

**Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Parks and Recreation
Planning & Environment Committee Meeting
Held at the Vancouver Park Board Office on
Thursday, May 14, 2009**

ATTENDEES: Park Board Commissioners

Aaron Jasper, Chair
Sarah Blyth, Vice Chair
Ian Robertson

Park Board Staff

Piet Rutgers	Director, Planning & Operations
Mark Vulliamy	Manager, Research and Planning
Danica Djurkovic	Manager, Facility Development
John Ross	Coordinator, Facility Development
Shala Hay	Recorder

Delegations

Vanier Park BMX Proposal:

Pat Armstrong
Robin Coope
Chris Young
Rob Venables
Jay Miron
Christopher Gaze, Artistic Director, Bard On The Beach
Janey Cruise
Katie Teed

VanDusen Gardens Development:

Mary Butterfield, VanDusen Gardens Association
Nancy Dixon, VanDusen Gardens Association

Preliminary Infrastructure Projects:

Margery Duda, Mount Pleasant Pool Committee
Vanessa Violini, Mount Pleasant Community Member
Gayle Uthoff, Renfrew Park Association

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm, with the following Agenda:

1. Approval of Minutes – April 09, 2009
2. Vanier Park BMX Proposal
3. VanDusen Gardens Development Permit Submission
4. Preliminary List of Potential Infrastructure Projects

1. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Planning & Environment Committee held on Thursday, April 09, 2009 were adopted as circulated.

2. Vanier Park BMX Proposal

Staff presented a report on the proposed BMX/Mountain Bike Jump Park at Vanier Park. The proposed site is in the vicinity of the regenerated wooded lands, in a relatively open area. The total site area is 20,000 – 25,000 ft². Residents and stakeholders were notified of the proposed plan via email, posters, flyers, signs at the site, media advertising, and the Park Board's home page. On March 31st, 2009 there was an open house, which was attended by 112 persons, and 102 persons completed a questionnaire to gather feedback on the proposed plan. 82% of the total respondents were in favour of the project, while 16% were opposed. For those respondents living within 2 blocks of the park 52% were in favour while 40% were opposed. Those in favour saw the park as a well needed facility that would provide a positive activity for youths. The major concerns were noise levels and increased drug use/criminal activity/garbage in the area.

There is documentation that the site is listed as a First Nations archaeological site, based on its past history and not due to archaeological findings. There is an obligation to proceed in accordance with provincial regulations and guidance, with advice from a professional archaeologist.

Discussion:

The Committee asked staff to comment on the informal bike park that existed at 37th Avenue and Oak Street, in terms of whether there were complaints from the community regarding noise or garbage. Staff stated that the feedback from the community indicated that there was no real problem with the cycling activity and that they would in fact have liked the bike park to remain. However staff was concerned that, due to excessive exposure and damage to the roots of the fir trees in the park, a safety issue had arisen and the trees would have to be removed. To avoid this, alternative options for the area were re-considered and it was decided to use the site as an Off Leash area, which did not require removal of the trees. The Board at the time approved the decision and instructed that another location be found for the bike park.

The Committee asked whether any other sites were considered for the park. Staff stated that a number of sites were considered. It was found that most of the users of the Oak Street Park were from the westside of Vancouver and therefore a location in this area was sought. Vanier Park was the furthest west of all the sites considered. It was found that there are several informal BMX/Mountain Bike activities in the surrounding areas and this site was selected as it would provide one formal consolidated area for biking activity.

The Committee asked what the timeline would be for going through the archaeological assessment. Staff stated that, assuming an archaeological designation is confirmed, the

process might be completed in a couple of months, as the site is far from the original graveyards and nothing of archaeological significance was ever discovered in the area. The Committee inquired whether other sites are currently being considered. Staff stated that currently no other sites are being considered. The focus was on reporting back to the Board on consultation that was carried out, as per the report submitted to the Board in January.

The Committee requested a copy of the letter that was sent to the Kitsilano Point Resident Association on the proposed BMX/Mountain Bike Park. Staff informed the Committee that a copy, which was emailed to the Commissioners at the point in time, would be re-sent.

