



Date: July 30, 2003

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: BARD ON THE BEACH SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board approve the addition of one tent to the Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival at Vanier Park for Young Shakespeare Workshops and evening performances from July 26 to Aug. 28.

POLICY

The Board approved the 1999 Calendar of Special Events in December 1998. The Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival received approval through this motion to repeat the same level of activity. This request is for an additional performance structure at Vanier Park and, therefore, requires Board approval.

BACKGROUND

The Board approved the use of Vanier Park as a site for the Bard on the Beach in February 1990. At that time the request was for one 300 person tent to hold Shakespeare plays from July 27 to Aug. 26. The justification for approval was based on making live theatre more accessible and creating a cultural attraction enhanced by the beach and park setting. The Festival has grown over the years until, in 199, it included one main stage tent with a capacity of 520, a 'front of house' of several smaller tents set up in a circular fashion for concessions, administration and event item sales, a dressing room tent as well as portable toilets, etc. Activities took place for 16 weeks from June to September.

Bard on the Beach has been a successful cultural activity at Vanier Park for the past 8 years. Last year the attendance for the season was 45,083, demonstrating the popularity of these performances. The Festival organizers have worked closely with staff and neighbouring facilities and residents to minimize the impact on the community. There have been very few complaints in the past years about the activity of the festival indicating a high level of responsibility by the organizers in their planning and advertising.

DISCUSSION

This year the organizers would like to expand their activities to produce lesser known Shakespeare plays in the evening and to physically expand their Young Shakespeare workshops during the day from one to two tents (letter of request Appendix A). They would provide these activities with the use of an additional ‘saddle’ tent that has a maximum capacity of 225. The tent would increase the footprint of the festival by approximately 20%. It would be used for rehearsals from June 7 to July 27, performance/workshops until August 28 then will remain in place until dismantling of the festival on Sept 25. The festival would be reduced from 16 weeks to 15 weeks this year, starting one week later.

1998 fee of \$2795.00 included a Special Event fee, staff recovery hours, alcohol fees and monthly event fees. If this request is approved, the permit fee would be increased by approximately \$500.00 with additional staff hours and an additional Special Event fee.

Community consultation has taken place through a distribution of pamphlets in the neighbourhood which included an invitation to respond to the request. Of 40 responses, 17 were supportive of the expansion and 23 were opposed. Issues raised in opposition were summarized as follows:

Public Comment	Staff Comment
Not enough parking.	Parking is available at the adjacent Park Board lot with a special rate negotiated to encourage patrons to use it. Additional parking is available at the Music Academy, Archives and Pacific Space Centre.
Too much noise.	The festival has been situated in a corner of Vanier Park that is away from residential areas between parking lots and the Archives. Activity is contained within tents and is fenced off from spilling into the neighbourhood. Patrons are encouraged to leave quietly through advertising on flyers.

Public Comment	Staff Comment
Too much traffic.	Daytime workshops do not represent an increase in numbers of participants but a spreading out of the same number into two tents. The evening performances will increase attendance by about 100 people per evening. Patrons are encouraged to use recommended routes when arriving and leaving. Access to the point is an issue being addressed by City of Vancouver Engineering Department and the residents.
Festival is big enough.	This request represents an increase in footprint of about 20% with the addition of a 60' x 80' saddle tent. Activity increase is one performance per evening, 6 days per week for 5 weeks.
Vanier Park should remain green, open space. There is too much grass loss.	The Festival is located on the far east corner of Vanier Park where it is considered to be as unobtrusive as possible. Operation staff have commented on the gradual degradation of the park land with this use over the years. They have worked with the festival organizers to re-seed the area each year. As reseeding takes place with mixed success due to compaction as well as the lateness in the year.
There are too many activities on Kits Point already.	Permanent structures include the Planetarium, the Archives, Maritime Museum, Academy of Music and Burrard Marina. Events include the Childrens Festival, Symphony of Fire, Bard on the Beach and Volleyball Tournaments. Smaller sized activities include a mountain bike competition, Pacific Space Centre special event, Maritime Museum special event, Open Water Swim competition and a canoe competition. The special event guideline of 1 major special event per month has been used in determining permits. No new major events will be permitted.

CONCLUSION

Issues raised through the comments are general concerns about the level of activity which has been in place for several years on Kits Point and has resulted in traffic, parking and noise concerns. City Engineering is working with the Residents association to alleviate some of the traffic concerns. The current request for an additional tent represents an increase in use of park land by about 20% but the increase in numbers of participants is only anticipated to be approximately 100 per evening during the performance dates. The festival itself will be one week shorter than previous years, which should provide some compensation to the issues of traffic, parking and noise levels. The request for open, green space in the park is a common request for all Vancouver parks. Bard on the Beach continues to be a valuable cultural activity that is valued by some as much as open green space is by others.

Prepared by:

Stanley District
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WA/wa
Attachment