



Date: October 26, 1998

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: GUIDELINES FOR PLACING MEMORIALS IN PARKS

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Board adopt the Guidelines for Placing Memorials in Parks as an interim policy for public review and testing.**
- B. THAT the moratorium on the acceptance of memorials be lifted.**

POLICY

In 1988, the Board adopted the Acceptance Guidelines for Long-term Gifts of Public Art developed by the City's Public Art Committee.

In 1997, the Board adopted Guidelines for the Review of Donations of Public Art and/or Memorials to City-wide Parks.

In June, 1998, the Board placed a moratorium on the acceptance of any application for memorials in Vancouver parks until completion of staff review and public process.

BACKGROUND

During the recent public consultation on the siting of the proposed AIDS Memorial, people questioned if memorials were an appropriate park use. The Board requested at that time a staff report inventorying: existing park uses, new demands on parks, estimated financial means to add parks in the future, legal and administrative rules regarding park uses, and legal means to protect parks. The Board further requested a public consultation process on appropriate uses of Vancouver park land, and imposed a moratorium on the acceptance of memorials.

SUMMARY

This report includes the staff inventory of park uses, attached as Appendix A, as background information on the requested public process. Staff will report back on the terms of reference for the requested public process.

This report recommends the lifting of the moratorium on the acceptance of applications for memorials and further recommends the adoption of interim guidelines for new memorial proposals, the testing of these guidelines and a staff report back on evaluation of the interim guidelines, and proposed final guidelines. The interim guidelines affect all parks. The guidelines for public art donations to citywide parks are not being changed at this time.

DISCUSSION

The question of appropriate park use has been raised often in regards to new proposals for parks: the Women's Monument, the Aids Memorial, new commercial ventures such as the tethered helium balloon, new athletic facilities such as beach volleyball courts, or new uses such as in-line skating. When confronted with a new park use or the expansion of an existing use, the public often raises the question of whether the proposed use is appropriate for a park.

In most cases, park uses were not designed from the outset but evolved over time. Society needs to occasionally ascertain whether this evolution of park use is compatible with society's current values. A recent representative public opinion survey (Marktrend), commissioned by the Park Board, concluded that, by and large, the people of Vancouver are satisfied with their parks. While this satisfaction is encouraging for the Park Board, it does not indicate a general acceptance of all existing park uses, nor does it provide sufficient guidance for consideration of new or expanded uses. The growing demand for park space coupled with a limited supply of parks adds further dimension to this question.

A quick glance at the attached park use inventory suggests that parks have many and varied uses, extending beyond the use pattern or even imagination of the individual. Parks are many things to many people. The variety of uses is reflective of a diverse population pursuing many recreational interests, some appealing to majorities (e.g. walking or field sports), some to minorities (e.g. lawn bowling or bocce). Any detailed public consultation process concerning the appropriate use of Vancouver park land will require an extensive outreach program to ensure that such diversity be reflected in the outcome, that everyone has an opportunity to be heard.

Conducting such a process is beyond the existing staff resources. This report therefore suggests a report back on the terms of reference for an outside consultant to design, conduct and evaluate such a process.

Placing Memorials in Parks

Predominantly, parks are public places of nature for passive recreation, and playgrounds and sport facilities for active recreation. Historically, another important aspect was seeing parks as civic open space, as a place for the city as a whole to come together and engage in social or cultural rituals, including the placement of memorials to commemorate significant historic events, or the lives and achievements of significant individuals. These memorials are thus reminders of the values cherished by society; they serve a purpose of reflection suited to quiet and passive park areas.

An inventory about 100 memorials in Vancouver parks has been appended (Appendix B).

Currently, proposals to place memorials in parks follow a process that includes a technical review of the site, public consultation and advice from an ad-hoc panel on suitability of the memorial proposal. The City's Public Art Committee provides advice to the Board when the memorial is also public art. The public process varies depending on the nature of the proposal and the park selected.

Response to memorials varies in relationship to their form, meaning and location. Because of this, any public consultation on memorials needs to address the specifics of a proposal. Memorial proposals are simply too varied to allow generic response to be meaningful.

This report recommends that public consultation to determine the appropriateness of memorials in parks be focused on specific memorial proposals, and be integrated into the proposed process that features:

- 1) A set of guidelines (Appendix C) giving stronger direction to the specifics of a proposal, such as encouraging memorials which enhance parks by means of trees, special landscaping, drinking fountains etc. These guidelines also allow for a more stringent review of proposals.
- 2) A more intensive public consultation process gives the public a stronger voice while replacing the ad-hoc panel consultation.

The "Gifts for Parks Program" soliciting the donation of benches, tables and trees, will continue to operate as in the past. The guidelines propose directing memorials to Mountainview Cemetery where appropriate. Designation of a park for memorials may be a future consideration.

Staff will assess the proposal based on the attached guidelines, a technical review and public consultation. Three processes for reviewing different types of memorial proposals are appended. (Appendix D)

Park Board staff will conduct the public consultation during which broader comment will be sought on the subjective areas in the guidelines such as the relevance and intent of the proposal and whether proposals enhance the park. Cost for public consultation is born by the proposal sponsor.

It is proposed that the interim guidelines be sent to Community Associations and other interested stakeholders for their comment.

Subsequent changes to these guidelines may be recommended as needed.

CONCLUSION

This report seeks further direction regarding a report back on the terms of reference for the requested city-wide public process on appropriate park use.

This report recommends the adoption of interim guidelines for new park memorials, the testing of these guidelines on the next two memorial proposals brought to the Park Board, and a staff report back on evaluation of the interim guidelines and proposed final guidelines.

Prepared by:

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