

September 14, 1995

SUBJECT: Environmental Education/Interpretation Plan - Advisory  
Committee Terms of Reference

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the Board accept the following terms of reference for an Environmental Education/Interpretation Advisory Committee

2. That a Liaison Commissioner be appointed for this Advisory Committee

BACKGROUND:

An Environmental Education/Interpretation Workshop was held on May 27, 1995, attended by 22 local organizations having interest or working in similar fields. This was the first step in developing a long term plan for environmental education and interpretation in the Vancouver parks system. The workshop reviewed the overall vision for a citywide environmental education program and identified a series of short, medium and long term priorities toward realizing these goals.

The workshop recommended that an advisory committee be established to monitor the implementation process and advise the Board on events and circumstances that might influence the priorities. This report establishes the terms of reference for an advisory committee.

DISCUSSION:

The Participants

The number of people and their backgrounds were the first areas considered in developing an advisory committee. Twenty two organizations that attended the workshop were enthusiastic about the concept and encouraged by the Park Board role. Many were interested in continuing with the development of a formal plan. Given the high degree of interest and support for the concept, invitations will be extended to all workshop participants to attend a first session.

The first order of business will be to define membership within the committee and to decide whether to expand or reduce the group size. After reviewing the role of the committee, the group will be asked to decide on their own structure to accomplish the necessary tasks. Staff will facilitate the meetings of the advisory committee, providing the worksites and meeting resources required.

The Role of the Advisory Committee

Regular meetings will provide opportunities for input from experienced environmental education personnel. The group will:

- a) Make recommendations regarding the implementation priorities approved by the Board and provide the Board with information to assist them in making decisions related to the funding of the programs.
- b) Prepare an annual report for environmental education in cooperation with Park Board staff.
- c) Make regular assessments of environmental education priorities, review current trends in environmental education and recommend new directions where appropriate.
- d) Schedule an annual theme related workshop addressing environmental education issues. Some proposed topics would include:
  - enhancement programming for selected species or habitats within city parks,
  - improving networking opportunities and securing auxiliary funding,
  - concentration on a selected park site to improve overall program service.

#### The Timeframes for the Advisory Committee

The meeting times for the advisory committee are related to the goals of the group. Sufficient lead time is necessary for adequate research and preparation. There are also key times to advise the Board concerning the funding of priorities and new directions and trends emerging.

Meetings would initially be scheduled in:

#### April/May

- A section on Environmental Education/Interpretation to be prepared as part of the Vancouver Park Board annual report.
- School programs will be briefly reviewed at the commencement of the school year. A more comprehensive review and assessment of the school programs would take place toward the completion of the school year, in April or May. Changes or additions could then be recommended, providing sufficient lead time for their incorporation into the following year's programs.

#### September/October

- The advisory committee will meet in September of each year to review the environmental education priorities and the required budgets. These recommendations will then be forwarded to staff for recommendation to the Park Board.
- Park visitor programs experience their heaviest use during the summer months. A review process by the advisory committee would occur at the completion of the busy season in late September or October. Recommendations for the following year would be developed.

November

- One theme related workshop will be scheduled annually for a less busy time of year, preferably late fall.

#### The Role of the Park Board

The Board responsibility is to make the final decision on program proposals and funding of the environmental education priorities recommended by the advisory committee. It is preferable that the advisory committee maintain close cooperation with the Board in order to recognize the conditions in which budgetary decisions are made. The appointment of a liaison Commissioner to the advisory committee would provide for clearly defined, well supported program development.

#### Conclusion

The creation of an advisory committee will provide a source of professional support for the planning and development of environmental education/interpretive programming for the Vancouver park system. Regular meetings, at appropriately scheduled times, will be facilitated by Park Board staff to review priorities for implementation, assess programs in use and consider future directions for environmental programming. Members of the advisory committee will also prepare an annual report for inclusion with other Park Board programs and facilities. The committee will also conduct a theme oriented workshop which will examine innovative ways to improve specific program areas.

Prepared by:  
Environment & Operations Division  
Board of Parks & Recreation

LM/ad

•