

July 6, 1995

SUBJECT: Environmental Education\Interpretation Planning Workshop Report

#### RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board approve in principle the accompanying Environmental Education\Interpretation Workshop report.

THAT short term priorities requiring funding be included for consideration in the 1996 operating budget.

THAT terms of reference be developed for an Advisory Committee with a followup report to the Board.

#### DISCUSSION

An information report was submitted to the Board April 24, 1995 which discussed the development of a Longterm Plan for Environmental Education\Interpretation for the Vancouver Park Board.

On May 27, 1995 a workshop was held to discuss the present and future plans for education and interpretation of the natural environment, the possible roles for the Vancouver Park Board and the opportunities for cooperation with other groups.

In planning the workshop, efforts were made to include as many education\interpretation organizations based within the Lower Mainland as possible. A diverse group of individuals representing over sixty groups, (list included in the Workshop Report) many with specialties related to interpretation, were invited to participate.

Dr. Sarah Groves assisted with the process of facilitation of the workshop and prepared the workshop report. The report will be distributed to all invited participants.

There was a general impression that the groups that attended shared many common beliefs and ideas. During the course of the workshop many similar problems in delivery of their services and resources were identified. There was general satisfaction with the workshop design. Participants were enthusiastic and involved in discussions of workshop subjects. Different points of view were appreciated and shared.

Evaluation of the workshop at its conclusion produced positive feedback from the participants. Many were encouraged by the Park Board direction regarding environmental education and the potential for the future. Others were grateful for the opportunity to network with other similar interest organizations.

While an extensive invitation list was developed workshop participants were invited to submit additional names for future consideration. The

additions will be invited to become involved in future planning activities and will receive copies of the workshop report.

## Workshop Report

The workshop has listed recommendations in the form of short, medium and long term priorities which the Board can use in considering the next steps. Staff have reviewed and considered the range of priorities. Cost estimates and time lines were subsequently developed.

Nine short term priorities are listed, many of which can be included as part of the present annual operating budget. The workshop group looked at specific short term priorities as being achievable within the next fiscal year with the additional costs being considered in the upcoming budget. The early stage priorities were also considered very important for the continued development of programming. Of special significance was the establishment of a position to coordinate the efforts of various groups undertaking environmental programming and set a foundation for a well organized city wide environmental interpretation program on a city wide basis.

Medium term priorities highlight the need for well developed inventory of natural resources in city parks, continued development of education programs and coordination with other government levels to develop programs. The long term priorities stress continued improvement of programs and consider a possible permanent site for the growing environmental activities. The more costly elements listed as long term priorities should be considered as part of future capital budgeting.

The workshop also recognized the importance of continued planning evaluation. A progress report prepared with staff involvement will help to assess programs and review implementation schedules. This can be included as part of the Park Board Annual Report.

A final recommendation is for the creation of an advisory committee to monitor implementation progress and further advise the Board. An advisory committee structure is under review. With the high degree of interest from the groups attending the workshop the inclination is to welcome all participants who wish to become involved.

## CONCLUSIONS

The workshop on environmental education\interpretation programs for the Vancouver Park Board was very favourably received by participating groups. Many respondents were pleased that the Park Board recognized the growing importance of these types of programs and the increasing public interest in environmental issues. The workshop format identified a series of short, medium and long term priorities that may be considered by the Board in order for specific actions to be taken of environmental programming.

Staff have reviewed the priorities list and recommend that short term priority items included as part of the 1996 operating budget. Some of the priority items are already included. Work will continue as the budget permits. Additional items included in the short term priority list should be considered as part of a 1996 operating budget. The more costly medium and long term priorities should be considered as part of the capital budgeting process.

Staff also believe that an annual report will provide important public information and accountability. An advisory committee of professional environmental educators and interpreters is seen as essential for continued development of quality programs. The committee will also ensure that the Park Board continues to be fully informed on progress and direction. Board staff will act as facilitators for the group meetings. The structure for such an advisory committee is under review.

Prepared by:

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