



Date: September 25, 2003

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Establishment of the Child and Youth Advocate

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board receive this report for information.

POLICY

There is no applicable policy.

BACKGROUND

Over the years, the Park Board and the City have worked on a number of joint projects involving the City's Child and Youth Advocate and Community Service Department staff. Key initiatives include the development and implementation of the Civic Youth Strategy and the Park Board's "Blueprint for Youth Services".

At the regular Council Meeting of July 29, 2003, Council approved the following motion:

WHEREAS the City is committed to advocating for and ensuring a wide range of child and youth voices and involvement in decisions affecting them;

AND WHEREAS on June 26, 2003 Council instructed that a report be prepared by November 15, 2003 on "a comprehensive overview and articulated staffing and budget plan for all civic program support and initiatives related to children and youth to include the Civic Youth Strategy, the Child/Youth Advocate and the Child Care Coordinator";

AND WHEREAS in the area of human service, independence of voice is the hallmark of true advocacy;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Council re-establish the Child and Youth Advocate in 2003, to work within the framework outlined in the document attached to the Motion and utilizing the information contained in the report previously requested by Council June 26, 2003 to guide implementation, and that this position:

- S be independent and report directly to Council;
- S be complementary to the existing childcare/child-development and youth-focused social planner positions;
- S focus on systemic advocacy, speak out on issues and concerns on behalf of the City to other levels of government, and identify issues and make recommendations; work with the community to ensure that a wide range of children and youth voices are heard and included in the City's decision-making processes.

AND THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a short-term Steering Committee including youth, representatives from child and youth groups, staff from the City, Board of Parks and Recreation, School Board and Vancouver Police Department, a representative from the Mayor's office and a Councillor be established to coordinate community consultation and bring forward the above-mentioned report to Council by November 15, 2003;

AND BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that Mayor and Council approve the creation, in collaboration with the Advocate, of a Citizen's Advisory Committee, including representative youth and other members as appropriate, and that the School Board and Board of Parks and Recreation be requested to appoint liaisons to the Committee.

DISCUSSION

The Park Board is a significant service provider for children, youth and their families. Through our extensive infrastructure of parks and facilities and partnership with community groups involved in delivering programs for all ages, we have a major role to play in ensuring the recreational needs of this population are addressed. With the re-establishment of the Child and Youth Advocate position, the Park Board will have additional support and guidance as it relates to services for children and youth. The Board will have the opportunity to participate in the work of the Advocate, particularly in serving on two committees, a Steering Committee and a Citizen's Advisory Committee.

Steering Committee – short term

Park Board staff will be invited to serve as a member of a short-term Steering Committee. The role of this committee is to coordinate community consultation and bring a report forward to Council by November 15, 2003. The General Manager will appoint a staff to this committee.

Citizen's Advisory Committee

A Park Board liaison is requested for this committee. As the role of this committee is developed, the Board will assess the nature of the liaison role required and proceed with an appointment.

City staff is presently reviewing the mandate and recruitment of the Child and Youth Advocate position. The Park Board will be advised as the process progresses.

SUMMARY

This information report outlines recent decision of Council on the re-establishment of the Child and Youth Advocate position with the city and discusses two committees in which the Park Board will be requested to participate.

Prepared by:

Vancouver East District