

Date: September 28, 2006



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Stanley Park Commemorative Donation at Ceperley Playground

CONSIDERATION

A. THAT the Board endorse the original concept of a commemorative donation for the refurbishment of Ceperley Playground in Stanley Park dedicated to the victims of the Air India tragedy without listing the individual victims' names on the commemorative feature, and allow the planning and the public process to proceed accordingly;

OR

B. THAT the Board support a review of the concept for a memorial in Stanley Park that includes the victims' names, in accordance with the Park Board Review Guidelines for the Donation of Public Art or Memorials.

POLICY

The relevant policy is the *Park Board Review Guidelines for the Donation of Public Art or Memorials*, included as Appendix A (see also the Park Board's web page: <http://vancouver.ca/parks/arts/guidelinesdonations.htm>).

BACKGROUND

After a year of informal discussions with the Air India Review Secretariat, the Park Board, at its regular meeting of June 26, 2006, accepted a donation from the Federal Government for the creation of a children's playground and commemorative feature in Stanley Park dedicated to the memory of the victims of the bombing of Air India flight 182. A memorandum of understanding between Federal Government and the Park Board to outline details of this project has been drafted but not yet executed.

Subsequently, Board members have been approached with the desire to change the concept and develop a memorial that includes the names of the victims. The Planning Committee meeting of September 5, 2006, discussed some of the implications of such a change, and requested additional information regarding the victims' families and their preferences. The Committee also directed staff to put the project on hold pending receipt of this information.

This report explains the differences between the two scenarios, commemorative donation versus memorial, in terms of the nature of the project, applicable policy, public process, and schedule, and provides the requested information from the victims' families.

DISCUSSION

The inclusion of victims' names changes the nature of the proposed project from a commemorative park improvement to a memorial. Names of the deceased are frequently a feature of memorials, from war memorials listing the names of fallen soldiers to the recent AIDS memorial near Sunset Beach listing the names of persons who died from AIDS. From a memorial, one might expect a stronger emphasis on looking back at the tragedy, a more significant physical form in the park landscape, a more serious character to the design, and more of a year-round presence. Further differences between these two options are listed below:

OPTION 1: COMMEMORATIVE DONATION

The Park Board frequently receives donations of money for park projects ranging from smaller items like benches and drinking fountains to larger projects like the recent lighting of the Inukshuk or the refurbishment of tennis courts in Stanley Park. Depending on the scale of the project, there may or may not be a public process associated with the donation. Recognition of the donation in some physical form – often as a plaque – is a common practice.

The donation from the Federal Government for the refurbishment of the Ceperley Playground has been approved by the Park Board. The intended public process will focus on the design of the proposed improvements, including two open houses, a presentation to the Planning Committee, and approval of the design by the Park Board.

Recognition of the donation dedicated to the memory of the victims would be envisioned in form of a feature integrated into the overall landscape design concept. According to the original timeline, the design concept was scheduled to be completed by now but the work has been put on hold to resolve the issues.

OPTION 2: MEMORIAL

The Park Board has a policy for the donation of memorials, see Appendix A. These Review Guidelines for the Donation of Public Art and Memorials were developed to ascertain the merit of a proposed donation and its fit with a specific park site. Included in the evaluation are the relationship of the proposal to the history of the site, its relevance for Vancouver, the level of public support for placing the memorial in a public park, and an assessment of whether the proposed memorial contributes to, enhances or benefits the park.

The process for acceptance of a memorial donation calls for a public discussion of the merits of the proposal, with at least one public meeting dedicated to that question, in addition to the planning open houses listed above addressing site and design issues. Further requirements are consultation with the City of Vancouver Public Art Committee, and the appointment of a panel to review design, social and merit issues. The conclusion of the planning process would be a formal Park Board decision on whether to accept the memorial donation, in addition to the approval of the design.

Staff estimate that the memorial process would take at minimum six months longer than the process originally outlined for the commemorative donation, but potentially much more than that, noting that the process for the AIDS Memorial took more than two years from first presentation to the Board to Board approval.

Given the stronger focus on the memorial and its associated process, a larger percentage of the donated funds would have to be allocated to these items, reducing the scope of playground and landscape improvements should those still be included in the project. Further of note is the diminishment of the purchasing power of the donation due to construction cost increases during a longer planning phase.

VICTIMS' FAMILIES

The Federal Government through the Air India Review Secretariat has provided some additional information at the request of the Board. They are in regular contact with approximately 180 victims' families. Of those, 15 live in the Greater Vancouver area. Five families live in the City of Vancouver.

The Secretariat has received responses from 40 families regarding the question of inclusion of names. 39 families support the inclusion of the names, with one family supporting the majority choice.

The victims' families have from the beginning emphasised their desire to achieve a design and program that finds broad support. While their stated preference is to include the individual names, a variety of design solutions may be developed in the planning and public process that represent a harmonious consensus of all parties without individual names.

CONCLUSION

The inclusion of the victims' names would change the nature of the project from a commemorative donation to a memorial proposal. Staff are listing two considerations for the Board's deliberation.

Consideration A is to proceed as approved without including the names of victims on the commemorative feature.

Consideration B is to pursue a review of the proposal as a memorial including victims' names in accordance with the *Park Board Review Guidelines for Public Art and Memorials*.

Prepared by:

Planning and Operations
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
Vancouver, BC

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