

Date: May 12, 2006



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Replacement of Firehall Number 15

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board encourage City Council to seek options for the replacement of Firehall Number 15 that do not involve the use of Renfrew Park.

POLICY

The Board approves the use and disposition of park land. Disposition of park land requires approval by a two-thirds majority vote of both City Council and the Park Board. In the case of the Park Board that means five affirmative votes.

BACKGROUND

Firehall Number 15 is over ninety years old and is sited on a property across the street from Renfrew Park at the corner of East 22nd Avenue at Nootka Street. The building is not on the Heritage Register.

The 2003-2005 City Capital Plan provided \$300,000 for the initial design of the replacement of this firehall.

The 2006 – 2008 City Capital Plan provided an additional \$4,585,000 for actual construction.

On February 14, 2006, Council requested a report from staff on the options for saving or moving the existing firehall building, including consideration of Fire Department, Park Board and community interests and project timelines.

The attached City Council report dated May 16, 2006 reviews a number of options, which range from placing the replacement firehall in Renfrew Park to incorporating some of the heritage elements of the existing firehall in the new building to be built on the existing firehall site.

In the last few years there have been some exploratory discussions involving community representatives looking at potential uses for the existing firehall. Some of these discussions involved relocating the existing firehall to Renfrew Park with the view of creating additional community space. Park Board staff have attended a couple of these meetings and noted that the Board does not have a program requirement or the financial resources for an additional building on Renfrew Park.

DISCUSSION

The attached Council Report provides background information on a number of options which fall generally into two categories.

- A. Rebuilt Firehall on existing Firehall site
- B. Rebuilt Firehall on Renfrew Park.

Option A involves either demolition of the firehall or moving the firehall to another site. Renfrew Park has been suggested as one such site. Accepting an old building on the park land would be associated with the responsibility for renovating, maintaining and programming a building. The Board has neither the programmatic requirement, nor the financial resources to accept this building. No party with an operating and financial plan has come forward to relieve the Board of its financial obligations that would arise from placing the old Firehall on park land and converting it to a use, which is consistent with the Board's mandate.

Option B, building the new firehall in the park, is outside the Board's mandate as provided for in the Vancouver Charter. To realize this option, the Board would have to relinquish the permanent park status of that area of Renfrew Park required for the new firehall and its associated parking. Removal of the permanent park status requires a two-thirds majority vote of both the Board and Council.

The attached report acknowledges that if Renfrew Park were used, the Park Board would be entitled to compensation for lands given up at market value.

The retention of the firehall has been analyzed from a number of perspectives. The preparation of the Statement of Significance for heritage purposes and various potential redevelopment scenarios have contributed to the delay in the project. The overall delay in getting the project started is now estimated to have resulted in a need to add \$1.2 million for the project to deal with cost escalation.

SUMMARY

Various options for the use and retention of Firehall Number 15 have been explored by city staff. Some of these options involve the use of Renfrew Park. Park staff have reviewed the potential use of parkland and concluded that none of the scenarios identified to date are within the Board's mandate or serve the Board's interests within tolerable levels of financial exposure.

Staff recommend that the Board encourage Council to find an option for the replacement of Firehall Number 15 that does not involve the use of Renfrew Park.

Prepared by:

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