



Date: October 8, 2010

TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Vanier Park - Bard on the Beach - Expansion of Tent Capacity

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Board approve the Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival’s proposed expansion of tent capacity to accommodate an audience increase of up to 390 additional visitors in the two main tents combined as detailed in this report.***
- B. THAT no legal rights shall arise and no consents, permissions or licences are granted hereby and none shall arise or be granted hereafter unless and until all contemplated legal documentation has been executed and delivered by all parties.***

POLICY

The Board has jurisdiction over Vancouver parks and approves special events.

BACKGROUND

The Board approved the use of Vanier Park as a site for the Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival in 1990 to be used seasonally according to the conditions of a special events permit, initially for one 300 person tent. This six week season had 6,000 patrons.



Twenty years later, Bard has two performance tents, a main stage tent and a studio tent, accommodating 760 (520+240) patrons. More than 90,000 patrons attend a performance during a season of 15 weeks. Most performances are sold out, and many ticket seekers have to be turned away. As the two tents are getting close to requiring replacement, Bard is proposing to seize the opportunity and expand the audience capacity of the new replacement tents to 1,150 (750+400) patrons, an increase of 390 seats or 51%. Bard is confident that increasing audience capacity will meet popular demand; and that Vanier Park can accommodate the additional visitors.

Bard on the Beach contacted the Park Board in spring 2010 to initiate discussions about this proposal and numerous associated technical issues; and presented to the Park Board's Planning and Environment Committee on September 9, 2010.

DISCUSSION

Vanier Park is home to the Museum of Vancouver, the H.R. MacMillan Space Centre, the City of Vancouver Archives, the Vancouver Academy of Music, a Coast Guard station and the Burrard Marina, in addition to park uses like the new BMX/mountain bike facility, the lawn popular with kite flyers, the boat launch and waterfront pathways. There are multiple public parking lots administered by the CoV or the Park Board. Vanier Park is bounded by Burrard Bridge, the Squamish Reserve, the Kits Point neighbourhood and English Bay. There is only one vehicular route into the park, off Chestnut Avenue, and vehicular exiting requires passing through Kits Point. For pedestrians and cyclists, there are multiple pathways in from all sides, including the Seaside Route pathways that link to other waterfront parks. In addition, pedestrian ferries connect to the Maritime Museum in adjacent Hadden Park. The nearest public transit stop is a ten minute walk from the festival site.



The proposal for a new Bard on the Beach venue includes:

- an increase in the fenced compound size by approximately seven percent;
- expanded toilet facilities to meet increased audience size;
- slightly expanded front-of-house retail operations;
- replacement of existing lawn areas underneath the tents with gravel;
- installation of tie-down anchors;
- undergrounding of utility hookups including power, water, and sewer; and
- additional landscaping to enhance the ‘theatre in the park’ character.

The cost of all work associated with this proposal will be the responsibility of Bard on the Beach.



Spatially, the new tents will be arranged much like the current set up. The performance tents are complemented by two dressing room tents, and linked by a tent village housing a concession, bar, gift shop, box office and site office.

Bard on the Beach is located in a park busy with attractions, but the venue site is removed from any immediate neighbouring conflicts. Important park areas such as the waterfront pathways, the boat launch, the marina with private boats as well as club facilities for non-motorised boating, the big lawn area popular for kite flying, and the areas used for watching the annual fireworks all co-exist with Bard on the Beach. Staff expect that the anticipated increase in attendance will not negatively impact existing park uses.

However, there will be an impact on parking. At present, the Park Board has about 215 parking spaces in three separate lots, in addition to 345 spaces in the three institutional lots, for a total of 560 spaces. An additional 55 spaces can be had in the Maritime Museum lot in adjacent Hadden Park. Most Bard patrons, if arriving by car, can be expected to share vehicles. Car occupancy would be between 2 and 3 patrons per car,

leading to a total parking load of 360 to 550 cars for sold out performances in the new tents. At evening performances, when few cars are in the park for other purposes, this number could be accommodated, however, weekend matinees may lead to a competition for parking due to other park uses attracting their own patrons in sizable numbers.

