

**Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Parks and Recreation  
Planning & Environment Committee Meeting  
Held at the Vancouver Park Board Office on  
Thursday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

**ATTENDEES:      Park Board Commissioners**

Sarah Blyth, Chair  
Raj Hundal, Vice Chair  
Aaron Jasper

**Park Board Staff**

|                  |                                                        |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Danica Djurkovic | Acting Director, Planning & Operations                 |
| Thomas Soulliere | Manager of Recreation Services                         |
| Doug Pirozek     | Recreation Service Co-ordinator - Sports<br>Facilities |
| Barinder Lalli   | Recorder                                               |

**Delegations:**

- Grant Rimer, Vancouver Cannons
- Mike Kelly, Vancouver Cannons
- Mary McCann, Vancouver Minor Baseball
- Bruce Wright, Hastings Park Conservancy
- John O'Grady
- Stephen Rybak

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

1. Approval of Minutes of the October 7, 2010 Meeting
2. Vancouver Cannons
3. Dog Off-Leash Area –West Memorial Park
4. New Brighton Park Salt Water Marsh Proposal
5. Approval of 2011 Planning & Environment Committee meeting dates

**1. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Planning & Environment Committee held on Thursday, October 7, 2010 were adopted as circulated.

**2. Vancouver Cannons**

Staff received a request from the Vancouver Cannons Baseball Club which is in the Senior Pacific Baseball League to request a home-field site. Currently the Vancouver

Cannons play in New Westminster but must establish a home-field site in order to remain in the league before the 2011 season begins.

The Park Board has an inventory of four acceptable diamonds. Of those four, two were short-listed by staff as potential options for the Vancouver Cannons home-field. The first option is Hillcrest Park and the second option is Gordon Park. Hillcrest Park has the highest quality diamond, but has an insufficient number of time slots to accommodate the Vancouver Cannons. Gordon Park is the second choice but requires upgrades to meet the specifications of the Cannons' League.

The Vancouver Cannons have indicated that some funding is available for diamond upgrades including the fencing and the landscaping. The rough estimate for upgrading Gordon Park is \$70 000-\$100 000. The next steps on this project involve working with the Park Development office on the specifics of facility upgrades and detailed costing. However, the availability of Park Development staff is limited due to the existing list of projects for 2011.

The following delegations requested to speak to the Committee:

- Grant Rimer, Vancouver Cannons
- Mike Kelly, Vancouver Cannons
- Mary McCann, Vancouver Minor Baseball

The following is a summary of the foregoing delegations:

- Goal of Vancouver Cannons is to have kids receive college scholarships.
- If the Vancouver Cannons do not have a field by June in Vancouver, it will result in being kicked out of the league.
- Vancouver Cannons has tried to work with Vancouver Community Baseball, but Vancouver Community Baseball does not want to share the field at Hillcrest Park.
- Vancouver Cannons want to have a working solution and does not want to fold the team because a solution cannot be reached
- Vancouver Minor Baseball is willing to work with Vancouver Cannons to share the baseball diamond however there are concerns that the timing will overlap.
- Vancouver Minor Baseball would like to see Gordon Park upgraded because it does need it and are willing to share.
- Vancouver Minor Baseball is very accommodating with other associations as there is a shortage of parks with baseball diamonds for older aged kids.

### Discussion

A member of the Committee asked the delegation from Vancouver Cannons if Gordon Park is workable for them. The delegation replied that if a backstop is created then it can be.

A member of the Committee commented that baseball diamonds should be included in the next capital plan if the Park Board does not have a large inventory.

A member of the Committee asked what kind of a resolution would be required to keep the Vancouver Cannons in good standing with their league. The delegation replied that the timing is very tight and a field would need to be in place for their season in 2012. The delegation added that something would have to be in writing before their season ends in July of 2011.

A member of the Committee asked the delegation from Vancouver Cannons how much money was available to fund the outfield fencing. The delegation replied that they had roughly \$5000 to \$7000.

A member of the Committee asked staff whether the timeline was reasonable. Staff replied that the funding is an issue and that it would be part of the 2012 capital plan which will not be set until sometime in September.

A member of the Committee asked whether Hillcrest Park is booked completely. Staff replied that there are timeslots available at Hillcrest Park, however the gaps that are available are not long enough to accommodate both leagues. Staff added that in the long run Gordon Park is the better option.

A member of the Committee asked if the capital plan is the only option for this project and whether there are other ways to give the Vancouver Cannons a definitive answer by the end of July. Staff replied that they can talk with different proponents but need to ensure that the Committee supports this proposal first.

The Committee asked staff to come back to the Planning and Environment Committee in early spring with some proposed options to give the Vancouver Cannons some certainty.

### **3. Dog Off-leash Area –West Memorial Park**

Staff received a petition for a Dogs Off-leash area in West Memorial Park. Dunbar Community Centre asked for public to comment in the Dunbar Recreation Guide booklet. The number of people that responded was 58 in total, with 42 people for and 16 people against the dog off-leash park. The intent of Park Boards staff is to develop a study of all parks to determine where the best places to put off-leash ones are. The dog off-leash issue is a controversial one and there are real extremes of people that want them versus people that don't want them.

