



Date: January 10, 2000

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Grandview - Woodlands Community Policing Centre

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board grant a licence to the Grandview-Woodlands Community Policing Centre to use the vacant caretaker suite in the Grandview Park fieldhouse as a Community Police Office.

THAT the terms and conditions of the licence include the following:

1. The term of the licence will be 5 years
2. The Grandview-Woodlands Community Policing Centre will contribute \$3,000 annually toward the cost of janitorial services at the field house
3. All costs associated with the construction and operation of the Community Policing Office will be the responsibility of the Grandview-Woodlands Community Policing Centre

POLICY

There is no relevant Board Policy relating to this proposal.

BACKGROUND

Grandview Park is one of the most heavily used parks in Vancouver. It's amenities include a playground, spray pool, War Veteran's cenotaph, tennis courts, stage and public washrooms. It is used by local residents and is also a meeting place for people who come to the Commercial Drive area. Several annual special events are held at the park including Canada Day, Remembrance Day, the Fringe Festival, Stonewall Festival and the Parade of the Lost Souls. In 1999, there were a number of events focussing on children and the family called "Putting the Grand Back into Grandview".

The park is also used for activities that have caused controversy in the community. Drumming, illegal drug use and unauthorized vending of merchandise occurs frequently. These activities offend some members of the community but are seen as acceptable by others.

.../2

In April 1999, the Vancouver East District Office was contacted by the Grandview-Woodlands Community Policing Centre (GWPCPC) with a proposal to move from its present location in the ice rink of Britannia Community Centre to the field house in Grandview Park. The GWPCPC has been looking for an alternate location that is larger and more visible in the community. The relocation was proposed after the GWPCPC was made aware by Britannia C.C. staff that the field house was vacant and scheduled to undergo renovations. Parks Operations staff met with GWPCPC staff to look at the feasibility of operating a community policing office out of the field house. It was determined that with the addition of a door and window, the field house could function as a CPC.

The GWPCPC has committed to paying for the additional renovations, as well as contributing \$3,000 per year to offset operating costs for washroom cleaning. The Park Board would be required to pay \$1,700 annually for washroom cleaning, maintaining the current level of service. (See appendix 1) This task is normally done by the caretaker who lives in the field house, at no cost to the Park Board.

To begin a public consultation process, the Vancouver East District Office produced a leaflet which outlined the proposal. (See appendix 2) On Saturday August 22, the leaflet was distributed to residents in a 1 block radius around the park. It was also distributed at a public event in Grandview Park and was available at Britannia Community Centre. 500 leaflets were originally produced. The GWPCPC made an additional 500 copies of the leaflet, which were distributed to a wider area. There were 401 responses to the leaflet. Because there was a large immediate response to the proposal, a public information meeting was scheduled for September 16 at Britannia High School Auditorium.

The public information meeting held at Britannia High School Auditorium was attended by approximately 250 people. 53 spoke on the proposal.

The *Ad Hoc Committee for Grandview Park* produced a survey, which was available from August 23 to 28 at a table set up in Grandview Park. (See appendix 3) As the name suggests, this committee was organized to respond specifically to the Grandview Park proposal. There were 684 responses to that survey. The committee published an eight page newspaper which contained the survey results and selected comments.

In early December, the GWPCPC initiated a third survey that was mailed to 6700 residences in the Grandview-Woodlands area. (See appendix 4) There were 476 responses. The GWPCPC stated that it would not proceed with the proposal unless at least 55% of respondents were in favour of the move. The Britannia Board of Management passed a motion that, based on the results of the survey, it was prepared to support the GWPCPC's decision to proceed with or withdraw the proposal. Comments from the first two surveys and the public meeting, as well as the news paper published by the Ad Hoc Committee are available for viewing at the Vancouver East district Office. The results of the three surveys and the public meeting are summarized in Appendix 5.

