



Date: November 20, 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 approve the event approval, park allocation and revenue generation policies as outlined in Appendix A.*

*THAT the Board receive the Guide to Special Event in Parks Report (Appendix B) for information.*

## POLICY

The Board's Policies for Special Events require that any major events which are in variance with one or more Park Board by-laws or guidelines (see Appendix C) receive Board approval.

### Park Board Strategic Plan

#### Services Delivery Goals

Define and on an ongoing basis, review programs and services delivered by and through the support of the Park Board, with a focus on open space, recreation and leisure needs of Vancouver residents, and on achieving excellence in all areas.

Design and provide comprehensive leisure programs and services based upon a thorough understanding of the diverse needs and preference of City residents.

#### Strategic Alliances Goals

Review and renew existing partnerships consistent with Park Board's mission, vision and strategic objectives.

Provide appropriate opportunities for partners and stakeholders to influence policy and planning decisions

## **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 would 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 park users, park neighbours, public, etc.). This review was to be done in consultation with the various special event stakeholders (i.e., event organizers, community groups, park users and the general public). It was proposed that this review be completed by the summer of 2003.

The review of special event policies and guidelines has consisted of:

- S** Best Practices Review - examining other major cities policies and guidelines for special events: Surrey, North Vancouver, Victoria, Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto, Montreal, Seattle and Portland.
  
- S** Special Event Stakeholders' Focus Groups - consultation with stakeholders was facilitated through four focus group discussion: staff, community groups, not for profit event organizers and corporate/contract event organizers. Appendix D includes a summary of the focus group discussions including the identification of key themes, issues and suggestions from the various focus groups.
  
- S** Public Opinion Survey - consultation with the general public was accomplished through the commissioning of a poll of City residents. Appendix E includes an executive overview, details for the key findings and conclusions for the public opinion survey. regarding special events.

In July, 2003, a draft "Guide to Special Events in Parks" was forwarded to the Board for information and further consultation. While the majority of the initial consultation process's key findings relating to special event policies and guidelines have been incorporated into the Guide, it was recognized that other key findings such as periodic meetings with event organizers to address issues, sharing of resources, fees and charges, better communication between organizers and parks staff would be addressed outside of this process. Upon conclusion of the consultation process, staff were to forward recommended policies for special events to the Board for consideration and special event guidelines for information.

## DISCUSSION

### Consultation

The consultation process included conducting two special event stakeholder meetings, posting the Guide on the Park Board's web site and forwarding the Guide to community groups, community associations and various park stakeholder groups for comment. In addition, the Guide was discussed at the October 5, 2003 meeting of the Culture and Recreation Committee.

The consultation process indicated that there is general support for the policies and guidelines outlined in the Guide. The following is a summary of comments:

#### Event Organizers

- S the Guide - add an event checklist and visual timeline for event approval, improve access to park site plans;
- S park improvements - incorporating special events requirements into park improvement projects: i.e., hard surfaces, access to power and water; consult with special event stakeholders, especially regarding cost sharing possibilities;
- S assist in streamlining City's permits and licencing process - especially with regards to tent structures, electrical generators, etc.

#### Park Stakeholders

- S ensure protection of environmentally sensitive areas;
- S balance the approval of events with the needs of park tenants as well as the tourist market.

Written submissions have been received from the Vancouver Aquarium, the Stanley Park Ecology Society and the Spirit of Vancouver - Rules and Regulation Subcommittee (correspondence on file with the Recording Secretary).

The majority of the consultation process's findings relating to special event policies and guidelines have been incorporated into the Guide. Other key findings such as incorporating special event requirements into park improvements, investigating cost sharing park improvement possibilities, etc. will be addressed outside of this process.

## **Special Event Policies**

Based on the special event review process, staff are recommending that the Board approve the policy statements as outlined in Appendix A for special event approval process (evaluation criteria, park allocation priorities, the approval body for event requests) as well as revenue generating activities associated with special events (gated-admissions, event sponsorship, sale of goods and services, special occasion licences). A brief rationale accompanies the policy statements.

