

Minutes of Meeting
Planning and Environment Committee, Vancouver Park Board
2099 Beach Avenue, Vancouver

DATE OF MEETING: October 4, 2005

ATTENDEES: **Park Board Commissioners**
Commissioner Loretta Woodcock
Commissioner Suzanne Anton
Commissioner Allan De Genova (arrived 7:35pm, departed 9:10pm)
Commissioner Anita Romaniuk (arrived 8:55pm)

Park Board Staff

Piet Rutgers	Director of Planning and Operations
Jim Lowden	Director of Stanley District
Mark Vulliamy	Manager of Research and Planning
Michel Desrochers	Research Planner
Kate Davis-Johnson	Manager Park Development
Bob Hindley	Recreation Programmer
Laurie Anderson	Recorder of Minutes

Delegations

Kim Perry	Perry and Associates
Linda Lawson	
Laurie Lee	Lord Nelson Annex PAC
Rowly Johnson	Westend Citizens Action Network (WECAN)
Aaron Jasper	Westend Residents Association (WERA)
Mardet Greenough	
Terry Lavender	Molehill CHS
Tara McDonald	Your Local Farmer's Market Society
David Gilmore	
Henry Deane	
Michel Morin	
Calen Sinclair	
Gavin Ross	
Edward Dinter	
Matthew Kwok	
Cate Atkinson	
Jeremy Bentson	
Magdy Nesenyas	
Cory McIntyre	Vancouver Skatepark Coalition
Nathaniel Adie	Public Skaters for Public Skate Park Org
Sebastien Templar	
Gary Harris	

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm, with the following Agenda:

1. Approval of the minutes of September 15, 2005 meeting
2. Nelson Park Design
3. China Creek South Park - Proposed Improvements
4. Gordon Jones – Delegation re: “Langara Park”
5. Public Consultation Study

1. Nelson Park Design

Two design options went through a community consultation process earlier in 2005 with no clear consensus. The consultant took the resulting feedback and incorporated it into a third design that keeps current activities (farmer’s market and children’s play area), creates an important “heart” for the park, builds a new field house, plants a community garden and puts a fenced dog park within Nelson Park. This new option will need to go through at least one community open house and is subject to further refinement.

Delegations

1. Kim Perry described details of the new design which addressed various issues including the creation of a “heart” in the park, more children in the west end, the need to respect the history of the site, the parking lot, the field house, Comox greenway improvements, park geometry, budget constraints, corners, teen programming, sightlines, access, native plantings and permeable surfaces.
2. Linda Lawson said she liked this third design as it addressed many issues from the previous designs. She also asked for benches with back support, landscaped dog area fencing to decrease noise, increased police presence, a “just for people” area and song bird boxes in the community garden area.
3. Laurie Lee read her letter dated October 1, 2005 outlining problems with the initial two options. She asked if the Vancouver School Board had seen the new option and if they were in favour of moving school parking to Comox Street.
4. Rowly Johnson said the new design was fantastic and that he appreciated the collaborative process. He also asked various parties to put their differences aside so the Nelson Park redesign can move forward. As public safety and orderliness is important in Nelson Park, he suggested good sightlines and lighting, lowered berms and trimming lower tree branches. He liked the community garden idea but expressed concern about parceling land from such a small park.
5. Aaron Jasper said that the Nelson Park redesign has been a great process resulting in a unique solution with the new option. He said he had spoken with school board trustees who indicated support for moving the parking. He suggested that part of the community garden be designated for school kids. He said that the root causes of homelessness must be addressed in a sustainable way and does not think that having a police presence on site would make a substantial difference.
6. Mardet Greenough asked for assurance that the new parking plan for Comox Street would not interfere with pedestrians and bike traffic and that the dog park would not interfere with children. She said that ground level lighting is important so it does not negatively impact neighbours.

7. Terry Lavender said he is impressed with the overall design in the new option and asked the various parties to put their differences aside and proceed with redevelopment.
8. Tara McDonald said that as Nelson Park is a heavily used farmers' market with an average of one thousand shoppers each Saturday during its season, there is a the need for farm vehicle parking and washrooms. She said that overall, the new design is wonderful and she likes the seating component.
9. David Gilmore said he does not want the field house near his house on Comox Street.
10. Henry Deane said that while there is a high proportion of dog owners who use the park, safety concerns should be dealt with first before addressing the size of the fenced dog area.
11. Michel Morin said he liked the overall plan but expressed concern with some of the elements: ninety degree parking on Comox Street, a proposed greenway may cause safety concerns as well as disruption to residences from headlights and school delivery vans that currently use the parking lot would likely block Nelson Street. He also said that a washroom and greater police presence are necessary.