.../3

DISCUSSION

There are several recurring comments mentioned on the first two surveys and at the public meeting. They can be grouped into categories:

- the use and sale of drugs in the park has a negative impact on the usability of the park (153 comments)
- expressed concern about increased police harassment; targeting of groups or individuals by police (83 comments)
- the park is not a safe place to go; not a safe place for children to play (59 comments)
- a Community Policing Centre is an inappropriate use of parkland (54 comments)
- concern about criminal activity in the park; crime in the area is connected to activity in the park (32 comments)
- concern about uncontrolled dogs; owners not cleaning up; off leash dogs (19 comments)
- poor community consultation, lack of process (18)
- issues around the treatment of poor people and minorities in the neighbourhood (16)
- increased police presence in park will result in illegal activities moving to other areas, not dealing with the problem (10 comments)

The proposal to relocate the CPC from Britannia to Grandview Park is a complex issue. Many people see this proposal as a way to control crime and drug use in the area. There is a belief that the presence of the CPC in the park will help to discourage illegal activity and make it a safe place for children to play.

This proposal is seen by the GWPC as an opportunity be more visible and to play a more active role in the community. It is an opportunity for the police to be involved at a grass roots level with the issues the community faces.

Opposition to the proposal has been voiced by a number of park users who believe that an increased police presence in the park will result in harassment and loss of personal freedom. There is an opinion that the use of “soft” drugs is acceptable and the laws are unjust. There is also an opinion that a CPC in the park will result in surveillance, which is an infringement of civil liberties.

A number of respondents opposed the proposal because they felt a CPC was inappropriate use of parkland. It is felt by some that the presence of a CPC would change the ambiance of the park and change its character. It was expressed that locating a CPC in the park is a simplistic solution to the drug problem, that it will only move the problem to another park or area.

.../4

There were a number of comments that criticized the process and lack of public consultation. It was suggested that the problems in Grandview Park are community issues that need to be discussed by representatives from the community. There is a feeling by some that the GWPC does not represent community interests. It has also been expressed that this proposal is intended to “clean up” the park by removing undesirables and is intended to further the gentrification of the neighbourhood, benefiting property owners.

Although there are currently two community policing offices in Park board facilities (Strathcona Community Centre and West End Community Centre), this is the first time a proposal has been made to use a park field house for this purpose. Some field houses are used by sporting groups as social and administrative centres.

CONCLUSION

The establishment of a CPC in Grandview Park field house will have no significant financial impact for the Park Board. This issue has, however, polarized the community.

There is no question that there is a great deal of concern about the high level of illegal drug use and trafficking in Grandview Park. Many park users feel the park is not a safe place to go. A Community Policing Centre in the park is seen by many residents as a way to address these concerns.

Given the present divergence of opinion in the neighbourhood, the establishment of a Community Policing Centre in Grandview Park at this time will also cause a certain amount of resentment.

Prepared by: Vancouver East District Office

GRANDVIEW PARK COMMUNITY POLICING CENTRE COSTS

The caretaker at Grandview had a few duties including unlocking and locking the washrooms, cleaning the washrooms and picking up used needles in the playground area. If the CPC is set up, there will be

additional costs to maintain the same level of service that is currently being provided (washrooms open for 8 months a year). The renovations that were planned for the field house would allow the washrooms to remain open year round. If this level of service is provided, there will be additional costs. This is a summary of the additional costs:

SET UP COSTS - ONE TIME

Building renovations (additional door and windows)		\$8,000
Signage for Parking	Police	
Additional phone lines	Police	
Security alarm	Police	
Total Cost		\$8,000
Park Board share		0
CPC share		8,000

OPERATING COSTS - ONGOING

Option 1: Maintain current service level

Washroom locking and cleaning (8 months/year)	\$4,660
Minus CPC annual contribution for washroom services	<u>\$3,000</u>
Park Board cost:	\$1,660

Option 2: Increase service level

Washroom locking and cleaning (12 months/year)	\$7,000
Minus CPC annual contribution for washroom services	<u>\$3,000</u>
Park Board cost:	\$4,000

The CPC Society has committed to remove needles from playground on a daily basis, monitor the condition of the washrooms and unlock the washrooms in the morning.

In summary, the CPC will fund the renovations for the office. The Park Board will be required to spend \$1,660 to \$4,000 annually to lock and clean the washrooms.