The following delegations requested to speak to the Committee:

- John O'Grady
- Stephen Ryback

The following is a summary of the foregoing delegations:

- Began a petition for a dog off-leash area in West Memorial Park after receiving a warning from animal control. The petition represents 150 households.
- Were told to wait before sending the petition into the Park Board by Bill Manning to ensure that staff is able to do a full review and consultation so that all the requirements are met for this park to be a dog off-leash park.
- The petition was sent in the summer of 2010 and it has been difficult to get this item on the agenda.
- Have been using this park since 1978 and appeared in-front of the Committee's predecessors to create the dog off-leash park in Balaclava Park
- Dog owners in Balaclava Park are responsible owners and the users of West Memorial Park would be the same.
- There is a need for a dog off-leash park as there is not one west of Dunbar. This would be a great place that dog owners could come to exercise their dogs without having conflict with other users and it would reduce the pressure on Balaclava Park

### Discussion

A member of the Committee commented that the dog off-leash issue is one of the most controversial items that the Park Board has to deal with. Last year Devonian Park and Fraser River Park were able to have dog off-leash areas because they were able to physically separate the people with dogs from those without them. Unless we can physically separate the dog off-leash area it does not seem workable.

A member of the Committee asked staff if it was possible to add fencing to West Memorial Park as was done in Devonian Park. Staff replied that could be possible. The delegation added that there are natural boundaries on all four sides and that it is already a well defined area and it does not need a fence.

A member of the Committee asked what the delegations concerns would be if the area were to be physically separated from the rest of the Park. The delegation replied that they would not want to feel excluded from the area.

A member of the Committee commented that they had recently gone to the park and it seemed like a very large area to have off-leash. The delegation replied that the area is heavily treed and there is a large open area to play with Frisbees and there is a slope to get to higher ground so the area will not get worn out by heavy use.

A member of the Committee commented that when a portion of a park is designated off-leash then the whole park seems to become a dog off-leash park. Another member of the Committee commented that there will be a review of dog off-leash parks within the Park Board and that a solution to this contentious issue is being sought.

The Committee would like staff to come back to the January Planning and Environment Committee with the costing estimates to create a fence, similar to the Devonian Park fence, for a physically separated dog off-leash area in West Memorial Park for an area much smaller than noted by delegation (up to a half of the noted area at the most – staff to recommend). If the Board decides to proceed at that time with the proposed direction, the next step would need a full community consultation process before coming to the Board for the final decision.

#### **4. New Brighton Park Salt Water Marsh Proposal**

Staff introduced Bruce Wright from the Hastings Park Conservancy to present a proposal for a Salt Water Marsh in New Brighton Park at the mouth of Renfrew Creek. The Hastings Park Conservancy was established in 1996 and its goal to preserve Hastings and Renfrew Creeks is one of its priorities.

Currently the proposed area is very soggy with wet paths and cannot be used as a result of its condition. The environmental benefits that would result from a Salt Water Marsh would strengthen the overall ecosystem integrity, it would add a productive estuarine habitat and increase biodiversity.

This would be a significant new asset for the Parks system and would include benefits such as provide educational opportunities within the Park, it would increase the amount of people visiting the park and enhance a space that it underutilized. Some of the issues that will need to be addressed are that the dog off-leash park would need to be relocated and approval would be required from the DFO.

The Committee thanked the delegation for their presentation.

#### Discussion

A member of the Committee asked what the timeline and process would be for this process. Staff replied that they would need to contact all stakeholders and park users first. Staff added that this concept fits well with the overall direction of the Park Board, however it is challenging to proceed with it in 2011 based on staff and funding resources. Staff would need to find out more about the Hastings Park Master Plan and understand what the next steps for it are. If there is a good fit then funding can be pursued in the 2012-2014 Capital Plan.

A member of the Committee stated that through conversations with Dave Hutch, many of the greening issues are at the top of the Hastings Master Plan so this could align well with the PNE master plan. The Committee member asked if 2012 Capital Plan was the best case scenario for funding. Staff replied that if there is a sense of urgency then an in-house review could be done to gain some history and background on the area first.

A member of the Committee asked if it was possible to use feedback for New Brighton Park from the Hastings Master Plan for this project. Staff replied that there would still need to be a focused discussion on New Brighton Park led by the Park Board.

A member of the Committee asked if fresh water is necessary to have a functioning ecosystem in the Salt Water Marsh. The delegation replied that there would need to be some sort of freshwater source but more studies would need to be done to determine how much.

A member of the Committee asked staff to give their best case scenario of a timeline for this project with the current resources and capital plan. Staff replied that the 2011 Budget has been set and there is no room for new projects. Some in-house background and feedback from stakeholders can be done. Staff are supportive of this project however there is no budget for it right now.

The delegation stated that since this is a habitat rehabilitation project, money could potentially be donated from different proponents.

A member of the Committee inquired which types of animals would appear as a result of the Salt Water Marsh. The delegation replied that there would be fish, invertebrates and other sea creatures as well as birds, swans, geese and the odd coyotes and raccoons.

A member of the Committee asked for rough estimates on how much this project would cost. The delegation replied that to move the dirt would cost at least \$300 000 so the entire project would be roughly in the \$1-2 million dollar range.

Bruce will do some more research for possible partnerships that may bring some external funding and will update staff with any opportunities.

## **5. Approval of 2011 Planning and Environment Committee meeting dates**

The Committee approved the proposed dates for 2011 Planning and Environment Committee meetings. The first meeting of 2011 will take place on January 13.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.

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Danica Djurkovic, Acting Director,  
Planning & Operations

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Commissioner Sarah Blyth,  
Chair