

Minutes of Meeting
Planning Committee, Vancouver Park Board

DATA OF MEETING: September 19, 2006

ATTENDEES: Park Board Commissioners

Commissioner Korina Houghton, Chair
Commissioner Spencer Herbert
Commissioner Ian Robertson

Park Board Staff

Piet Rutgers	Director of Planning and Operations
Jim Lowden	Director of Stanley District
Mark Vulliamy	Manager of Research and Planning
Doug Taylor	Recreation Service Coordinator
Yuna Flewin	Committee Secretary

Delegations

Jeff Malmgren	Vancouver Field Sports Federation
Gavin Ross	Mount Pleasant Community Centre Association
Sharon Urton	Pacific Sport
Bob Sarti	Strathcona Parks Planning Committee
Dick Woldring	MoreSport
Maggie Leithead	Resident of Strathcona
Adrian Robertson	Resident of Strathcona

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm, with the following Agenda:

1. Approval of Minutes of September 5, 2006 Meeting
2. Trillium Parksite
3. Ceperley Playground – Air India Donation

1. Approval of Minutes of September 5, 2006 meeting

The minutes of the September 5, 2006 meeting were approved as presented.

2. Trillium Parksite

Mark Vulliamy provided the Committee with information regarding the potential of Trillium Parksite for installing two artificial playing fields. Mark presented a brief background of the proposed site, which is located on the False Creek Flats and was primarily used for industrial purposes. Immediately to the east of the site there is National Works Yard that was developed to replace the old Cambie Yard. On the other side there is a large open space owned by Providence Health Care, and it is proposed for the St. Paul's hospital relocation site, but there is currently no clear direction, and the assumption is that the lands need to be rezoned and that there will not be any site development in the near future. Other reference includes Strathcona Park to the northeast, McLean Park, Strathcona Community Centre, Elementary School and Library all within the Strathcona residential neighbourhood.

Trillium Parksite was acquired by the City in 1993 to satisfy a park dedication for subdivision. The intention at the time was to build two playing fields to serve the growing population in the downtown core. At the time of acquisition both the City Council and Park Board consulted the community specifically the Strathcona residents regarding the use and design of the park. The community did not support the proposed fields. A community program study was conducted by the APRA group for the Strathcona and Trillium Parks; their study is referred to as the APRA Plan. The APRA Plan recommends removing two playing fields from Strathcona Park and installing them in the Trillium site. Strathcona Park was redeveloped as the basis of the APRA plan.

The Synthetic Turf Rollout was as a result of the Playing Field Review conducted by the Park Board and School Board over two years from 2000 to 2002. One of the recommendations was to increase the field inventory over the 10-year period and build six new synthetic turfs that have the capacity of 24 regulation grass fields. This has to be done by intensifying the use of existing fields as building new playing fields will be extremely difficult. 2003 – 2005 Capital Plan included funding for two synthetic turf fields.

The public process was conducted late 2003 at Sir Charles Tupper School, in which 58 sites were reviewed as potential turfs using two sets of criteria. Out of the 58 sites five were short listed. One of the criteria was for the site to be adjacent to a secondary school. One such turf has already been built at Point Grey, and another one has been approved at the Vancouver Technical High School. The construction will commence early in the next year. The remaining three includes Churchill that is still a possible development site, and other two are off the list due to technical conditions.

Staff explained that the Strathcona residents have been consistently opposed to installing sports fields. Local residents have advocated for a passive use while field user groups have been concerned about the loss of two fields. However, looking at playfield supply in Vancouver there is a need for more playing fields. Historically, the ratio is 1 field to 5,000 residents. There is a difficulty in meeting the demand by the fast growing population in Vancouver. The Trillium site is located centrally and is ideal to serve the growing population. There are two grass fields and one gravel all-weather field in Strathcona Park. There is a demand in the northeast part of the city which is not particularly well-served.

The Park Board's current standard for neighbourhood park space requires 1.1 hectare per 1,000 residents. In Strathcona provision of the parks is 1.24 hectare per 1,000 residents, which is slightly higher than average; however, there are special aspects to consider. It is a low income neighbourhood, and there is a relatively limited open space for single family homes. Many residents rely on public transportation, and families need to access parks within their immediate environment. The estimated cost of park development is two million per turf in current estimate, which will likely to rise. The next steps would be to prepare a Board Report to proceed with the development of the park and a Council Report to request capital funds for the project.

