

Date: March 20, 2010



TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Key Principles for Operating Relationships with Community Centres

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board endorse specific key principles (equity among community centres; access for residents to a network of community centres; protection of vulnerable populations; financial sustainability) to guide improvements to the operating relationships between the Park Board and local community associations.

POLICY

The Park Board operates community centres through Joint Operating Agreements with local community centre associations.

BACKGROUND

The Park Board has been working on updating the contents of operating agreements with local community centres since 2005. Since this time, only one new agreement has been completed.

In developing its budget for 2010, the Park Board faced \$2.8 million shortfall, of which \$1.1M was assigned to community centre operations. To address this financial challenge, staff and community centre association representatives were able to reach agreement on an operational plan for 2010, which maintained service levels and avoided significant impacts to staffing levels at community centres. The basis for the approach involved reaching consensus on key principles that guided the decision making process. These principles included;

- Equity among community centres
- Access to a network of community centres
- Protection of vulnerable communities

Community association representatives and staff endorsed (through a Memorandum of Agreement) the operational plan for 2010. The memorandum specified that these changes were for 2010 only.

Park Board staff and community association representatives agreed that further discussion was required to address additional concerns regarding the long term operation relationship between the parties. These issues include the inequity of community centre resource allocation, providing access to a network of community centres, and the protection of vulnerable populations through a sustainable operating relationship; Associations' involvement in management HR issues at Centres; and a dispute resolution mechanism. It was noted that this list was not all inclusive and the other operational issues could be added by either party.

DISCUSSION

Staff are asking the Board to confirm these principles as the basis of discussions with community associations. Given the expected budget pressures for 2011, this process must begin immediately.

Equity among Community Centres

The focus of this principle is fair and equitable access to recreational programs for users at all Vancouver community centres. Equity must address socio-economic barriers to participation (ability to pay, language, etc.) and ensure that resources are allocated to community centres based on need.

Access to a Network of Centres

The community centre system should be based on common policies and program standards, yet still provide a diverse program offering through local involvement in programming at community centres. Residents desire the ability to use all community centres with a common expectation of service and value.

Protection of Vulnerable Populations

Vulnerable populations include residents who are made vulnerable by their "financial circumstances or place of residence, health, age, personal characteristics, functional or developmental status, ability to communicate effectively, and presence of chronic illness or disability". They also include residents whose needs are not addressed by traditional community centres or who feel they cannot access or use community centre programs or services offered. All residents must have access to basic recreation services.

Sustainability of the Operating Relationship

The operating relationship between the community associations and the Park Board must be financial sustainable within the limitations of the community centres' operation – based on a combination of Park Board and Association resources. The operation of community centres should also reflect the increased efficiencies of sharing resources where possible.

NEXT STEPS

Staff are preparing to initiate the discussions with local community associations on improvements to the operation relationships, per the executed Memorandum of Agreement. The foundation for this dialogue should include key principles to guide the parties towards an outcome which will provide the greatest overall benefit to residents who value the city's recreation programs and facilities.

A meeting with community association representatives will be scheduled in early April and then staff will meet individually with each association. The Associations will be asked for their suggestions, comments and strategies to address these operating issues and concerns. This process should be complete by the end of June for inclusion in the 2011 budget process.

CONCLUSION

Staff recommend that the Board approve the recommendation to endorse four specific principles; equity among community centres, access for residents to a network of community centres, and protection of vulnerable populations, financial sustainability, for the upcoming discussions between staff and community associations.

Prepared by:
Stanley District
Vancouver Board of Parks & Recreation
Vancouver, B.C.