Discussion

- The group discussed the importance of creating a “heart” to bring people into the park and maximize the volume of interaction between people. Water features, attractive seating, activities and trails designed to pass through the heart could contribute to accomplishing these goals. One Committee member noted that the absence of a direct pathway through the park might also encourage people to remain in the park.
- There was discussion about the possible effect of Comox Street parking on the farmers' market. Staff suggested the creation of a double-sided market on Comox Street with displays on both sides and space for farm vehicle parking on the ends of the street.
- There was discussion about the field house, its state and possible new locations. Staff said that the new design calls for dismantling the existing field house and building a smaller, heritage-themed field house, including washrooms, closer to Comox Street, which would increase its visibility. The new field house and washrooms would also be accessible to the farmers' market and include storage space for the community garden.
- The group discussed security concerns and while some community members said it was important to have regular police presence in the park, a Committee member said she does not think more police is the best way to solve the park problems. The idea of removing berms to increase visibility was also discussed and it was generally agreed that berm removal is a positive aspect of the new design.
- Discussion of the dog run location included a Committee member question about movement of the fenced dog area closer to the residential area. Staff said that relocation in the new design helped create a “front yard look” that would also hide the fencing and give dogs a long run. A Committee member suggested the dog area be moved closer to noisier Nelson and Thurlow Streets and away from the community garden and play area.

- There was group discussion about the need for lighting that does not interfere with surrounding residences. Staff said that pedestrian pathway lighting would be at least 110 feet away from the nearest street and that park core lighting is possible without disturbing neighbours.
- The group discussed timing for approval of the park redesign after a Committee member expressed a clear desire for the current Park Board to deal with this issue. Staff said it would be a challenge to get approval before the election, as it is necessary to obtain School Board agreement to move the parking and there is uncertainty about their meeting schedule and possible labour disruption. The group further discussed when to contact the School Board about proposed changes to the parking lot and whether staff or Commissioners should make these overtures.

Summary

Commissioners expressed appreciation for the process and the creation of the new option. Staff suggested that Commissioners exchange letters with School Board officials about principles of the redesign plan.

Next Steps

Staff will begin contacting School Board officials about the redesign and its plan for the parking lot. Commissioner Woodcock also offered to contact school board officials, if necessary.

2. China Creek South Park – Proposed Improvements

Michel Desroches presented a report that outlined the process and feedback to date as well as the constraints on the project, which included arterials, edges, trees, daycare, bikes, sewers and the budget. He presented the three options under consideration and noted the commonalities as playground space, community garden, half basketball court, pathways, more trees, the 10th Avenue bikeway and lane bollards. The one major difference involved the location of the skateboard park.

- Option 1: Skatepark stays where it is now; the junior and senior playgrounds are divided.
- Option 2: Skatepark moved over beside Clark Street; the basketball area is moved beside the skatepark; the combined junior and senior playground area is located where the skatepark currently is so that it is in the middle of the park.
- Option 3: Skatepark is moved to another location in another park; the basketball area is moved to where it is in option 2

Delegations

1. Calen Sinclair, the original builder of the skate park, said that China Creek has always had problems regardless of the skate park. He said the bright lights attracted skaters and that removal of the skate park would create more problems in the park

2. Gavin Ross is involved with the Community Centre Association and said it has passed no official motion on this issue, as members would like the community to decide. Mr. Ross said he supports option one as skateboarders are good neighbours and he likes the community garden idea because it adds another use to the park.
3. Edward Dinter said he grew up beside the skate park and would like to see the bowl moved even if the funds come from the park redevelopment budget. He said that skateboarding has grown astronomically, that rails and stairs create increased noise and that people urinating against his house is an issue as there is no washroom in the park.
4. Matthew Kwok said he deals with constant noise from the park that affects his ability to sleep through the night and that while he supports the existing facilities, he is against usage during restricted hours. Vandals removed a fence and signs restricting usage between 10pm and 6am and they have yet to be replaced. He asked Park Board to take responsibility and implement measures to deter people from using the facilities between 10pm and 6am as police resources often cannot respond to resident complaints.
5. Cate Atkinson said she lives near the skate park and supports Option 1. She said that the skate park is an important part of the neighbourhood and is the heart of the park. She suggested installing bleachers so people could watch the skateboarders.
6. Jeremy Bentson expressed concern that many people did not know about this meeting nor who to contact to register to speak. He said that the park is safe due to the presence of skateboarders, the bowls should be kept where they are and the majority of boarders do not come at night because it is dark.
7. Magdy Nesenyas said there are more skateboarders now than when the skatepark was created, that the noise from the wooden jump “additions” created noise similar to that found in an industrial area and that residents have a right to quiet between 10pm and 6am. He also expressed a concern about monitoring if toilets are installed.
8. Cory McIntyre, with the Vancouver Skateboard Coalition, suggested that using the full basketball court at Cedar Cottage Park could eliminate the noise from the half court in China Creek. He also commented that in his opinion the bowls were not in good condition.
9. Nathaniel Adie quoted a study of decibel levels undertaken as part of an urban planning thesis in Portland, Oregon. This study found that within fifty feet of a skate park, decibel readings are no louder than that of a dishwasher.
10. Sebastian Templar said he is a designer, builder and consultant for skateboard parks and that China Creek is a world-renowned training ground. He said that moving the bowl would be expensive and that it should have another twenty-five years of life, considering that it was well built. He confirmed that adding berms could help reduce noise and suggested the elimination of the basketball area and the addition of areas that children would enjoy.
11. Gary Harris said to keep the bowl and expand the park with the money saved from not moving the bowl. He suggested turning out at night the bicycle pathway lights.

