

**Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Parks and Recreation
Planning & Environment Committee Meeting
Held at the Vancouver Park Board Office on
Thursday, February 04, 2010**

ATTENDEES:

Park Board Commissioners

Sarah Blyth, Chair
Ian Robertson
Stuart Mackinnon
Constance Barnes
Loretta Woodcock

Park Board Staff

Piet Rutgers	Director, Planning & Operations
Michel Desrochers	Research Planner
Doug Pirozek	Recreation Service Co-ordinator - Sports Facilities
Hart Nijjar	Recorder

Delegations:

- Patti Bacchus, Chairperson, Vancouver School Board
- Bill Ostrom, Manager of Operations, Vancouver School Board
- Tim Pezarro, West Point Grey Soccer Club
- Roy Wares, Arbutus Neighbourhood
- Gordon Johnson, Vancouver Youth Soccer Association
- Valerie Halpin-Jones
- Margaret Hanson
- Art Hawkins, Vancouver Ultimate League Society
- Rob Howatson
- David Robinson, Neighbours from Prince of Wales
- Anne Thompson, Vancouver Hawkes Field Hockey
- Karen Cooke, Vancouver Olympic Club
- Peter MacDonald
- Craig Woods, President, Vancouver Field Sports Association
- Sharon Urton, Vancouver Field Sports Federation
- Graeme Fell

The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm, with the following agenda:

1. Approval of the Minutes of the meeting on January 07, 2010
2. Synthetic Turf Playfields at Jericho and Memorial South Park

1. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Planning & Environment Committee held on Thursday, January 7th, 2010 were adopted as circulated.

2. Synthetic Turf Playfields at Jericho and Memorial South Park

Staff presented information on potential synthetic turf playfields at Jericho Park and Memorial South Park. Staff went over three recommendations that, if approved by the Committee, will be put forward to the Board during the February 8 Special Board Meeting:

- A.** THAT the Board approve the installation of a synthetic turf playfield at Jericho Park on the existing grass playfield adjacent to Discovery Street (the 'West Field'), as described in this report.
- B.** THAT the Board approve the installation of a synthetic turf playfield at Memorial South Park on the existing grass playfield/pitch in the central oval, combined with an upgrade of the existing running track, as described in this report.
- C.** THAT the Board direct staff to update and revise the 2002 Playing Field Renewal Plan to guide playfield capital investments, playfield maintenance programs and playfield allocations to user groups for the next ten years.

Recommendations A and B relate to current site selection, while Recommendation C relates to upgrading the Playing Field Renewal Plan.

Funding for two synthetic turf playfields was allocated as part of the 2009-2011 Capital Plan. The process for site selection began in April 2009, and included consultation with the Vancouver Field Sports Federation and the Vancouver School Board. Staff short-listed seven sites for consideration in 2009. However, input from the Vancouver School Board resulted in the elimination of two sites located on school grounds because of current or planned building projects: Queen Elizabeth and Sexsmith. The remaining five sites (four park sites and one school site) were then put forward for public consideration during a series of open houses in the fall of 2009.

Based on results of the public consultation and the desire to install synthetic turf fields in both the west side and the east side of Vancouver, staff recommends that the west field at Jericho Park and the oval at Memorial South Park be approved for synthetic turf upgrades as well as the track at Memorial South Park. The Federal Government will provide partial funding for these sites on the condition that two synthetic turf fields shall be installed and a running track be upgraded by March 31, 2011.

The project timeline for the park sites allows five months for pre-construction (consultant selection in February; detailed construction drawings from March to May; development

permit from April to May; tender from May to June). Construction itself will take approximately nine months and must begin no later than July to meet the March 2011 completion deadline (site preparation in July; sun-base, drainage, concrete from August to September; turf installation from October to November; lights, electrical, other items from December to March).

Although staff considered installation of synthetic turf at Prince of Wales, it was not chosen due to the additional pre-construction steps and time commitment required. Specifically, various portions of the project will have to be approved by the Vancouver School Board before construction can begin. School Board approval of the plans will take approximately one month, approval of a licence agreement will take two months, and school board review of the construction drawings will take one month. Risks associated with the project include the possibility that the School Board may not approve the site, delays to the start of construction, more construction during the rainy season, and the possibility that the project may not be completed by the March 2011 deadline. As such, staff did not feel it was appropriate to recommend Prince of Wales for a synthetic turf upgrade at this time. Staff noted that the Park Board will continue to install synthetic turf fields throughout Vancouver, and future opportunities may allow for the upgrade of the Prince of Wales site.

