

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

DATE OF MEETING: February 21, 2006

ATTENDEES: Park Board Commissioners
Commissioner Korina Houghton
Commissioner Spencer Herbert
Commissioner Loretta Woodcock

Park Board Staff

Liane McKenna	Director of Queen Elizabeth District
Lori MacKay	Director of Vancouver East District
Michel Desrochers	Research Planner
Debra Barnes	Project Manager
Jim McKenzie	Recreation Services Coordinator, Vancouver East District
Barbara Joughin	Recorder of Minutes

Delegations

Marta Farevaag	Phillips, Farevaag, Smallenberg
Kate Perkins	Grandview Community Association

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm, with the following Agenda:

1. Approval of Minutes of February 7, 2006 meeting
2. Pigeon Park Design Update
3. Trout Lake Master Plan
4. Active Communities

1. Approval of Minutes of February 7, 2006 meeting

The minutes of the February 7, 2006 meeting were approved as presented.

2. Pigeon Park Design Update

Michel Desrochers gave a presentation on the upgrade of Pigeon Park, which is linked to a recent initiative to create the Carrall Street Greenway. Pigeon Park is located at Hastings and Carrall Street, and is also known as Pioneer Square. At 0.04 hectares, it is the Park Board's second smallest park. It is a hard-surfaced urban plaza, but is very green due to a significant tree cluster. Sitting is the predominant activity. Working with consulting firm Durante Kreuk Ltd., staff have prepared a preliminary plan in response to the following considerations:

1. Carrall Street Greenway – development is proceeding with 2006-08 funding
2. #1 West Hastings Media Centre – need to phase park development with the restoration of the adjacent building
3. Budget – may need to augment the existing budget of \$170,000

The objectives of the upgrade are to preserve the park's important features, upgrade its aging infrastructure, and add new elements.

- Preserve the trees and the central space, and leave an open space for ongoing program development.

- Replace the benches, fountain, park surface, and lighting. Staff are coordinating the integration of art components on the benches and fountain.
- Add small tables, a canopy for rain protection, and a public toilet, and embed rails into the park surface to commemorate the historic railway in the area.

Public consultation about the park has included a Car Free Day in September 2005 and an Open House in December 2005. Responses to the preliminary plan include concerns about the proposed canopy and public washroom.

Discussion

- The group discussed the eight foot wide areaway that lies between the park and #1 West Hastings. This City of Vancouver land is leased to the adjacent property owner, and the Board's park jurisdiction stops at its edge. A Heritage Revitalization Project has recently been approved at #1 West Hastings Street, and the phasing of the park redesign will need to be coordinated with the adjacent redevelopment, as restoration on the building may impact park improvements if the park redesign proceeds first.
- A Commissioner inquired about efforts to integrate art components into the building restoration. Staff responded that the building itself is beautiful and would likely not be adorned with art, and said that the restoration project hopes to create animation by ensuring that the building façade invites viewing from the outside in and the inside out.
- The group discussed options for the new benches. Although metal benches are more durable, wooden benches are more comfortable in both summer and winter, and allow for the integration of art.
- Staff explained that the City's engineering department has requested that the Park Board consider Pigeon Park as a location for an automated public toilet, but there is a challenge regarding the amount of space it would use. If it is included, it must be placed carefully to minimize conflict with the proposed canopy and to ensure good visibility behind the structure.
- The Committee discussed the value of integrating park elements with the greenway, and distinguishing between the character of individual areas. Staff suggested that the existing Gastown light features could be replaced with a design that creates a focal point at the park.

Next Steps

From March to April 2006, staff will hold another Open House at Pigeon Park, meet with community groups, and coordinate with City staff. The Board will receive a report in the spring after the construction timeline is determined, which depends in part on the timing of the restoration project at #1 West Hastings.

3. John Hendry (Trout Lake) Park Master Plan

Michel Desrochers explained that John Hendry Park requires a new Master Plan to guide park redevelopment and the reconstruction of the ice rink and the community centre. The 27 hectare park, located at Victoria Drive and 19th Avenue, combines natural and recreational features and receives very high usage. Key features of the park include a four hectare lake, the existing community centre and ice rink, sport fields and courts, and naturalized and cultivated landscapes. All buildings and parking lots are at the edges of park, and preservation of the core should be enshrined as a principle.

