

**Twinning of the Ice Rinks  
Evaluation of the Pilot Project  
October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2003**

## **A. Introduction**

In September 1999, Vancouver Park Board implemented a pilot project to twin the programming duties and centralize the ice booking service for Kitsilano ice rink and Kerrisdale arena. Sunset ice rink and Riley Park ice rink were similarly twinned in September 2001. This involved using one programmer for the two rinks at each project and having a central booking clerk to book ice rentals for all four rinks.

At all four rinks, each complex took its original Programmer budget of \$41,198 and put \$20,599 each into the twinned Programmer position. At Kerrisdale and Kits \$13,799 was into the booking clerk with \$6,800 left to help cover some of the non rink duties that had been performed by the rink Programmer for each site. At Riley and Sunset the \$13,799 was kept, along with the \$6,800, at the complex for programs.

The objectives of the projects are:

- “to improve customer service through centralized booking”
- “to achieve operational/programming efficiencies through consolidating the Programmer job function” for the rinks.

This report will use quantitative and qualitative information to evaluate the accomplishment of the stated objectives and provide opinions from the evaluation committee.

## **B. Method**

To evaluate the Twinning of the rinks the following data will be used:

- Direct revenues and expenses from programming/booking activities 1997-2002.
- Usage statistics from 1997-2002.
- Surveys from public programs (206 surveyed).
- Surveys from lesson programs (353 surveyed).
- Surveys from rentals (30 surveyed).
- Surveys from Staff (38 surveyed).
- Interviews with 13 key personnel including coordinators, board members, booking clerk, programmers, and the Queen Elizabeth district manager.

The above information will be presented as totals from all four rinks to evaluate the twinning project. Some of the site specific break down will be available in the appendix and further data will be available on request.

The discussion part of the report will be divided into two sections by the objectives; customer service, and operational efficiencies. The quantitative data will be interpreted as a measurement of success for the objectives and the qualitative information will give insight and opinions of the project and the objectives.

## C. Discussion

page 2

The twinning project was designed to improve customer service and create operational efficiencies. Here are highlights from the research:

### 1. Customer Service:

The following indicators of customer service, totals from all four rinks, were compiled;

- **Public Program Revenues** may be an indicator of customer service in areas the programmer is responsible for. If these revenues go up, it may be concluded that more people are coming due to good services; declining revenues may indicate the opposite. Recreation programs in 1997 were \$259,000 and in 2002 were \$243,000. Revenues ranged from a high in 1998 of \$283,000 to a low of \$162,000 during the strike year, 2000. When price increases are factored in, it appears that the revenues represent declining attendance from 1997 to 2002. The most obvious effect on the revenues is the year 2000 strike.
- **Public Program Surveys** are an indicator of services influenced by the programmer. 96-99% of 206 people surveyed would recommend the twinned rinks services. In regards to staff being organized and schedule info being available, 90% of the responses were positive (47% always and 43% usually). The opinion that public skating meets the respondents need is less affirmative with 72% (21% always and 51% usually). These results indicate that although the service is good, the times may not meet people's needs.
- **Rental Revenues** may be an indicator of customer service in areas affected by the central booking service. These revenues have gone from \$558,000 in 1997 to \$603,000 in 2002. The highest year was 1999 at \$651,000 and the lowest was 2001 at \$469,651. It appears that revenues have stayed in a fairly consistent range except for the effect of the strike in 2000.
- **Rental Program Surveys** are an indicator of the services most influenced by the central booking service. 54% of those surveyed indicated the central booking desk always meets their needs and 38% indicate it usually met their needs. 21% responded they can reach the booking clerk sometimes. 79% said they could reach the clerk usually to always. On average 90% find booking efficient and meets their needs usually or always.
- **Statistics** are an indicator of the use of the rinks for rentals and public programs, and may measure the booking clerk and programmer's general effectiveness in delivering the service. The statistics were found to be very inconsistent and upon discussing how they may be compiled differently from staff person to staff person they were not useful for this research. The committee feels that statistics gathering requires standardization in how numbers are compiled.
- **Interviews - improvements in customer service were the** most common responses of those interviewed: the central booking desk (9/13 responses), more efficient billing (5/13 responses), decrease in double booking (4/13 responses), coordinated and efficient programming of services (3/13 responses) and district wide programming over local (3/13 responses). Most of the positive multiple responses are for the central booking service.
- **Interviews - reductions in customer service** were also mentioned. The most common responses included half a programmer for each rink (7/13 responses), and decrease in access to the programmer for the public (5/13 response). There were no comments on decreases in booking service.

## D. Discussion

page 3

### Customer Service continued.

- **Interviews - other comments** included: that success depended on having staff in the programmer position and booking clerk position with exceptional communication skills, the ability to multitask, strong organizational skills and the ability to work independently (5/13 responses); central booking clerk may require additional support for their duties (3/13 responses); and location of central booking office was not adequate for accessibility, security and support.