Park Board staff have requested that a traffic study be done to analyse the current parking situation, project the increase in parking demand once the new performance tents are in use, and propose solutions to mitigate the impacts. The goal is to accommodate Bard patrons without harming other park uses, and without causing impacts in the adjacent neighbourhood. The traffic study is underway. Park Board staff are expecting a variety of measures to manage parking demand, including an aggressive transportation management plan that is integrated into the Bard's entire communication outreach, and that emphasises alternatives that are consistent with the City's and the Park Board's direction for a more sustainable future. The traffic study and remediation measures will be evaluated by staff in advance of the issuance of a special events permit for the 2011 season.

NEIGHBOURHOOD CONSULTATION

Bard on the Beach conducted a survey to evaluate support for the expansion plans. A neighbourhood survey was mailed to 1,206 households in the vicinity of Vanier Park, in addition to a Bard patron survey mailed to about 9,200 individuals.

Amongst patrons, support was 87.8% of 1,297 respondents, underlining that Bard on the Beach was a great event and provided high quality theatre. Patrons not supporting the expansion preferred the smaller, more intimate character of the existing tents.

Amongst neighbours, 122 people responded for a response rate of 10%. Of these, 85.3% were in favour, and 14.8% (18 responses) were not in favour.

Both surveys listed the Park Board comment email address for people who wanted to share their views directly with the Park Board. 32 emails were received; 19 of them (60%) in support and 13 (40%) not in support.

While both of the surveys are encouraging in their levels of support for the expansion plans, the concerns of neighbourhood residents opposed to an expansion need to be considered. The concerns are all related to increased traffic: that the volume of traffic overall will become difficult to deal with for people living in the neighbourhood; that street parking will be consumed by Bard patrons making it hard to find parking for residents and their visitors; and that the noise of patrons leaving after the performances will be too much to bear.

Similar concerns by Kits Point residents have been voiced numerous times in the past, indicating the basic conflict between the desire by local residents to have a quiet neighbourhood, and the attraction of a city-wide population to the popular parks and park destinations. One outcome of this ongoing dialogue has been the introduction of resident-

only parking. At present, almost all street parking in the neighbourhood is resident permit parking, either all year or seasonally for five months of summer.

Two changes may affect traffic patterns next year. The Children's Festival will not take place at Vanier Park; they will move their operation to Granville Island, thus reducing car traffic early in the season. Second, a sidewalk will be built from Whyte Avenue to the waterfront, making it safer and more comfortable to walk to the site.

NEXT STEPS

Bard on the Beach and Park Board staff will continue to cooperate on resolving any technical issues including site servicing, construction details for tent foundations and bases, site access for construction purposes, site restoration, and landscaping details. Bard on the Beach will provide and obtain Park Board concurrence on the design and construction drawings of the new venue at the 50% stage, the permit stage, and the final set. Bard on the Beach's consultants will include, at minimum, a professional engineer and a registered landscape architect. Bard on the Beach are aware that notwithstanding Park Board staff agreement with technical details, Bard on the Beach is responsible for obtaining all required permits and approvals from the appropriate agencies.

Bard on the Beach will complete the traffic study, cooperate with neighbourhood residents on evaluation and discussion of alternative mitigation measures, and obtain approval from Park Board staff for all actions to be undertaken in regard to the traffic study, including at minimum an ambitious transportation management plan that emphasises alternative transportation.

Bard on the Beach will consult with the other Vanier Park institutions regarding the proposed expansion, in particular as the construction of the new venue may impact the operation of other park users.

Once all permits have been obtained, Bard on the Beach and Park Board will sign a letter of understanding that references all the intended work, provides a schedule for the work, contains all required permits, provides appropriate assurances regarding traffic/parking impact mitigation and park restoration prior to any construction activities commencing. The signing of the letter of understanding will be a prior-to condition for next year's special event permit.

SUMMARY

Park Board staff recommend that Bard on the Beach's Shakespeare Festival's proposed expansion of the performance tent capacity be approved, noting that numerous conditions and expectations will have to be satisfied prior to the Park Board's issuance of a special events permit for the 2011 season.

Prepared by:
Planning & Operations
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
Vancouver, BC

TD/tcd