

**Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Parks and Recreation
Planning & Environment Committee Meeting
Held at the Vancouver Park Board Office on
Thursday, September 9, 2010**

ATTENDEES: Park Board Commissioners

Sarah Blyth, Chair
Raj Hundal, Vice Chair
Ian Robertson
Constance Barnes
Aaron Jasper

Park Board Staff

Peter Kuran	Director, Stanley District
Danica Djurkovic	Acting Director, Planning & Operations
Philip Josephs	Manager of Revenue Services
Tilo Driessen	Manager of Planning and Research
Bill Manning	Manager of Horticulture and Arboriculture
Octavio Silva	Manager of Business Development
Barinder Lalli	Recorder

Delegations:

- Christopher Gaze, Artistic Director, Bard on the Beach
- Robert Barr, Managing Director, Bard on the Beach
- Bruce M. Watson, Vancouver Historical Society
- Eleanor Haldey

The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm, with the following agenda:

1. Approval of Minutes of the July 8, 2010 Meeting
2. Bard on the Beach –New Venue Plans
3. Victory Square Historical Plaque
4. Farmyard Update
5. Adanac Community Garden Proposal
6. GCAT –Update on City Process

1. Approval of Minutes

The Committee advised that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning & Environment Committee held on Thursday, July 08, 2010 be revised to reflect the correct time the meeting was adjourned.

2. Bard on the Beach –New Venue Plans

Staff discussed the location of Bard on the Beach in Vanier Park and the parking lots available surrounding the area. In total there are 6 parking lots, some of which are operated by the Park Board while others belong to businesses in the area. Staff introduced Christopher Gaze and Robert Barr from Bard on the Beach who made a presentation regarding a new venue plan for Bard on the Beach.

Bard on the Beach has been in Vanier Park for the last 20 years and began with a single tent in the park. Now, two decades later, it has become a highly anticipated event with four productions catering to over 90 000 patrons each year. Bard on the Beach employs over 150 seasonal staff and over 200 volunteers. It has garnered a loyal tourist patronage, an artistic reach into the community and has welcomed school participation.

Currently Bard on the Beach is facing capacity challenges. Shows are sold out weeks in advance which results in last minute buyers being turned away. To combat these capacity challenges Bard on the Beach would like to increase seating capacity by 400 seats over the next 2 years. This will be done by adding 240 seats to a new main stage tent in 2011 and adding 160 seats to the Campbell Studio Stage in 2012. The change will result in a 6% footprint increase in Vanier Park. With the new venue there will be enhanced technical capabilities, better service to amenities and improve the use of the park.

A public consultation was done in early August with the 1206 surveys mailed out and 122 respondents. 85% were in favour of the expansion while 15% were against it. The main concerns of those against the expansion were that they would be unable to use the park. However, because the footprint change remains low, that does not become an issue. Bard Patrons were also surveyed. Out of 9200 people contacted, 1297 people responded. 88% were in favour of the new venue and 13% were not. Of those against the new venue, 95% were worried about artistic changes while 5% were concerned with parking and access.

An informal parking audit was also done. The lots were checked 15 minutes after show commencement over a 3 day period. The results from the survey show that there are 540 parking stalls in Vanier Park and the average number of stalls in use on show nights are 308.

The Committee thanked the delegation for their presentation.

Discussion

A member of the Committee inquired what the current seating capacity for the production is and what the future changes to that number will be. The delegation replied that the main production stage has 520 seats which would go to 750 and the Douglas Campbell Studio Stage has 240 seats which would go to 400.

A member of the Committee asked the delegation to elaborate on the infrastructure improvements. The delegation replied that they are exploring the possibilities of improving the electrical and the access to water and sewage.

A member of the Committee inquired how the parking survey was completed and whether there were current restrictions to any of the lots now. Staff replied that the Boat Launch Lot has two rows that are specifically for vehicles with trailers. The member of the Committee asked if those spots were included in the informal parking audit. The delegation replied that they would have to go back and check.

A member of the Committee asked the delegation how they had worked with the park board to make this plan. The delegation responded that the park board gave them the parking areas/zones that they would need to check.