The objectives of the Master Plan are to: define park principles; locate new facilities; preserve key park features; enhance existing features; and address gaps and issues. Development of the plan will occur in two phases:

- Phase 1 locate sites for ice rink and community centre for April 2006 Board decision
- Phase 2 address all other issues

Marta Farevaag described the park's soils, landscape character zones, hydrology, services, trail system, views, topography, uses and special events. She noted that it is unusual to make decisions on the location of major facilities before a master plan is in place. Staff described the public consultation process that has invited involvement from the community centre, the user groups, immediate neighbours and the public at large. At an Open House on February 18, 2006, staff presented eight zones and participants chose zones A, B and E for further consideration as site options. The Committee was asked to comment on these three options.

Delegations

Kate Perkins spoke about the high level of community engagement with the process of redesigning John Hendry Park and told the Committee that some people are hesitant about trusting the inclusiveness of the process. She expressed concern that a smaller than normal capital envelope in 2009 – 2011 may negatively impact the successful completion of the community centre in that capital plan cycle, and said they were studying ways to find other funding to enhance the project.

Discussion:

- The majority of the park site is a peat bog with a central lake of standing water. The southwest corner of the park (Zone A) is glacial till and provides good foundation soil, but any building situated off this location will have to be piled. It was noted that a site on peat will be considered if it is the best location, and while there are cost implications, there is more concern with access and movement of people.
- Disruption of service is a key concern of park and facility users, and a member of the Committee asked if this would preclude selecting Zone A as a site for the new facilities. The consultant noted that there are ways to rebuild where the facilities currently exist, and told the Committee that the next public meeting will focus on Zones A, B and E and present different options for each.
- A Commissioner expressed concern about deciding the location of large facilities in isolation, and said that the parking and transportation plans need to be included in Phase 1. An additional concern is where people will park while the new facilities are built. Staff said that the parking and transportation planning will occur in Phase 1, as will all other considerations related to the location of the facilities, and that Phase 2 of the Master Plan development will start immediately after the building sites are chosen.
- A member of the Committee noted the effective building of community consensus at the Open House, and a Commissioner recommended use of the website to help keep the neighbourhood informed on the progression of the project.

Members of the Committee commented: it is necessary to decide where the community centre goes along with the ice rink in order to establish its footprint; think about the community centre's views; prefer either A or B but enjoy the contours in A; prefer B which is currently not a family-

friendly area with its parking lot and associated traffic; not excited about E; not E, but both A and B look good; the stable foundation in A makes a more viable long term option.

Next Steps

Options A, B and E will be presented at a public workshop on March 4, 2006 to select a location for the new facilities. The chosen location will be brought to the Board for a decision in April 2006, and Phase 2 will commence immediately with the development of the Trout Lake Master Plan. The architect will work with Park Board staff to develop a schematic design for the new ice rink by the end of 2006.

Commissioner Woodcock left the meeting at this time.

4. Active Communities

Lori MacKay introduced the first launch of Vancouver's participation in the "20 by 2010" initiative, intended to get individuals and communities 20% more active by 2010. A January 2006 Ipsos Reid poll of 300 Vancouver residents assessed citizens' physical activity levels and recreation behaviours and needs, and showed that 68% of Vancouver residents engage in 30 minutes of moderate physical activity three times a week or more. The most popular activities were identified as walking, using a gym, and running. Jim McKenzie told the Committee that a challenge has been sent out to all community centres to create activities, and provided details about two Park Board pilot initiatives:

1. Step Out Walks: The goal of this project is to feature a wide selection of popular walks in four categories (park trails and walks, park jogging paths, 1/4 mile running tracks, and city walks). Walks will be self guided and will use existing resources. Communications and marketing will be done by identifying walks in Vancouver on the website and with walk pamphlets at community centres.
2. Fitness and Adventure Passports: This pilot project at Tillicum Elementary School is a partnership with Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, the Vancouver School Board, and MoreSports, and runs from February 20 – March 20, 2006. It incorporates ten activities (including swimming, skating, walking, circus arts, and rock climbing) to encourage elementary students to practice daily exercise and explore local parks.

Two other events were noted – May 10, 2006 "Move for Health Day", by Marpole-Oakridge Community Centre, and April 23, 2006 – "Walk the Run", an invitation to join Park Board Commissioners in the Vancouver Sun Run.

Staff asked the Committee for direction on the Step Out project.

Next Steps

The Committee requested that the Step Out project be started, and asked staff to explore opportunities for activity projects directed at specific clientele. Staff will review program revenues, examine costs and benefits and information from other municipalities, and develop a pilot project.

5. Next Meeting

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 7, 2006.