



Date: November 20, 2006

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: 2006 Aquarium Expansion Proposal

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Board approve the attached Vancouver Aquarium expansion plan subject to the mitigation and compensation measures outlined in this report;***
- B. THAT the Board amend the term of the current Stanley Park Aquarium Agreement to extend the license to 20 years from the start of construction of this proposed project on the basis that no legal rights are hereby created and non shall arise until an agreement to extend has been executed to the satisfaction of the Director of Legal Services and the General Manager.***

POLICY

The Board approves all major developments in the Park system. The Board approves all leases and licenses in the Park system and any amendments to them.

BACKGROUND

The Vancouver Aquarium approached the Board in the spring of 2006 with a proposal to upgrade and expand its existing facility in Stanley Park. A concept jointly developed by the Aquarium in consultation with Park Board staff with a related request to proceed came to the Board on July 10, 2006. The following motion was passed.

“THAT the Board refer this motion to the September 11, 2006 Board meeting so that the technical review can be completed and made public prior to the public consultation process.”

At the September 11, 2006 Park Board meeting staff recommended that the Board receive for information the proposal by the Vancouver Aquarium to revitalize and expand the Aquarium in Stanley Park, and receive for information the technical review prepared by Park Board staff on the impacts of the Aquarium’s proposal, and endorse the public consultation process, as outlined in that report.

The Board passed the following motions regarding the Aquarium proposal and related documentation, including the staff reports.

“THAT the Board receive for information the proposal by the Vancouver Aquarium to revitalize and expand the Aquarium in Stanley Park, as described in this report and shown in Appendix 1.”

“THAT the Board distance itself from this process by not being a co-sponsor but allow the Vancouver Aquarium to go forward to convince the community that what they are doing is the right thing.”

Attached to this report are the following documents received by the Board at its meetings of July 10 and September 11, 2006:

- Appendix 1 – Aquarium Revitalization and Expansion Proposal;
- Appendix 2 – Technical Review: Impacts of the Proposed Aquarium Revitalization and Expansion on Stanley Park; and
- Appendix 3 – Community Consultation on the Proposed Aquarium Revitalization and Expansion in Stanley Park.

DISCUSSION

The proposal brought forward by the Aquarium would take up an additional 1.5 acres/0.6 hectares of Stanley Park beyond their current licensed boundary which incorporates 2.9 acres/1.2 hectares of land. The proposal would remove about 1.34 acres/0.54 hectares of greenspace, predominantly south of the existing boundary and a piece of the Lumbermens’ Arch open green. 32 trees of 20 cm/8 inches or greater would be removed.

In summary, the proposed expansion would include the following, both inside and outside the Aquarium boundaries:

- new, larger pools for dolphins, beluga whales, sea lions and otters;
- new underwater water viewing for all pools;
- new facilities for animal care;
- two new galleries;
- a new main entrance;
- a larger gift shop and expanded food service;
- new meeting rooms;
- redevelopment of the public open space located south of the Aquarium;
- reorganization of the pedestrian pathways leading to the Aquarium;
- three locations for free public viewing of Aquarium animals;
- a new, larger and publicly accessible salmon hatchery;
- an extension to the fish-bearing salmon stream;
- new public washrooms to replace existing washrooms;
- a new food service building to replace existing food concession; and
- reorganization of car and bus parking along Avison Way.

During July and August, staff undertook a technical review of the potential impact of the proposal. The document is included as Appendix 2. A summary of areas of impacts included the following:

- amount of land required for expansion;
- impact on trees;
- impact on greenspace;
- impact on free public viewing of Aquarium animals;
- impact on salmon hatchery;
- impact on salmon stream;
- impact on public open spaces;
- impact on food services outside the Aquarium;
- impact on public washrooms;
- impact on pedestrian pathways;
- impact on visitors to Stanley Park during construction; and
- impact on Park Board revenue during construction.

The technical review limited itself to the external impacts of the proposal and does not address design concepts within the proposed building envelope.

The consultation process developed and implemented by Kirk and Company, the consultants to the Aquarium in summary contained the following features:

- handouts (including a key document, a booklet, called “discussion guide and feedback form”);
- display boards;
- a newspaper insert;
- a website;
- a scale model of the proposal; and
- a computer slideshow.

A variety of methods were used to notify individual citizens and community groups of the public review and specific public events, including:

- notification letters;
- electronic mails;
- newspaper advertisements;
- information signs at the Aquarium and key locations in Stanley Park; and
- notices at all major Park Board facilities.