A member of the Committee asked the delegation how Bard on the Beach affects the parking for other attractions in the area and what support they would provide to them. The delegation replied that they did not notice any full lots, usage rate was higher, but there were still no full lots even on the Weekends.

The Committee discussed the delegations presentation and request. The Committee expressed its support for the expansion but shared concern over parking issues that would arise as a result of an increased capacity at the venue. A member of the Committee suggested increased communication with bylaw enforcement and creating relationships with shuttle services to alleviate resident concerns regarding parking overflow. The Committee recommended that the Bard on the Beach proposal be approved for the board.

3. Victory Square Historical Plaque

Staff introduced a delegation from the Vancouver Historical Society who presented a proposal for a historical plaque in Victory Square. The Vancouver Historical Society has been present for 70 years and its goal is to help generate an interest in history. Victory square is an iconic location in the city; it is where the city began. More importantly since the 1920s it has become a place of remembrance and respect.

So far the society has put up two plaques in partnership with Park Board, one in Devonian park and another in Stanley Park. The proposed sign would provide information on Victory Square history and ensure that people today remember the past. The plaque would be a meter by a half a meter on the north east corner of Cambie and Hastings and would be in the format of a timeline. The cost of the plaque will be assumed by the Vancouver Historical Society. Aldridge-Pears have agreed to design the sign and the wording has been worked out by a Committee.

The Committee thanked the delegation for their ongoing work.

Discussion

Staff noted that they are in full support of this plaque. The Committee was pleasantly surprised with the rich history of this area, and thankful to Vancouver Historical Society for the great work they do. A member of the Committee asked if the goal was to have this project completed by November 11th. The delegation replied that it was.

The Committee was unanimous in their support of this plaque.

4. Farmyard Update

Staff presented an update on the Children's farmyard in Stanley Park. During the core services review in 2009 the decision was made to close the Children's Farmyard. In December 2009 there was a Request for Expressions of Interest issued when it became evident that there was public desire to keeping the facility open. The Park Board initially received two proposals. Both proponents withdrew, one in writing the other by phone, when they realized what a challenge it would be to keep the Farmyard open.

The farmyard is open 5 months of the year and has experienced on-going financial challenges between 2005 and 2010. The current operating deficit has averaged at over \$150 000 during this period. If the Farmyard were to remain open additional funds would be required for improvements. In the short term \$75 000 would be needed and in the long-term \$500 000 would be required.

The closure would have an impact on both staff and the animals. One full-time staff will face lay-off but CUPE 1004 is working on finding a job for that person. Three auxiliary employees are in the seniority pool and the Human Resource team is working with them to convert their hours to full-time to help them find work. An additional five to six auxiliary employees will be able to apply for similar auxiliary positions that might become vacant. The 122 animals at the Farmyard will be relocated to new homes from organizations that have expressed interest in them. No monetary value will be placed on the animals as locating appropriate homes with experienced care-givers will be the main criteria. All new homes will be inspected before the animals are relocated.

Staff recommend the Farmyard close on January 2nd 2011 following the end of the bright night Christmas events and that all animals be relocated to approved organizations that have expressed interest in giving them safe and secure homes.

Discussion

A member of the Committee asked if there was an increase in attendance at the Farmyard this past summer. Staff replied that there was an increase from the average of 30 000 visits to 34 000 visits but that any increase in revenue was taken away by increased expenses.

A member of the Committee inquired whether a new activity would take place in the location or whether it would be returned to green space. Staff replied that the space could

be used for a variety of activities including new outdoor, educational or environmental experiences.

A member of the Committee asked who would bear the cost associated with tearing down the Farmyard. The staff replied that they did not know who would be responsible for that cost yet as it is dependent on what the area becomes.

A member of the Committee asked if the buildings were sound. Staff replied that the barns could be taken down at very low cost and that the structures were sound and could remain.

The following delegation requested to speak to the Committee:

- Eleanor Hadley

The following is a summary of the comments made by the foregoing delegation:

- Does not understand how it costs so much to run the farmyard and suggests hiring a farmer or a student to alleviate the costs.
- Concerned that staff will turn the area into a commercial area.

