

DATE: April 9, 1997

SUBJECT: COMMEMORATIVE TOTEM POLE PROJECT-PORTSIDE PARK

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board accept the recommendation of the Park Board Site Review Panel to give site approval to the Bridge Housing Society for Women, for the installation of a commemorative totem pole in Portside Park, subject to acceptance through the City of Vancouver Public Art Committee process, and with all arrangements to the satisfaction of the General Manager.

POLICY

In 1988 the Park Board adopted the Acceptance Guidelines for Long Term gifts of Public Art developed by the City of Vancouver's Art in Public Places Committee (now the Public Art Committee)

In 1997 the Board approved Site Review Guidelines and a Process to assist the Park Board to more formally consider and accept Donations of Public Art and Memorials in parks. (Appendix A)

BACKGROUND

The Public Art Committee addresses the process by which public art is sited on City property. In the case of the donation of an artwork, the committee designates a panel which facilitates an arms length review process for artist selection and comments on such things as relevance of the work and artistic merit. A sponsor for the project is required. The public art program requires that the sponsor commit 10% of the value of the work to a public art maintenance reserve. If the project is proposed for installation on parkland, the sponsor is required to approach the Park Board for site consideration prior to a making a formal request to the Public Art Committee.

The Bridge Housing Society for Women has applied to the Board to install a 30 foot totem pole in Portside (Crab) Park to commemorate the women and children who have died on the streets in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. The work will be created by First Nations Artist, Bernice (Skundaal) Williams. She will carve the pole on Granville Island with twelve women formerly from the streets whom she will teach to carve.

The project has the support of many organizations in the Downtown Eastside and the artist has indicated she has the support of the three local First Nations band councils.

The artist first made her proposal to the Recreation Services Committee in January 1997 but was required to wait until the new Site Review Guidelines for Donations of Public Art and Memorials were developed and approved. This is the first project to pass through the new review process.

DISCUSSION

The artist has proposed that the pole be sited on the western knoll overlooking Portside Park. The first step in the Site Review Guidelines is the technical review. This was done by Planning, Operations and Maintenance, and Recreation staff. Ray Cam staff who operate summer programs on the Park have also been consulted. Because the pole is a free standing structure, the anchoring plans and installation procedures will require the Seal of an Engineer and because the soil is fill there is also a requirement for a soil test for weight-bearing to be done by a geo-technical engineer. Other than a concern about the potential of vandalism there were no other technical concerns. Staff have indicated that the site is technically appropriate for this installation and the pole is not in conflict with any other park plans or activity.

The second step in the Process is the requirement to sign the proposed site, post a notice in local public buildings and leaflet the adjacent residents. There are no adjacent residents and the other two steps have been completed. The signs were up for three weeks and notices were posted in Carnegie and Ray Cam. (Appendix B) There was no response either positive or negative resulting from this activity.

The third step was the appointment of a Site Review Panel (Appendix C) The Panel reviewed the conclusions of the technical review, the results of the consultation process and then conducted a review of the proposed site for the commemorative pole using the format outlined in the Review Guidelines for Design and Social Issues. Because this is a new process the questions and responses have been outlined in Appendix D. The Panel determined that the purpose reason for memorial is relevant to the area and the Park, the art work itself, a totem pole, is significant to a large portion of the local population, and the park will be enhanced by its installation. The Panel concluded the Review with a recommendation to the Board that the requested site for this pole be approved.

Once the pole has been reviewed by the Public Art Committee a contract will be developed between the Board and the sponsor to address such things as ownership, moral rights, maintenance, a review process and deaccessioning.

It is necessary for the Board to be aware of two other pieces of information relative to this request. The Carnegie Community Centre Association will be submitting a proposal for a Totem Pole in Oppenheimer Park to commemorate all those persons who have died in the Downtown Eastside. This proposal is somewhat complementary to that of the Bridge Housing Society and both project organizers support each other's proposal. There is another proposal to commemorate persons who have been murdered in the Downtown Eastside. This project for Portside (Crab) Park, a bronze plaque on a large rock closer to the Beach is in the process of being developed by Don Larsen of the Crab-

Water for Life Society. It has been scheduled to come to Committee on April 28, 1997. Given that these other proposals are still in a formative stage, the Site Review Panel could not consider them at this time. The Bridge Housing Society and the artist have been waiting for several months to have this proposal receive Board consideration.

CONCLUSION

This project has successfully passed through the criteria for reviewing the appropriateness of the work to the site and Portside Park. In addition, the project is well-supported by community groups and will be developed in a way that involves active participation of area residents.

Prepared by:
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