The following delegations requested to speak to the Committee regarding the proposal:

- Pat Armstrong
- Robin Coope
- Chris Young
- Rob Venables
- Jay Miron
- Katie Teed

The following is a summary of comments provided by the foregoing delegations, in favour of the proposal:

- Vancouver is known around the world for mountain biking yet the city does not have a bike park
- There are bike parks in all the other neighbouring municipalities
- There are lots of facilities for other sports in Vancouver yet biking remains a neglected area, although it is not a new concept
- The planning process is critical and parents and other community members need to be involved
- The proposed area is currently neglected and has been used as a dumping ground for garbage
- Informal jumps are already set up in the area and formal jumps would ensure the safety of users
- In Coquitlam there is a similar bike park where parents accompany their kids and seniors come by and interact with other patrons
- The Coquitlam park has a good concept with dirt tracks, regular tracks and pump tracks for kids
- The older generation of bikers would like to be involved in the planning process to ensure that the jumps are integrated with other park spaces and would not act as a hindrance
- The park provides a means to get kids active and keep them out of trouble
- Many of the young people who participate in biking are not involved in other sport activities
- The nearest bike parks are too far away and unsafe for kids to ride to
- The noise level is relatively low
- Bike parks are utilized by a diverse group of people and promote an active lifestyle

The following delegations requested to speak to the Committee regarding the proposal:

- Christopher Gaze, Artistic Director, Bard On The Beach
- Janey Cruise, Kitsilano Point Resident Association

The following is a summary of comments provided by the foregoing delegations, in opposition to the proposal:

- Insufficient consultation was conducted with stakeholders
- Noise levels would be disruptive to nearby businesses
- The wooded area in Vanier Park is one of a few of its kind remaining and should be maintained with proper sidewalk access and lighting
- Stakeholders would like to be involved in the planning process to find the best use for the park
- Believe the entire wooded area would eventually become part of the bike park, especially when it becomes an Olympic event
- A bike park is not compatible with the current usage of the park
- Suggest it be considered to develop the area into a garden, which is more in line with the 'green' drive
- The bike park will satisfy the needs of a new user group rather than current users of Vanier Park
- A similar concept was proposed at Jericho Park which was refused and the proposal has now been moved to Vanier Park
- Future plans of other park stakeholders should be considered

Discussion:

The Committee questioned whether there are other bike parks close to Vancouver. Staff stated that several neighbouring municipalities have at least one bike park.

The Committee asked whether Jericho Park was considered for the bike park before moving to Vanier Park. Staff stated that there is nothing on record indicating that Jericho Park was preferred over Vanier Park, and it was not identified in the shortlist of possible sites.

The Committee inquired into what type of communication was made with stakeholders on the proposal. Staff stated that notice was sent to Kitsilano Point Resident Association and Vanier Park stakeholders, in January when the site was proposed.

The Committee questioned whether any measurement was done to gauge the noise levels. Staff stated that no measurement has been taken on bike park noise levels, the concerns raised at the open house was with regards to amplification of noise, especially during special events. These concerns can be addressed in the planning process.

The Committee gave its approval for the proposal to move on to the next step. Staff was requested to look into ways of addressing the concerns of residents and other stakeholders and to seek feedback from the bike park in Coquitlam on what complaints have been received from the community and what can be done to address those concerns. Staff will report back to the Board in a few months.

3. VanDusen Gardens Development Permit Submission

Staff reported to the Committee on the current stage of the VanDusen Gardens Project. The structure will be a living building with zero carbon footprint. The concept was well received by the community and generated excitement at the second open house in April 2009. The project is at the stage where the development drawing designs are being finalized and the development permit is being submitted for approval. The project is being jointly funded by the Park Board and the VanDusen Gardens Association. The estimated cost is about \$18 million; \$12 million has already been secured. The Association is actively seeking funding for the balance of the cost. Construction will commence in April 2010, after the Olympics, and is scheduled for completion in mid 2011. The main goal is to increase annual visitors to the Gardens to at least 300,000. The project has the potential to be a city landmark, similar to the Vancouver Aquarium and Science Centre. Its accessible location, at the centre of the city, would act as the ideal 'salesman' for sustainability and increase attraction to the city.

The structure is designed to actually improve the environment. Water would be re-circulated throughout the system, it will contain a green roof, and a 15 meter high atrium serving as the lungs of the building. Bio-diesel from restaurants within the Park Board system and dry wood from city parks and street trees are two options being considered as a source of energy.

Discussion:

Representatives from the VanDusen Gardens Association and staff met earlier in the week with Mayor Robertson to discuss the project. It was pointed out that this would be the 'greenest' building in the city, with an iconic architecture designed to be eye catching. The Mayor was also informed that this is a joint project between the VanDusen Gardens Association and the Park Board.

The Committee questioned what would be done to capture the younger audience. Staff stated that one appealing aspect would be the exposure of all the systems behind the structure, which are conventionally hidden, such as the mechanical and water systems. This is expected to generate much attention, especially among younger audiences.

The following delegation requested to speak to the Committee:

- Mary Butterfield, VanDusen Gardens Association
- Nancy Dixon, VanDusen Gardens Association

The following is a summary of comments provided by the foregoing delegation:

- The gardens currently serve approximately 5000 students annually, but only operate in the warmer months.
- This project would allow the facilities to operate throughout the year
- The gardens would also be upgraded to connect more with schools
- The education facilities for families, which now only operate in summer, would be available throughout the year
- There has been consultation with Tourism Vancouver and they are also keen on the project

The Committee thanked staff for their commendable work and expressed that this project may be seen as a pioneer in the design concept for sustainability in the years to come.