Delegations

- Jeff Malmgren told the Committee that Vancouver Field Sports Federation has a long-term interest in this project. As the population in downtown area grows there is a deficit of playing fields. Many of the downtown parks such as Stanley Park and David Lam are practically impossible for field users to access as the field conditions are unsuitable, and they have to be shared with other park users. The Federation is also interested in promoting sports activities in the proposed neighbourhood. The new fields will encourage night time users as well as day time users, which will draw more people and programs to the neighbourhood. Mr. Malmgren enquired if this project does not go through where there will be a similar development in the future.
- Gavin Ross stated there is a need for a good public process above and beyond what has already happened as the previous process did not satisfy a large number of people. Mr. Ross also thinks there are too many synthetic turfs in the same neighbourhood.
- Sharon Urton told the Committee the neighbourhood needs the fields as the APRA report indicates as it is a lower income neighbourhood, and there is a need for youth to participate in sports activities. Considering the growing healthcare cost this is positive to youth sports education.
- Bob Sarti explained that the land was purchased, and funds were supposed to be used to build local amenities. There have been recent improvements done to Strathcona Park, and 80% of the park is used by sports users who are from outside the community. The proposed site is close to three different neighbourhoods, and it is crucial to reflect the wishes of the residents in the Strathcona community. The APRA and City public process last year made it clear that the residents in the community would like the needs of community reflected on the design of the park. Sports users are well represented by Andy Livingston and Strathcona Parks. The community would like a public process before going forward with the project.
- Dick Woldring explained the role of his organisation is to get children involved in sports. Fields must be close to where the children live. If there is going to be a field development at the Trillium site or somewhere else MoreSport would like to support it.
- Maggie Leithead is a resident of Strathcona and a member of Metro Women's Soccer League. She stated there are many people who would like this opportunity to play in the neighbourhood field as currently players have to travel outside of the community to play.
- Adrian Robertson is a resident and a soccer player. He explained that there is in practicality only one playing field as one of the two is closed for half a year. The winter field has a baseball diamond. He suggested Britannia High School as a good option for installing the artificial turf. He would like the Park Board to discuss different options for installing synthetic turfs in the community as it is not enjoyable to play on a gravel pit or with a baseball diamond.

Discussion

- A Commissioner asked why some of the sites were pulled out of the public consultation process. Staff explained that these sites were disqualified for use due to the criteria. One of the key elements is the level of light. Another element is the ground conditions. High school fields were also closely looked at, and there is one that could be considered. There will not be any other opportunity when geographical distribution is considered.
- A Commissioner enquired why two of the five short-listed sites were rejected. Staff responded the Killarney site was strongly supported by the community, and the needs still remain; however, the cost will be double on account of soil conditions. The Prince of Wales site has relatively good ground conditions, but it is right across from a couple of senior homes, and the school facility and parking are on the far side of the school. More parking space has to be built, and that will increase the cost in addition to the opposition from the community.
- A Commissioner asked if there was a community consultation during the APRA process. Staff answered that there was considerable community involvement, but not everyone approved of the proposal.
- A Commissioner asked what the ideal public process would consist of. A delegation commented that the previous consultations were dictated by the Board, and community's input was not reflected. The consultation should be done without any preset mandate to go forward with the proposal.
- A Commissioner asked the delegations for key reasons for opposing the proposal. One of the delegations told the Committee that the field is not what the community wants on site, but people want rest areas and nature space, which the community has been asking for 12 years. The community is not opposed to sports fields but rather think there are better places for installing them. Strategically, it is better to find somewhere else where there is a demand. A representative from the Carnegie Centre Association commented that the APRA community process was very impressive. All involved said they wanted different things, but no one said fields. The community was unified on that point. That piece of land was bought with the money that was supposed to be used for community amenities for Strathcona and Downtown East side to off-set the impact of new development. People were never given a chance to say what kind of amenities they wanted.
- A delegate asked if there was a preset mandate to the APRA public process by the Park Board, preferring the Trillium site for the fields. Staff responded that the consultation process was borne to balance off different interests. Some wanted space without fields, and others advocated for playing fields. The questionnaires were also translated into Chinese language for the Strathcona residents.
- One of the delegates commented that there is a need for reassessing the use of Strathcona Park and other parks to see if these are used for sports. It will be a great bonus to having the playing fields one can play during the day on Saturdays and Sundays, and games are never cancelled. Last year it rained a lot, and seven games out of 18 were cancelled or rescheduled because the fields were too wet.
- A delegate requested clarification on how many fields in the neighbourhood are available to play on. Staff responded that in Strathcona Park there is the Strathcona Oval that is a spring and summer soccer field, and in the fall it gets shut down. The

West Field opens up after the softball season so there is only one active field at any given time.

- A Commissioner asked what sort of amenities were put in when two fields in Strathcona Park were taken out. Staff responded that a skateboarding bowl, children's play equipment, climbing wall, and a basketball court.
- A Commissioner asked the Strathcona community representatives if there were a community consultation process and the result were to have the playing field that would be acceptable. A delegation answered that there have been two public consultations, and for both times the community was very clear and stated that the small community of Strathcona is up against the people of the City of Vancouver and well organized lobby groups for sports fields.
- A Commissioner expressed his support for the proposed sports fields as an adequate public consultation process was given. There is a desperate need for fields, and it will be a good addition to the community. Sports are an integral part of children's development, and schools are cutting back on sports time.
- A Commissioner commented that two fields sound like an excellent idea. A public consultation process should be conducted to hear what the community says.

Next Steps

Staff to prepare a report for the Trillium site development and public consultation process.

3. Ceperley Playground Update

Further to questions raised by Commissioners at the last Planning Committee meeting, the Director of Stanley District presented responses provided by the Air India Secretariat. In summary, the Secretariat has had contact with approximately 180 sets of relatives of the 331 victims. Fifteen live in the Greater Vancouver area of which five live in the City of Vancouver. The Secretariat asked the current head of the families' group to survey opinion on including names. The Secretariat has stated that 39 of 40 families asked wanted names.

Summary

The Planning Committee received the information from staff. The project will remain on hold pending further discussion with the whole Board.

4. Next Meeting

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 3, 2006.