Staff told the Committee that the people who run the concessions are not City employees but the Park Board has provided free housing for some of them. There are three fulltime employees working under the collective agreement at the warehouse.
- Jim Lowden met with CUPE representatives to discuss the report and its implications, two consultations were held with concession operators, and the Manager of Revenue Services met with affected food services operations staff. Operators of higher volume concessions

tend to favour the opportunity for more control, while operators of low yield concessions are concerned about the loss of their seasonal income and free housing.

- A member of the Committee noted that the proper protocol was to have consulted with the union as the elected representatives of the warehouse employees regarding the possible loss of jobs or change in function, and asked staff to describe the process of deciding who became involved and when. Staff explained that this situation involved fifteen outlets with no relationship to the union, and the warehouse, where employees had an informational meeting with the consultant as part of the research for the report.
- A member of the Committee asked about the timeline of the proposed changes. Staff recommended that the Board acquire the development permit for a new restaurant before requesting proposals in order to remove uncertainty and increase its value. The timeline of the development permit process would mean that a new restaurant could be opened in early 2009 to help buffer any short-term downtrends from other changes in the concession system.
- A member of the Committee asked about the projected timeline and the implications of phasing out the warehouse. About one-third of product sales are not provided by the warehouse at this time. Staff said that it will take a long time to analyze product range, distribution efficiencies and potential hybrid modifications. The lack of storage space at some sites is a current weakness in the system, and makes the recovery of living areas attractive.
- A member of the Committee expressed concern that food prices will rise and become inaccessible to some people if the service is privatized. Staff explained that while a broader range of products may be emphasized that may cost more, products that are currently available will continue to be provided and the prices will reflect the market.
- A Commissioner asked how a cushion for food services change will be built if the money earned from restaurants goes into general revenues, and staff said it may be possible to create a capital reserve account similar to what was established for golf and synthetic fields.
- A member of the public asked if golf course concession net revenues increased measurably after the golf courses were redeveloped. Staff informed the Committee that food services were brought in-house in 2002 and the three clubhouse concessions returned total revenues of \$15,000 to the Board in 2005. However, none of the capital cost of building the club houses has been billed to food services, which in real terms would represent an annual mortgage of \$215,000.
- A member of the public asked how much of the Watermark's gross sales were from alcohol and staff responded that their liquor license limited it to less than 50%. Staff told the Committee that some concession operators feel their sales performance would be enhanced if alcohol were served. The Committee said consistency throughout the system was important and the public should be consulted. Staff suggested that a survey could be conducted with a specific question and an analysis prepared for the Board. This could be either a dedicated survey (for about \$20,000) or an omnibus survey (\$10,000).

Next Steps

The Board will receive the Concession Strategy Study final report at its regular meeting on May 1, 2006.

5. Next Meeting

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 pm. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 18, 2006.