



Date: June 6, 2000

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: RESEARCH PLANNER POSITION

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board approve the creation of a Planner II position, pay grade 30, in accordance with the provisions of the CUPE 15 Collective Agreement, in order to provide research capability within the Planning and Operations Division.

POLICY

The Global Budget arrangement with the City allows the Board to establish staff positions at its discretion if funds are in place.

BACKGROUND

As part of the 'New Directions' organizational restructuring, two new planner positions were to be established within the Planning and Research Branch of the Planning and Operations Division. These positions were identified in the proposed New Directions organizational chart as a 'Strategic Planner' and a 'Research Planner.' The Strategic Planner position was assigned to an incumbent staff person at the Planner II level. The Research Planner position was left vacant due to budgetary uncertainty at the time.

DISCUSSION

Over the past 18 months since the Planning and Research Branch has been in existence, many significant work program items have been put on hold pending the addition of a research specialist. These work program items include:

- *Long range facility renewal planning:* The Research Planner will design and compile a consolidated Capital/Major Maintenance Requirements database using internet technology. This application will be maintained by appropriate Planning and Operations staff, with read-only access by all staff. The database will serve as the official reference for NNR budget, Infrastructure Program, Capital Plan and other funding opportunities.

- *Digitalized inventory of Parks and Facilities:* The Research Planner will work with Information Technology to adapt a geographic information system (GIS), such as MapInfo, for this purpose.
- *Neighbourhood park standard and land acquisition policy review:* The City is currently undertaking a Financing Growth Review, in which Park Board staff have been intensely involved. This study will almost certainly result in increased funding for land acquisition, and hence underscores the need for the Board to develop a more refined acquisition strategy. The Research Planner will analyze the City's land base to identify specific acquisition opportunities in areas that are currently park deficient or where high population growth is anticipated.
- *Revised procedures for annual statistics gathering:* Our current system of statistics gathering with respect to parks and recreation activity is both cumbersome and inconsistently applied from site to site. New technologies present an opportunity to update this system, enabling cross tabulations with local area demographics and identification of long term trends. The Research Planner will assist with development of the new system, which will provide a sound foundation for tracking progress towards Strategic Plan goals.
- *Partnership models review:* Another outcome of the strategic planning exercise will be an examination of the existing relationship between the Park Board and its partners, as well as exploration of new opportunities to promote citizen involvement in parks and recreation facility development. The Research Planner will contribute to this initiative by researching partnership models from other comparable jurisdictions.
- *City planning projects:* The Research Planner will provide analytic and research support related to Park Board interests in City planning initiatives.

While the above projects have a high degree of current urgency, the need for disciplined investigation into a range of topics of interest to the Board will certainly be an ongoing requirement. The Research Planner will also provide an added resource to the Senior Management Team and the Districts, when information gathering is required in relation to issues of current concern.

The budgeted annual cost of the position will be \$73,000 for wages and benefits, with the source of funding to be partly from the Evans Yard Administration cost centre, where a review of vacant positions has identified an opportunity to realign building management functions and transfer resources. Specifically, the position of Energy Utilization Inspector will be phased out. This CUPE 15 position has been vacant for about a year and prior to that the incumbent had been on secondment to the City to work on corporate initiatives. Park Board energy management has been and will continue to be integrated into mechanical maintenance functions as a regular way of conducting business. Annual funding of \$55,438 will be reallocated to the proposed Planner II

position.

The balance of funding will be derived from contributions from the City to cover the costs of Park Board staff participation in various planning projects. Currently, for example, the amounts assigned for the Vancouver General Hospital precinct study, South East False Creek planning, and others total over \$30,000. As noted above, the Research Planner will be engaged in these corporate planning exercises on an ongoing basis.

There will be no net increased budget cost to the Park Board as a result of establishing this position.

SUMMARY

The Board is requested to approve the creation of a research focused Planner II position, at an estimated annual cost to the Board of \$73,000.

Prepared by:

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