

Date: January 5, 2006



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Community Board Meetings

RECOMMENDATION

That staff explore the possibility of holding one Park Board meeting per month in the community by:

- a. Extending an invitation to Community Centre Associations to host meetings in the 2006 – 2009 periods;*
- b. Reporting back with a financial plan to fund community board meetings based on the number of public meetings in the community.*

POLICY

At its December 16, 2002 Board meeting, a motion was passed by the Board to hold six of its regular public board meetings at the Park Board facilities around the City.

BACKGROUND

Since 2003, the Board has conducted some of its public board meetings in different communities throughout the City to increase public participation and make it easier for residents to attend meetings. Board meetings are traditionally held at 2099 Beach Avenue, on Monday evenings at 7:00 pm.

DISCUSSION

Since January 2003, the Board has convened eighteen community meetings (six per annum) in different Vancouver neighbourhoods, as shown in the table below. In determining the locations of the meetings, the Board has had to balance busy community centre schedules (finding availability of a room), while ensuring all geographic areas have the opportunity to host the Board meeting.

2003	2004	2005
Sunset Centre	West Point Grey Centre	Douglas Park Centre
VanDusen Botanical Garden	Kensington Centre	Kerrisdale Centre
Trout Lake Centre	Riley Park Centre	Hastings Centre
Mt. Pleasant Centre	Killarney Centre	Kitsilano Centre
Strathcona Centre	Roundhouse Centre	Marpole/Oakridge Centre
Coal Harbour Centre	Renfrew Centre	Dunbar Centre

Activities to Raise Public Awareness and Attendance

For each of the board meetings held at community locations, extra measures were put in place to promote the event and invite the public. Print advertisements ran in the *Vancouver Courier* community newspaper in each case, and in an effort to reach specific ethnic populations, other papers were also used on occasion. In addition, news releases were issued and editorial coverage sought to increase public awareness. Community Associations further publicized the meetings by advertising to key community stakeholders: a "Join Us!" flyer was developed for community centres to display and distribute to their local users, and notices about the Board meeting were posted on outside reader board signs at facilities holding the meetings. As well, the date and location of the community board meetings were highlighted on the Park Board web site home page and on the Agenda (Phone) Line. To make the location easier to find and to attract passers-by, sandwich board signs were also erected in and around the buildings on the nights of the community board meeting.

Additional Preparation for Community Meetings

Staff prepared background information on each community prior to the meetings to brief Commissioners regarding neighbourhood demographics, history and local issues. As well, arrangements were made for audio-visual equipment to be available at each site if necessary.

Leisure Guides/Annual Reports and Park Partner brochures were available for the public at each meeting, along with a selection of each Community Centre's program information.

A questionnaire was developed to gauge feedback from attendees. Over the three year period, thirty-two were returned, with the majority expressing positive comments around the opportunity to ask questions or offer comments at the start of each meeting.

While regular Park Board agendas were in place for the community board meetings, attendees had a new opportunity to speak beyond that of signing up as a delegation for a particular agenda item. Immediately following the Chair's Report, an open question period of 30 minutes was scheduled for the public to ask questions or offer comments on

Park Board issues. On the back of the printed agendas for the public, information entitled ‘Getting to Know the Vancouver Park Board’ was added.

Attendance

Attendance figures were similar to those for the meetings held at the Board’s head office (2099 Beach Avenue). Average attendance was 43 participants in 2003, 33 participants in 2004 and 48 participants in 2005.

Costs

The costs of conducting community meetings in 2005 were as follows:

Community newspaper advertisements and supplies	\$ 800 – 1,200
Contract audio visual services	\$ 2,200
Average Cost per Meeting	\$3,500
TOTAL 2005 COSTS	\$21,000

In-House Audio-Visual Capability for Community Meetings

At present the Park Board does not own the portable audio-visual equipment required for out-of-office meetings and does not have in-house staff with the technical expertise or knowledge to service and maintain such equipment.

To conduct community board meetings using in-house staff would require purchasing audio-visual equipment costing approximately \$40,000-\$45,000, and contracting with an audio-visual specialist to update and maintain the equipment as required. As well, staff costs of approximately \$325 per meeting would be incurred to operate the audio-visual equipment.

The following table compares the costs of contracted audio-visual services to providing audio-visual support by in-house staff for 11 community board meetings:

	Contracted Service	In-house Service	Difference
Equipment Maintenance	Included	\$1,500	
Equipment Operation	\$2,200 x 11 meetings: \$24,200	Approx \$325 x 11 meetings: \$3,575	
Total On-going	\$24,200	\$5,075	\$19,125
Plus Equipment Costs (one time)	Included	\$40,000-\$45,000	
Total	\$24,200	\$45,075- \$50,075	(\$20,875 - \$25,875)

If the Board conducts public board meetings in the Community eleven times per year using Park Board facilities, there will be annual savings of at least \$20,000 by using in-house staff, after a one-time investment of \$40,000-\$45,000 in audio visual equipment.

Equipment (one time)			\$40,000- \$45,000
Staff Costs (ongoing) \$325 X 11 meetings, plus contracted equipment maintenance costs of \$1,500	\$5,075		
Advertising (ongoing) \$1,000 X 11 meetings	\$11,000		
Total estimate for In-house per annum	\$16,075		
Average cost per meeting with contract audio visual services in 2005 \$3,500 x 11 meetings	\$38,500		
Difference		\$22,425	

Lessons Learned

- Community board meetings draw about the same number of attendees as those held at 2099 Beach Avenue. Attendance is primarily driven by agenda items.
- Booking meeting space at busy recreation facilities is often difficult as facilities are heavily booked for activities. Moving or cancelling programs may be required to accommodate the meetings.
- The opportunity for participants to ask questions or offer comments at Community board meetings was well received by those responding to questionnaires.
- There is an additional cost to holding Community board meetings, although this may be mitigated over the long term by purchasing the equipment and providing the service in-house.

SUMMARY

This report describes the recent experience of the Board in holding its meetings in the Community, detailing activities, attendance and the cost of public board meetings at the Park Board facilities around the city.

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