At the Jericho Park site, both west and east fields were considered. Both locations were presented for consideration at open houses in the fall. The east field was not found to be desirable by staff because it is too close to two natural areas in the park, whereas the west field is further away from these areas. Installing synthetic turf on the west field will require expansion and upgrade of the east field so that it can accommodate displaced users from the west field, and the tennis courts located north of the east field will need to be re-configured due to the expansion of the east field towards the north end of the park.

At Memorial South Park, the central oval and northwest field were assessed for possible synthetic turf installation. Both fields were presented for consideration at open houses during the fall. The northwest field is not recommended because of its proximity to a natural area. Staff recommend the oval field for synthetic turf installation as it is near a parking lot, adjacent to the historic field house, and upgrades to lighting will benefit both the field and the track while negative effects due to overspill of lights will not be an issue as the field is surrounded by mature trees. If the Board approves this recommendation, the southwest field will need to be expanded and upgraded to accommodate users displaced from the central oval, the northwest field will need to be converted to a softball diamond to replace the southwest diamond, and the children's playground will need to be relocated within the park.

Next steps will include hiring a consultant, determining the surface type of the turf, development of phasing plans for both sites, applying for permits at City Hall after which point construction contracts can be awarded, and starting construction.

The Committee thanked staff for the presentation.

Discussion:

The Committee asked staff what the mitigation costs will be to install the two turf fields and upgrade the running track. Staff estimated that mitigation costs will total \$200,000 to \$400,000 per field with variables such as drainage and irrigation impacting the final number. Staff confirmed that monies for mitigation costs will be available from field accounts.

The Committee asked for clarification on why the northwest field at Memorial South Park was not considered. Staff noted that a synthetic turf field will be lit, requires fencing and needs storage space, the aesthetics of which would clash with the northwest field.

The Committee asked staff whether any other areas in Memorial South Park can be considered for synthetic turf installation. Staff replied that the southwest field can be considered a candidate, but it will have a greater impact on neighbours and will have less recreational value as compared to the oval. The oval is considered by staff to be the best value for money.

The Committee asked staff to elaborate on the types of sports played on the fields that will have synthetic turf installed. Ultimate, rugby, and youth soccer are played on the Jericho field while ultimate and cricket are played on the Memorial field.

The Committee asked staff to clarify when the decision on the type of turf that will be installed will be made. Staff has begun dialogue with the Vancouver Field Sports Federation in that respect and expects a decision will be made by March or April.

The following delegations requested to speak to the Committee:

- Patti Bacchus, Chairperson, Vancouver Board of Education
- Bill Ostrom, Manager of Operations
- Tim Pezarro, West Point Grey Soccer Club
- Roy Wares, Arbutus Neighbourhood
- Gordon Johnson, Vancouver Youth Soccer Association
- Valerie Helpin-Jones
- Margaret Hanson
- Art Hawkins, Vancouver Ultimate League Society
- Rob Howatson
- David Robinson, Neighbours from Prince of Wales
- Anne Thompson, Vancouver Hawkes Field Hockey
- Karen Cooke, Vancouver Olympic Club
- Peter MacDonald
- Craig Woods, President, Vancouver Field Sports Association
- Sharon Urton, Vancouver Field Sports Federation
- Graeme Fell

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

- The Vancouver School Board has not taken a formal position on the installation of a synthetic turf field at Prince of Wales School
- The Vancouver School Board would like to work with the Park Board to facilitate such a field at Prince of Wales
- The synthetic turf field will serve as an asset to the school although the School Board has not approved the installation
- Time is of the essence and user groups would like to see turf fields installed as soon as possible
- There is a city wide shortage of synthetic turf fields
- Synthetic turf fields promote a healthy lifestyle
- Support a west side site due to the large number of soccer clubs there
- Prince of Wales is a good choice
- The timeline for the grant will serve as an incentive to get through the pre-construction process as soon as possible in regards to Prince of Wales
- The Park Board should use this as an opportunity to improve sports at schools
- If Prince of Wales is not chosen, Jericho is also a good site
- Prince of Wales is not a suitable site as the underlying sewer line poses a risk and there are drainage issues that will result in water logging
- The field will have a substantial impact on the neighbourhood and an adequate traffic study has not been conducted to determine risks
- There is an unacceptable conflict with other neighbourhood amenities
- Vancouver is well suited for synthetic turf fields
- Field users are anxious to see fields built with the best sites receiving priority
- Jericho is a good site, but if a field can be built at Prince of Wales this round, it should be done
- The Prince of Wales site will have higher lift in terms of usage than the Jericho site
- Public transportation is better at the Prince of Wales site
- The timeline imposed by the Federal grant has led to the selection of an inferior site, Jericho
- Consideration must be given to the environmental impact at the Jericho site
- Three of the five tennis courts at Jericho will have to be re-located, which may conflict with the natural areas of the park
- The consultation process was biased in favour of field users
- There is a gravel lit playing field at Jericho already
- Soccer is a noisy sport so putting a synthetic turf field at Prince of Wales will have a negative impact on neighbours
- Should not take away green space at P of W to build field house and parking when they already exist at Memorial and Jericho
- Would like to see a field built in conjunction with the Vancouver School Board
- Lack of field house at Prince of Wales has been an issue faced in the past and can be addressed
- Report submitted by VFSF did not support the two staff recommendations
- Fields at Memorial and Jericho are very good and cherished by users so should not have turf installed
- Memorial South Park is not a good location for synthetic turf because of its natural beauty