The majority of these policy statements reflect the current practices followed by the Board. Approving these policy statements will not significantly change the diverse nature or scope of events offered in Vancouver parks. They are intended to direct Board and staff decisions, ensuring events are approved based upon agreed principles and the process is transparent. The revenue generating activities policies are designed to allow organizers to off set administrative costs and/or raise funds for charities while still protecting the non commercial nature of parks.

Staff are recommending a fairly significant change to the Board's current Consumption of Alcohol Guidelines. The proposed policy recommends that staff rather than the Board can approve special occasion license areas for adult events in larger destination parks. The majority of these requests have been approved by the Board in recent years. Allowing staff to approve these requests will streamline the approval process.

It is important to note that in addition to Park Board Special Event Policy, event organizers are required to adhere to any other applicable Park Board policies as well as Federal, Provincial and other civic legislation, statutes, laws and by-laws.

## **Guide to Special Events in Vancouver Parks**

As previously mentioned, the Guide to Special Event in Vancouver Parks Report (Appendix B) is included for the Board's information. The Guide includes the proposed special event policies as well as guidelines for implementing the policies and administrative practices. It is intended to be a "working" document designed to assist event organizers to conduct successful special events. Staff through consultation and feedback from event organizers and park stakeholders will continuously update and improve guidelines and administrative practices outlined in the Guide. Any changes to special event policy will be forwarded for the Board's consideration.

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. Flexibility remains key in the special event approval process so as to reflect the unique nature of events and the ability of parks to accommodate them. Historically, this flexibility has resulted in the vast and diverse level of special events in parks. While balancing the adherence to rules with common sense introduces subjectivity into the decision making process, it also recognizes that a strict “cookie cutter” approach for event approval would not result in a satisfactory provision of events and activities. The policies, guidelines and administrative practices outlined will carry on this tradition.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Guide to Special Events in Vancouver Parks consolidates the Board’s special event policies, guidelines and administrative practices into a single document. The ultimate objective for the Guide is to assist event organizers in conducting a successful event.

Prepared by:

Stanley District  
Board of Parks & Recreation  
Vancouver, BC

## APPENDIX A

# Vancouver Park Board - Proposed Special Event Policies

## Event Approval and Allocation Policies

### Evaluation of Event Requests

The approval of special event requests on parkland is determined by evaluating:

- the compatibility of the event with the Park Board's mandate;
- the suitability of a site to accommodate the event.

Events whose primary purpose is not compatible with the Park Board's mandate are not generally approved although they may be considered by the Board on a case by case basis.

Rationale:

The key to successfully managing special events is scheduling the appropriate activities in the appropriate spaces. Under the Vancouver Charter, the Park Board is given the authority to manage park activities. The Charter entrusts the Park Board to determine which activities are appropriate in parks. Historically, park activities include active and passive recreational activities which are physical, social, cultural, artistic or environmental in nature. Thus, priority is given to special events which are compatible with the Park Board's mandate.

It is important to recognize that sites which accommodate special events are parks first, thus the regular use of the park must be respected. The majority of parks have not been designed to accommodate large events as most lack the amenities (parking areas, washrooms, access to power and water) to support the events. With this in mind, the objective for the Board is to match events to an appropriate park site.

### Priority for Allocating Park Space

The allocation of parkland for special events is based on the following priorities:

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| First Priority  | Park Board activities.   |
| Second Priority | Park Board partners (Community Associations, Ecology Society, etc.), other government agencies, school board, etc. |
| Third Priority  | Non profit organization whose event is primarily of interest to the general public.                                |
| Fourth Priority | Non Profit or private group whose event is of primary interest to the organization.                                |
| Fifth Priority  | Commercial Venture - an event organized for profit.  |

Rationale:

As a general principle, special events on parkland should be open to the general public. They should not restrict the public's access to park space either through physical or financial barriers. Thus, priority in the allocation of parkland is given to events which are open to the public and to events and/or organizations which are compatible with Park Board's mandates.