Discussion

- There was discussion about ways to reduce or eliminate noise from the basketball court. Some suggestions included installing electronic basketball nets, turning out the lights or shielding lighting into the park at night, reinstalling fencing and signage that would restrict access between 10pm and 6am, and finally, making use of the full basketball court in Cedar Cottage Park therefore not replacing the basketball area in China Creek Park. It was noted that there is a careful balance between eliminating the basketball area as an activity and wanting activities that bring users into the park.
- The noise emanating from the use of wooden boxes in the bowl was discussed. A Committee member asked if there had been any noise studies done on the use of boxes. It was suggested that perhaps skateboarders would not object to eliminating the boxes.
- The group discussed adding berms around the skate park as a way to decrease noise although they would also decrease visibility and accessibility. A Commissioner suggested that berms only be added to one side of the bowl.
- Incorporating toilets into the China Creek improvements was discussed regarding the location of washrooms. A Committee member asked if toilets could be added to any daycare-rebuilding project. Staff said that when a permanent daycare was constructed, plumbing and electrical infrastructure could be built into one side and toilets added when the Park Board had capital funds available.
- There was discussion about the need for a “heart” in China Creek Park and that the character of a heart will depend on the activities happening there. Currently the skate park seems to be the heart.
- There was some discussion concerning lack of seniors using the park due to few benches. A Committee member asked if seating for seniors could be incorporated into the park improvement and staff said the walkways would also have to be conducive to walking so that seniors would come to the park.
- A fourth option suggested would include a perimeter pathway, a heart and a playground as possible features to bring people into the park. There was no agreement about the perimeter path as one Committee member said it uses up green space, generates little activity and does not bring people into the park.
- The group discussed relocation of the skate park within China Creek or offsite to another park. Some of the factors to consider include: skateboarder attachment to the location and bowl design at China Creek; noise affecting residents; no washrooms; lack of skateboarding community and resident confidence in the Park Board; and the contents of the Master Plan for John Hendry Park. A Committee member suggested relocating the bowl closer to Broadway Street and staff said

that moving it closer to Clark Street seemed to decrease the number of houses affected. Staff also suggested moving the south end of the bowl and adding it to the north end in order to begin the process of removing the skate park from residential areas. Staff said that to date there has been no discussion about including a skate park in John Hendry Park but that this could be an option.

- A Committee member asked what the cost would be to move the skate park and staff thought it would be approximately \$115,000-120,000. Discussion followed about whether something as good as the existing bowl (built with rebar three inches apart as compared to today's industry standard of rebar 16-18" apart) could be built today for that amount. Staff will find out the current life expectancy of the bowl.

Summary

- Committee members would like to see the basketball area eliminated, as there is a full court basketball area in Cedar Cottage Park.
- Develop a park design that provides focus for neighbourhood residents.

Next Steps

- Staff will make enquiries regarding the current quality and life expectancy of the bowl.
- As there was no consensus on how to proceed with the proposed improvements to China Creek Park, staff will take the ideas that were generated and return to the committee with a new plan.

3. Gordon Jones – Delegation re: “Langara Park”

Mr. Gordon Jones, a resident of the Langara Park area, said he represented three hundred seniors and made the following requests of the Committee:

- install an official Park Board sign that recognizes the green space site at 49th and Columbia streets as a park
- keep the park as a natural space with no installation of playground equipment or shuffleboards
- officially name the park as Langara Park
- install benches
- create an all weather pathway
- eliminate the overflow parking from the golf course
- accomplish these requests by November 19, 2005

Discussion

- There was discussion about the naming of this green space as Langara Park and community involvement in this process. Staff said that there would need to be an official naming process with the name reflecting the geographical and historical aspects of the area.

- A Committee member asked about the quality of the park surfaces. Staff said that the north ends needs some work and that it would be a good place for a perimeter pathway because it would connect to the larger pathway system.
- There was a discussion about the necessity of overflow parking from the golf course. Staff said the golf course operator believes that the overflow parking is necessary to attract business as parking is challenging in the neighbourhood. Staff suggested that a sign identifying the space as a park might mitigate this problem.
- A Committee member stated that if the Park Board does not show ownership of the park, it may be lost to other uses. A Commissioner supported keeping the park in its natural state.

Recommendation:

The Planning and Environment Committee recommended that staff report back to the Board with a park naming process for the green space at 49th Street and Columbia Street.

4. Public Consultation Study

Deferred

5. Approval of September 15, 2005 meeting minutes:

The minutes of the September 15, 2005 meeting were approved as presented.

6. Next Meeting:

The meeting adjourned at 11:50 pm. The next Planning and Recreation Committee meeting is scheduled for November 1, 2005 at 7:00 pm.