The Committee stated that the next step would be to bring the project before the Board for consideration.

The Committee called a 2 minute recess at 7:40pm.

The Committee reconvened at 7:45pm.

4. Preliminary List of Potential Infrastructure Projects

Staff reported to the Committee on the preliminary list of infrastructure projects to be submitted for federal government funding. In January 2009, the federal government announced that Infrastructure Funds will be set up to be disbursed across the country. Two of these programs are of significance to the Park Board. These are the Infrastructure Stimulus Fund of \$4 billion, and the Recreation Infrastructure Canada (RINC) Fund of \$500 million. Under the RINC fund federal government will provide a maximum of 33% funding per project.

Staff presented a list of projects to be submitted for funding under two components of the Infrastructure Fund program. These are:

- VanDusen Gardens Project
- Trout Lake Community Centre Project
- Queen Elizabeth Park Asphalt Replacement Program
- Synthetic Playing Field Program
- Neighborhood Park Improvement Program

If funding is raised for these through federal government it would free up funds on the capital budget for more projects.

Discussion:

Staff requested feedback from the Committee so that the list of projects can be put forward for endorsement by the Board and submitted to City Council for approval.

The Committee inquired whether funding would be strictly for capital expenditure or whether operating expenditure was included. Staff stated that it is strictly for capital expenditure.

The Committee questioned how many projects can be submitted. Staff stated that there is no defined maximum, but in the initial discussions with City Hall it was suggested that five projects be submitted. The Committee asked whether there were other projects that did not make the shortlist. Staff stated that these five projects were the only ones given sound consideration as they are the major projects. There are several minor projects, however the funding required for these are not as substantial and, based on the number of procedures to be followed, it would only be worthwhile to put forward the five major ones presented.

The Committee inquired into the timeline for submitting the list of projects to City Hall. Staff stated that a preliminary list with these five projects have already been submitted to City Hall with the understanding that it still has to be put forward to the Board before finalization. Based on a recent meeting at City Hall, it is expected that the submission process would move forward quite quickly.

The following delegations requested to speak to the Committee:

- Margery Duda, Mount Pleasant Pool Committee
- Vanessa Violini, Mount Pleasant Community Member

The following is a summary of comments provided by the foregoing delegations:

- The Board had moved that staff meet with Mount Pleasant Community Centre (MPCC) to develop a list of potential fundraising projects for the pool replacement
- A list was developed by MPCC however the meeting never occurred
- The outdoor pool is a vital part of the centre
- MPCC would like the pool replacement to be included in the list of projects submitted for federal government funding
- As the time for moving to #1 Kingsway is drawing close, this is the best time for consultation and fundraising to begin
- Fundraising can be promoted in summer and commence in fall, while the pool is still operational and fresh in everyone's mind
- The project has also received political support
- The pool provides a source of entertainment and activity to families living in apartment buildings
- The cost of demolishing the centre should go towards saving the pool
- Loss of the centre would be devastating to families and artists who use the centre, as well as, to the City of Vancouver
- The community wants to be given the opportunity to work with the Board to raise funds for replacing the pool
- Would like the Committee to reconsider saving MPCC

Discussion:

The Committee inquired into the cost of constructing a new pool at MPCC. Staff stated that the cost is approximately \$5 million. The Committee questioned the criteria to include the MPCC outdoor pool in the list for funding. Staff stated that the Park Board must have some funds to put toward the project, which do not currently exist. The Committee stated that as the project does not meet the initial criteria it would be difficult to work through.

The Committee stated that the move of the community centre is a separate issue; with respect to the outdoor pool, although it is a worthy project there is a concern that as it does not meet the criteria it may dilute the validity of the other projects being put forward.

The Committee inquired whether there are other possibilities for funding the project. Staff stated that if, in the future, the Board decides to allocate funds toward the project it may be possible.

The following delegation requested to speak to the Committee:

- Gayle Uthoff, Renfrew Park Association

The following is a summary of comments provided by the foregoing delegation:

- There is a need for non-profit organisations and community associations to be more organised
- This would allow more money to be raised for projects
- A committee could be developed by the Park Board to get associations more prepared for requesting funds from the City
- The main purpose of attending the meeting was to request funding for a few projects; however it has been realised that these projects are too small for federal government funding
- Maybe this could be sought through a non-profit organisation

Discussions:

The Committee stated its support of the list of projects submitted. Due to lack of funding it would not be possible to include the outdoor pool at Mount Pleasant Community Centre on this list.

The meeting adjourned at 8:25pm.

Piet Rutgers, Director,
Planning & Operations

Commissioner Aaron Jasper,
Chair