The Committee recommendation to the board is to shutdown the Farmyard.

5. Adanac Community Garden Proposal

Adanac Park is on the border of Burnaby and Vancouver. In May of this year the Board received a proposal from Adanac Community Garden Society to build a Community Garden in Adanac Park. The proposal called for a Community Garden in the southeast corner of the park that would be 125 feet by 95 feet with 56 garden plots.

In June staff undertook a consultation process that involved distributing approximately 150 flyers to the area surrounding the park. The Park Board received 9 responses from local residents with 7 in support of the garden and 2 opposed. The 2 opposed were concerned that the garden would displace children who use the area to practice soccer and football and for those who use it for picnics. Staff believe the park is large enough to satisfy the needs of both the current users and the proposed Community Garden.

Discussion

A member of the Committee asked staff whether 9 responses out of 150 is the norm for this type of survey. Staff replied that low response is a good thing as people generally only respond if they are unhappy with the proposal.

A member of the Committee asked staff who would be responsible for the cost of the garden and whether the bedding would be raised. Staff replied that the responsibility of the cost lies with the non-profit society and it is up to them to decide whether they want raised bedding.

A member of the Committee asked what happens to the Community Garden if it loses support or is not maintained. Staff replied that there is a policy that will enable staff to maintain the garden or review a need for the garden if that happens. Staff added that it has never happened before.

The Committee discussed the proposal and asked that staff bring a detailed outline of the park looks during the board meeting to help provide a visualization of the garden.

6. GCAT –Update on City Process

Staff presented an update on the Greenest City Action Team (GCAT). The mayor started a plan last year where Vancouver is to become the greenest city in the world by 2020. City staff will work with experts in a variety of fields. The plan has 10 long-term goals and 10 suggested targets and include metrics for the targets. The City of Vancouver Sustainability office provides guidance and leadership for this process.

Public consultation is done continuously through the ‘talk green to us’ website and was also done through an information night called ‘Pecha Kucha’ which had over 2000 attendees.

Amongst other initiatives, Park Board participation in this process is to provide easy access to nature through parks, greenways and other natural spaces, to have every person live within a five-minute walking distance of a natural space and to plant 150 000 trees by 2020.

The first target, having every person live within a five-minute walk of a natural space, is currently not met by the Park Board. The strategies involved in meeting this target are to complete the Council-approved greenways, re-purpose existing local street bikeways into greenways, develop sections of streets into natural and usable park-like spaces and to acquire more park land and public open spaces. The Park Board aims to develop strategies to meet the metric while refraining from using resources in areas that do not need them.

The second target is to plant 150 000 trees. The strategy involved is to develop an urban forest management plan, which would include updating and incorporating existing tree management plans. The first action is to increase street trees. However, there is a high price tag with this and it will incur long-term operating costs. The second action will be to increase trees in parks, playgrounds, golf courses and other city-owned land. The third action will be to increase tree planting on private property. This will be through tree planting programs with schools and not for profit societies. This can be done at low cost since these can be smaller trees.

The next step for the Park Board will be to submit a draft plan to the sustainability office on October 8th. In the Fall of 2010 and Winter 2011 there will be public feedback on the draft plans. Then, in Spring 2011 the Greenest City 2020 plans will be completed.

Discussion

A Committee member asked how many street trees are planted on average each year. Staff replied that the number varies but stays somewhere between 3000 and 5000 and includes trees planted through development projects.

A member of the Committee asked whether there are focuses other than expanding 'green space'. Staff replied that there are more targets set within the GCAT, and every city department has been currently charged with the specific targets.

A Committee member inquired what the definition of 'natural space' was. Staff replied that it was parks, anything in the jurisdiction of park board, greenways and park like spaces managed by other agencies. Staff added that school yards were not included because some function as green spaces while others do not.

A Committee member asked if creating pocket parks was an option and whether it would be cheaper than acquiring new land. Staff replied that they are working with engineering services who are enthusiastic about that option and will consult with public on the most appropriate locations.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm

Danica Djurkovic, Acting Director,
Planning & Operations

Commissioner Sarah Blyth,
Chair