A variety of methods were available for citizens to share their opinions on the proposal, including:

- a feedback form (made available on the website, in the newspaper insert, and at public events);
- emails, letters and faxes;
- three public open houses (one downtown, one on the east side and one on the west side);
- meetings with a wide range of stakeholders interested parties, including youth and academics;
- focus groups (randomly selected residents living in Vancouver);
- one-on-one interviews; and
- a telephone survey.

The consultation process ran from September through October 2006. The results of the process were released in the second week of November and the summary report is included in Appendix 4.

Of particular interest to the Park Board were the public responses related to the staff technical review. These included the loss of parkland, the reduction of greenspace and the loss of trees. While a large majority of those surveyed supported growth and revitalization of the Aquarium, fewer supported the resulting impacts on Stanley Park. The key results section of the summary consultation report states that overall, 61% of the consultation participants agreed with using more parkland for this expansion, while 16% disagree and 22% have no opinion. The same pattern reoccurs with the views on loss of greenspace. Fifty five percent of those who participated agreed with using greenspace, 20% disagree and 25% have no opinion. Tree loss reporting was similar, with overall support of 63%, while 26% disagree and 10% have no opinion.

Given the difference between general agreement with the concept of Aquarium expansion and the impact on Stanley Park, there will be a need for substantial mitigation and compensation measures related to the Park to maintain support for the proposal in its current form. Therefore, staff recommend that the mitigation and compensation measures in the following section be tied to any approval of the proposal to proceed.

MITIGATION AND COMPENSATION

- A. The Aquarium has agreed to the following process that allows the Park Board to ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are followed to minimize site damages and to deliver a design package which is complementary to the park.
 1. The design, detailing and material selection for all aspects of the space exterior to the Aquarium facility walls must be to the approval of the Park Board.
 2. The design of the exterior treatments of the new or renewed Aquarium buildings must be to the approval of the Park Board.
 3. The Park Board must approve the development permit application, prior to its submission.

- B. The Aquarium has agreed to develop, to current Park Board standards, the following compensation features. These will be paid for by the Aquarium as part of their expansion project.
1. New public washrooms – minimum 12 fixtures and 8 basins.
 2. New food service building, finished, not less than 250 sq. metres plus decks.
 3. New formal plaza as per concept plan.
 4. New informal plaza as per concept plan.
 5. Extended salmon stream and hatchery accessible to general park population.
 6. Four public viewing sites of the exhibits, three of which provide underwater viewing of the exhibits (including the hatchery).
 7. Reconfigured parking on Avison Way.
 8. All required remedial landscaping to ensure an appropriate interface between the expansion features and the Park.
- C. Beyond these new facilities, the Aquarium and the Park Board will jointly pursue enhanced safety features, including pathway lighting to the bus loop and enhanced traffic management features which will improve the pedestrian connections to the Aquarium plaza and parking lot areas.
- D. As part of project phasing, the Aquarium has agreed to deliver the following features of the proposed plan within the first phase.
1. New washrooms
 2. New food services
 3. Two new plazas
 4. Expanded salmon stream
 5. All related landscape mitigation
- E. In terms of short term financial compensation, the Aquarium has agreed to pay the Board for lost revenue from the existing plaza concession during the construction period. This amount would be \$170,000 per annum, pro-rated as required.
- F. In terms of long term financial compensation the Aquarium has agreed to annually pay to the Park board 4% of its gross revenues from direct food sales (excluding special event catering) within the Aquarium. In terms of 2005 revenue, this would represent approximately \$90,000.00.

Subsequent to the approval of this report the current January 1999 Stanley Park Aquarium Agreement between the Park Board and the Aquarium will require amendment to reflect any approved changes. The Stanley Park Aquarium Agreement runs until 2015. The Aquarium is requesting an amendment of the term of the agreement, to provide a 20 year license to the Aquarium from the start of construction. Based on the Board's direction staff will work with the City Law Department to amend the Agreement.

CONCLUSION

The overall consultation results show 89% (86% Vancouver residents) support for the Aquarium's revitalization and expansion project. Beyond the Kirk and Company consultation, the Board received opinions by phone, email, or letter from 86 residents and organizations. An analysis of the 86 responses showed that sixteen supported the proposed expansion and 34 opposed it, another 34 expressed dissatisfaction with the process and 17 opposed captive displays. The consultation process was extensive and staff recommend that the proposal proceed, subject to the conditions outlined in this report. If approved by the Board, the proposal will come back to the Board for design approval prior to submission of a development permit.

Prepared by:

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