### 2. Operational Efficiencies:

- **Salary Expenses** can indicate operational efficiencies. Costs for full-time salaries were \$557,428 in 1997 and \$497,866 in 2002. The high for salaries is \$928,080 in 2001 and the low is \$419,423 in 1999. It appears that over the five years wages show no consistent linear direction as they fluctuate from year to year though 2002 is the second lowest total of the five-year period.
- **Part-time Wages** can indicate operational efficiencies. Costs for part-time wages were \$519,117 for 1997 and \$594,562 for 2002. The high is \$608,261 for 2001 and the low is \$478,540 for during the strike year 2000. It appears that these totals have increased consistently in the five years when factoring in the strike in 2000.
- **Supplies and Auto Allowance** has fluctuated over the years with no indication of increased or decreased efficiencies.
- **Net of Program/Rental Revenues and Expenses** can indicate operational efficiencies. The net loss for 1997 was \$297,502 and the net loss for 2002 was \$279,607. 2001 posted the largest loss of \$867,783 and 1999 posted the lowest loss of \$140,982. The results fluctuate from year to year without a clear direction.
- **Staff Surveys – Program questions** may be an indicator of efficiencies in operations. Staff indicated that 68% usually are aware of current information on rink schedules and 24% always are aware of the information. 50% of staff interviewed indicated they always could reach the programmer when they need to, 37% indicated they could usually and 13% responded sometimes. 80% felt always supported by the programmer, 17% usually and 4% sometimes. Awareness of changes in the staff schedule showed 39% knew of the changes sometimes, 29% usually and 21% always.
- **Staff Surveys – Booking Clerk** 58% usually could reach the booking clerk when needed, 19% always and 19% sometimes.
- **Staff Surveys – Twinning efficiency** 57% felt it was always efficient, 31% sometimes and 12% never.
- **Interviews – Programming efficiencies.** The most common response was more efficient use of staff (7/13 responses), use of resources and information (7/13 responses), more efficient use of ice time (4/13 responses), coordination of maintenance staff (3/13 responses), district wide programming ((3/13 responses).
- **Interviews – Programming inefficiencies.** Half the time at each facility (7/13 responses), travel time (6/13 responses), inability to provide site coverage and support (6/13 responses), limited access to the programmer (5/13 responses), double meetings/duties (3/13 responses).

### Operational Efficiencies continued

- **Interviews – Central Booking efficiencies:** The most common responses were; the position itself (9/13 responses), more efficient billing and a centralized place for money (4/13 responses), access to four rinks at once (4/13 responses), and decrease in double bookings (4/13 responses).
- **Interviews – Central Booking inefficiencies.** Booking Clerk may require additional support (3/13 responses) and location of central booking service is not adequate for accessibility, security or support (2/13 responses).

### Single opinions or observations from interviews:

- Kits has programmer less than half the time.
- Twinning at Kitsilano within the site is not ideal.
- Not for a junior programmer.
- Twinning might be more efficient within facilities.
- Potential to compromise one centre for the programmer's work at another centre.
- Added load to centre programming.
- Saving may have compromised needs for improvement to facility for central booking.
- Skepticism from the union with regards to staff protection.
- Twinned Programmer position perceived to be more work due to two facilities at the same pay as a regular Programmer position.
- Use of software for accountability and reporting is an asset.
- Inequity among all the sites including, sharing of central booking staff costs and includes supplies and central booking staffing funded by Kerrisdale and Kits budgets.
- Only 15-18% of the facilities are actually programmed. The rest is rentals indicating a need to put more resources into booking if this continues and less in to ice programming. This is different during dry floor at Kerrisdale due to implementation of the Play Palace.
- Originally Kerrisdale had approximately 20 hours of reception/cashiering at the Arena. This is now gone and sharing of central booking costs could return some of this budget to be used for reception/cashiering for the Play Palace.
- Communications with the UMW's and the central booking desk for last minute changes is difficult and frustrating.
- 80% of the time of the programmer is dealing with administrative support.
- Boards led to believe that things were going to happen that didn't.
- Boards were told that it was a Pilot program which was to be evaluated after one year but three years later we are just getting through the evaluation.
- The rink twinning results in the loss to each community centre complex of half a programmer; this reduction in staffing has increased the workload of the remaining programmers at each centre.

## **Discussion**

page 5

### **Committee observations:**

- Statistics gathering at the ice rinks needs a consistent system that is auditable.
- The Rink Task Force is also working on policies that will increase customer service and efficiencies.
- The Rink Task Force is also looking at the way we program rinks which may have implications down the road for twinning the programmers. Presently the rinks are used 75-80% as rental facilities with public programming accounting for about 20-25%. This requires more administration from the programmer than programming. Any increases in public programming could reduce the ability for one person to do two rinks.
- The need for experienced staff in the position and the opinion that the job is harder than at one facility may need to be addressed. At Kerrisdale and Kits, the last four programmers have only stayed for a year to a year and a half mainly due to promotions. When call for interests have been put to experienced programmers, there has only been one response each time.

## **E. Summary**

This evaluation of twinning services of Kerrisdale, Kitsilano, Riley and Sunset rinks consists of quantitative data, survey data and opinions of key stakeholders and participants. Surveys and interviews gave the most conclusive data on Central Booking and Programmer twinning effecting customer service and operating efficiencies.

The data collected indicates that the centralized booking of ice provides good customer service and creates efficiencies. Reducing the amount of communications a customer requires to find open ice and consolidating resources in one place makes central booking effective. The only area of concern with the central booking was the support, security and supervision available at the present location. Centralized booking should continue or expand with thought given to upgrading or moving the office. Equity of the expense of central booking is also a concern for Kerrisdale as increased central booking has decreased their reception time.

Twinning the programmer also appears to provide good customer service and efficiencies. Surveys indicated the public were happy with the programs and skating lessons. Efficiencies came in the coordinated use of staff and information. Concerns revealed less time for each community and doubling up on some duties. Twinning is effective at the current level of public programming in the rinks. Increases in programming, such as the Play Palace at Kerrisdale, may make twinning the position less effective. The committee expressed that a "Twinned Programmer" job requires experienced staff with exceptional skills.

## **F. Conclusion**

The pilot project for Central Booking has been unquestionably successful. Twinning of the Programmer job has had mixed results.

Going forward the Central Booking office should be improved and equity on the funding should be considered. For the twinned programming job, levels of facility programming and job category should be considered along the way.