



Date: July 9, 2003

**TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation**  
**FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation**  
**SUBJECT: Special Event Policy Review**

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Board receive the Draft - Guide to Special Event in Parks Report for information.**

**That the Board forward the Draft - Guide to Special Event in Parks Report to partners and stakeholders for further consultation.**

## **BACKGROUND**

At its December 16<sup>th</sup> 2002 meeting, the Vancouver Park Board passed a motion to undertake a review of the policies, guidelines and the administrative processes for special events accommodated on parks. The majority of the Board's special event guidelines/ policies were approved over 10 years ago. The objectives for this review were to update and consolidate special event policies and guidelines which will both guide and direct Board/staff decisions with regards to special events as well as clarify the rationale behind the decision making process for event organizers and the various park stakeholders (other users, park neighbours, public, etc.). This review was to be done in consultation with the various special event stakeholders (i.e., event sponsors, event organizers, community groups, park users and the general public). It was proposed that this review be completed by the summer of 2003.

## **DISCUSSION**

To date, the review of special event policies and guidelines has consisted of reviewing other major cities policies and guidelines for special events, conducting focus group discussions with various special event stakeholders as well as commissioning a public survey regarding special events.

## **Best Practices Review**

The best practices review consisted of reviewing special event policies and guidelines for the following cities: Surrey, North Vancouver, Victoria, Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto, Montreal, Seattle and Portland. The review focused on allocation priorities, application and approval process, definitions for appropriate activities, use restrictions as well as special conditions for revenue generation, park preservation, site requirements and services and safety and security.

The key findings of the best practices review include:

1. Priority for the Allocation of Park Space

Most civic special event policies include a priority for allocating park space. Top priority is usually given to Park Board/Commission operated events followed by events open to the general public sponsored by non profit societies, private events and commercial events.

2. Appropriate Activities for Parks

Most jurisdictions only permit activities which are compatible with a park environment. Some policies do not allow commercial activities on parkland while others permit only if they are ancillary to a larger event.

2. Revenue Generation

Most policies or guidelines include regulations on admission fees (restricted to designated sites), event sponsorship (limited signage, product displays), sale of goods and services (event related items and support services), food services and sale of alcohol.

3. Park Protection Measures

Limiting the frequency of events, activity restrictions, noise management and community notification are a number of park protection measures included in other cities special event policies and guidelines.

4. Safety and Security

Most cities require a security and traffic management plans for large events.

## **Stakeholder Focus Groups**

The initial consultation with stakeholders was facilitated through four focus groups - staff, community groups, not for profit event organizers and corporate/contract event organizers. Discussion centered on the principles and objectives for special events in parks, appropriate activities for parks, appropriate scheduling of events, site protection measures, the application and approval process, revenue generation opportunities and consultation with staff, park users and neighbours.

Key findings from the focus groups include:

- There is a desire from all stakeholders for a consolidated document of special event policies and guidelines;
- Special event policies and guidelines should be based on outlined principles, values, goals and objectives and be clear and transparent;
- Policies and guidelines should be consistently applied;
- The organizer's ability to manage their events should be formally recognized;
- Better communication between all groups would result in better decision making, thus more successful events - staff, event organizers, other park stakeholders.

Appendix A includes a summary of the focus group discussions including the identification of key themes, issues and suggestions from the various focus groups.

## **Public Opinion Survey**

Consultation with the general public was accomplished through the commissioning of a poll of City residents. The objectives for the poll were to determine public sentiment on special events in general and on key issues under review - impact events have on park visitors; variety of events offered; impact of increasing number of events; as well as opinion regarding sale of goods and services, corporate sponsorship, admission fees and alcohol sales at park events.

Key learning's from the survey include:

- Special events are popular with Vancouver residents;
- There is a general endorsement of park use for special events as most events have a favourable impact on park visitors;
- There is support for more events in parks - both for small neighbourhood as well as large city wide events;
- Increasing the number of events would have a positive impact on park usage;
- Food and event related merchandise at park events is acceptable to most residents;
- Residents generally support the identification of corporate sponsorship for events although

support declines with increase visibility of the sponsorship.

Appendix B includes an executive overview, details for the key findings and conclusion for the public opinion survey.

### **A Guide for Special Events in Parks - Draft**

The majority of the key findings from the initial consultation process have been incorporated into the draft - A Guide for Special Events in Parks. This report will be distributed at the Board meeting. It is recognized that this document focuses primarily on special event policies, guidelines and administrative practices. Other key findings from the consultation process - scheduling of meetings with event organizers to address issues, sharing of resources, fees and charges, better communication between organizers and parks staff will be addressed outside of this process.

Staff recommend releasing the report and supporting documents for comment and further consultation. The Report will be sent to special event stakeholders and community groups. In addition, it will be available on the Park Board's web site. A meeting with stakeholders to discuss the report will be scheduled early in the fall. Upon conclusion of the consultation process, staff will forward recommended policies for special events to the Board for consideration and special event guidelines for information.

### **CONCLUSION**

Special events are of great value to the City. These events contribute to the cultural richness and milieu of the City and are highly attended and well received by Vancouver residents. A number of these events also have significant economic benefit through increased tourism and many events also serve as major fund raisers for various non-profit societies. Given the importance of special events to the City, it is appropriate that the Board review and update its special event policies and guidelines.

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