



November 9, 2016

TO: Park Board Chair and Commissioners
FROM: General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Marking National Flag of Canada Day 2017

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Vancouver Park Board approve the installation of a flag pole in Queen Elizabeth Park near the Bloedel Conservatory to commemorate National Flag of Canada Day 2017, as described in this report, subject to successful engineering studies.

POLICY

The Park Board approves major changes in parks.

BACKGROUND

On February 22, 2016, the Board passed a motion directing staff to report back on the feasibility of locating a permanent flag pole on or next to the Bloedel Conservatory for National Flag of Canada Day on February 15, 2017, and to include a plan for a permanent marker and celebration to mark the 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation.

As the site with the highest elevation in Vancouver, a flag pole will be highly visible from this location. Additionally, the Bloedel Conservatory was originally conceived and built as a Centennial project and is on the register of National Historic Places. The spacious and widely visited surrounding plaza is well-suited for ceremony on appropriate occasions such as National Flag of Canada Day (February 15) and Remembrance Day (November 11), and is a logical place for a flag pole installation to fly the Canadian Flag.

DISCUSSION

Currently, there are eight (8) free-standing flag poles in Vancouver parks, with additional flag poles at a majority of community centres in Vancouver. Based on staff experience with these existing poles, it is recommended that flag pole heights be limited to 18.3m (60 feet) and include an internal rigging system. Maintenance and engineering for flag poles beyond this height becomes cost prohibitive and an 18.3m pole will still be significantly prominent in the landscape. Internal rigging is recommended since poles with external rigging require a large vehicle to access the system, which presents additional costs, time commitments, and potential safety concerns.

Staff initially explored four (4) potential locations for a flag pole installation. Depending on the location, the cost to supply and install a new flag pole ranges from \$50,000 to \$80,000. These estimated costs include engineering studies, construction of a footing, pole purchase and installation, and a contingency. Funding is available in the current capital budget.

The first location considered was the top of the Conservatory dome. Locating a flag pole on the dome would create access issues for staff and would likely require guywires or roof modifications to support the pole. As the building is architecturally and nationally significant in its current form, locating a flag pole on the Conservatory directly was not pursued.

Staff then explored three (3) location options in the plaza surrounding the Conservatory, as illustrated below.



Figure 1: Potential QE Park Flag Pole Locations

Option A: an underutilized area between the upper plaza fountain and the entrance to the Conservatory surrounded by a large staircase which provides an opportunity for staging during ceremonies; the stairs in this location create a further sense of height over the lower plaza and the space is accessible from the parking lot. The estimated cost of Option A is \$50,000.



Figure 2a: Option A - Existing



Figure 2b: Option A - Proposed

Option B: replace one existing memorial bench (that could be relocated) on the main plaza; location is visually prominent and accessible, but adjacent benches and walls limit gathering space potential. The estimated cost of Option B is \$50,000.



Figure 3a: Option B - Existing



Figure 3b: Option B - Proposed

Option C: a retaining wall and walk-out from the existing plaza would be created to form a viewing platform; this option would not impact the plaza directly, but would require a new wall requiring geotechnical review. The estimated cost of Option C is \$80,000.



Figure 4a: Option C - Existing



Figure 4b: Option C - Proposed

Of the three proposed options, Option A is the approach preferred and recommended by staff. Option A will not involve substantial changes to any existing park features, is accessible for the public and staff, and creates a focal point in an underutilized area.

Staff further recommend creating a concrete plinth around the base of the flag pole to give the pole more presence and to create a surface for the mounting of a commemorative plaque. This approach may also reduce the extent of excavation necessary for a buried footing, saving costs and potential construction complications.

There is some uncertainty about the geotechnical and structural needs for the pole. As such, upon Board approval, staff will proceed with detailed site investigations for Option A. Should Option A not be feasible, staff would proceed with Option B as the alternate location.

Dependent upon successful engineering study outcomes, staff would then award a contract for the design of the base and installation of the pole, and would work with the successful design-build team to target installation of the flag pole for a celebratory event on National Flag of Canada Day on February 15, 2017. A commemorative plaque would also be installed for official unveiling. This public event would include media and photo opportunities, similar to recent park openings and new park announcements.

SUMMARY

In recognition of Canada's 150th anniversary of confederation, staff recommend the installation of a new 18.3m tall flag pole in the plaza near the Bloedel Conservatory in Queen Elizabeth Park. With Board approval, staff will proceed with detailed site investigations for Option A as the most accessible, available, and visually prominent location (as outlined in this report). Should this option be found not feasible, Option B will be investigated as an alternate location. Subject to successful engineering studies, the proposed new pole and commemorative plaque would be installed for an official unveiling and celebratory event on National Flag of Canada Day 2017.

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