### **Event Approval - Board or Staff**

The approval process for special event requests is as follows:

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| No permit required:                | under 50 people, shared space, no special requirements (no set-up, structures, public address system, etc.).  |
| Permit required - Staff approval:  | up to 1,000 people, exclusive use, minimal impact on other park users, neighbours.  |
| Permit required - Board approval : | over 1,000 people and/or events which significantly impact on regular park users and neighbours, have extensive set- up/take down or events which are in variance with one or more Park Board policies or event guidelines: charging of an admission fee, selling of goods other than event related items, requesting a liquor licence which does not meet the Board's policy, etc. |

Board approval is required for a new major event for the first three years of the event's operation or when significant changes to existing major special events occur.

Rationale:

To streamline the event approval process, staff approval has been increased from 500 to 1,000 participants. However, to ensure that a higher degree of consultation is conducted during the approval process, Board approval is required for events for larger events which will significantly impact regular park users and/or park neighbours.

## **Revenue Generating Activities**

### **Revenue Generation**

All revenue generating activities associated with special events must:

- focus on event participants and not the general public;
- be ancillary to a larger event.

Revenue generation activities are subject to any applicable government regulations (e.g., licensing requirements, gaming legislation, etc.).

#### **Rationale:**

Event organizers may be given permission to generate revenues to offset organizational costs and/or raise funds for charities. To preserve the non-commercial nature of parks, the revenue generating activities must focus only on event participants and not the general public. Commercial activities which are not part of a larger event and/or are not within the Park Board's mandate are generally not approved.

### **Gated - Admission Events**

Gated or admission fee events are limited to designated areas in larger parks. The majority of the park including the park's circulation network (pathways, bikeways, etc.) must remain open to the public.

#### **Rationale:**

As a general principle, special events on parkland should be open to the general public. They should not restrict the public's access to park space either through physical or financial barriers. However, the Board does recognize that under certain circumstances, the diversity of programming can be increased through the permitting of events with an admission fee.

### **Event Sponsorship - Signage and On Site Promotion Policy**

#### **Sponsorship Signage**

- sponsorship signs are limited to the event area and must be directed at event participants only;
- signs should be discreet and kept to a minimal level;
- sponsorship signs must be approved by staff prior to installation.

## On Site Promotions

- sampling of sponsors product and product displays are permitted with staff approval;
- Excluding the on site food and beverage service, the sales of event sponsor's product (food and beverage excluded) is not permitted;
- Passive distribution of written material may be permitted with staff approval.

## Rationale

Most major events have at least one major sponsor. In return for their financial contribution, event sponsor request significant profile on event promotional material and on the event site. The Board's role is to balance the sponsor's on site recognition with the preservation of the non commercial nature of parks.

With the exception of food and beverage products, the sale of sponsors product is not permitted during the event. This is based on the premise that the sponsor is contributing towards the event and not purchasing the right to sell product. Food and beverage products of a sponsor are permitted only if the product is sold as a component of the on site food and beverage service offered to event participants only.

## **Sale of Goods and Services - Permitted Items**

- items with the event's name or logo;
- items or services which support the theme of the event (i.e., light sticks for night events, lantern making, kite making, etc.)
- Festivals: expanded artistic products including art and crafts, musical recordings, etc.

## Rationale:

The sale of goods and services may be permitted if they are ancillary to a larger event. Items must be event related and compatible with a public park. Festivals are permitted to sell a wider range of arts and cultural items provided that they are an integral part of the event.

## **Consumption of Alcohol in Parks**

Staff can approve requests for special occasion licenced areas when:

- the sale of alcohol is supplemental to an event.
- the event is not being held in a mini or neighbourhood park.
- minors are not the prime focus of the event.
- the event is operated by a community service organization and profits from the sale of alcohol are used to support the community service activities of the organization.

- the hours of operation for the licenced area parallel the event or between the hours of noon and 9:30 p.m.
- organizers have an approved security plan in place.

Requests for special occasion licenced areas which do not meet these criteria may be considered by the Board on a case by case basis.

**Rationale:**

Policy allows staff to approve special occasion license areas for adult events in larger destination parks. The scale of the service area will be in relation to the event's attendance and service is restricted to event participants only.