- The field house at Memorial South Park is a heritage listed site
- The aesthetics of Memorial South will be ruined by synthetic turf
- Prince of Wales site already used heavily and the lights and street traffic are not desirable to residents
- Densification due to Arbutus Village problematic in conjunction with synthetic turf at Prince of Wales
- Neither site is an option for field hockey
- The oval at Memorial South is a bad location
- Need to have rubber track not asphalt
- Need proper track and field facility
- Prince of Wales will need a better field due to densification
- Neither site suitable because of the accompanying lighting and fencing
- Installing turf on good grass fields is a mistake, the Park Board should turf poor grass fields or gravel
- Support Recommendation C
- VFSF rallied around NW field at Memorial South without knowing details about the track upgrade
- Mitigation costs for Memorial South will be very costly
- If the oval at Memorial South is chosen, significant funds need to be dedicated to replacing lost fields
- There is consensus on the Prince of Wales site as the site on the west side as it is more central than Jericho
- At the Jericho site, irrigation in east field would need to be upgraded which is costly
- Vancouver can not host track and field events
- A field constrained by a track is not ideal for track and field users
- Do not have enough information about the track upgrade being proposed at Memorial South Park

The Committee thanked the delegates for their comments.

The Committee asked Mr. Ostrom whether the timeline and delays outlined by staff in regards to the Prince of Wales site are accurate. Mr. Ostrom confirmed that they are and noted the timeline is tight but a synthetic turf field installation is doable, although the risks outlined by staff are also accurate. The Committee asked staff about the consequences if construction on the projects is not completed by March 2011. Staff noted that in the agreement signed with the Federal government, any work that is completed after March 2011 will be the full financial responsibility of the Park Board. There is a four month additional risk if the Park Board chooses to go with the Prince of Wales site, the financial cost of which will have to be paid for by the Park Board.

The Committee asked for clarification regarding the sewer line at Prince of Wales. Staff informed the Committee that there is a City of Vancouver sewer line that runs under the field which may present a long term risk. No other Park Board fields have been built on top of existing sewer lines.

The Committee asked staff to elaborate on the impact the re-location of the tennis courts at the Jericho site may have on the natural areas of the park. As the tennis courts will be located to an area currently covered by lawn, there will be no impact on the natural areas.

The Committee asked staff whether they have received noise complaints in the past from residents located near lit fields. Staff noted that there have been a few complaints in the past, but not many.

The Committee asked staff why Beaconsfield was not considered an option for an upgrade. Staff noted that Beaconsfield is in close proximity to Van Tech where a synthetic turf was recently installed. In addition, there is no track that can be upgraded at Beaconsfield, so the requirements of the Federal grant would not be met.

The Committee asked staff for clarification on the material that will be used to upgrade the track at Memorial South Park. As the budget for the track is higher than the one allocated for the upgrade at Point Grey, the track would be of better quality and would be a rubberized surface.

Due to the concerns brought forward by field users, a Committee member suggested that the staff recommendation regarding Memorial South Park be revised to ask the Board to approve the installation of a synthetic turf field at the southwest field rather than the oval. This move would better accommodate field hockey users and displace fewer user groups. Further, the mitigation costs for the southwest field will be less than those for the oval. The Committee members agreed to this suggestion and advised staff to revise Recommendation B to include the discussed change in field location.

The Committee supports that installation of synthetic turf at Jericho west field and Memorial southwest field as well as a track upgrade at Memorial South Park be considered by the Board during the February 8 Special Board Meeting.

The Committee thanked the Park Board Chair for extending the timeline for the final decision making process in regards to synthetic turf field locations to allow for full consideration of all options.

The meeting adjourned at 9:27 pm.

Piet Rutgers, Director,
Planning & Operations

Commissioner Sarah Blyth,
Chair