

**Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Parks and Recreation
Planning & Environment Committee Meeting
Held at the Vancouver Park Board Office on
Thursday, March 3rd, 2011**

ATTENDEES:

Park Board Commissioners

Sarah Blyth, Chair
Raj Hundal, Vice Chair
Constance Barnes
Aaron Jasper
Stuart Mackinnon
Ian Robertson

Park Board Staff

Peter Kuran	Deputy General Manager
Danica Djurkovic	Acting Director, Planning & Operations
Gordon Barber	Manager of Revenue Services and Marinas
Tilo Driessen	Manager of Planning and Research

Delegations:

- Rhiannon Chernencoff, Bicycle Advisory Committee
- Richard Campbell, Bicycle Advisory Committee
- Gerry O'Neil, AAA Horse and Carriage
- Herb Challier, AAA Horse and Carriage
- Mark Thompson, Musson Catell Mackey Partnership
- John Nightingale, Vancouver Aquarium
- Clint Wright, Vancouver Aquarium

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

1. Approval of Minutes of the February 10, 2011 Meeting
2. Bicycle Advisory Committee
3. AAA relocation Proposal
4. Aquarium Revised Concept Plan

1. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Planning & Environment Committee held on Thursday, February 10, 2011 were adopted as circulated.

2. Bicycle Advisory Committee

Staff introduced Rhiannon Chernencoff and Richard Campbell from the Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) who discussed the need for upgrades of the deteriorating bike lanes

across the city. The Bicycle Advisory Committee represents all active transit users including skateboarders, inline skaters and utility wheelchair users. BAC is working towards an active transportation mandate, though their current submission is focused on a number of parks around the city with an emphasis on the seawall.

Currently, the seawall reaches capacity at peak use causing hazardous conditions and comfort and accessibility issues in some areas. Problematic areas shared across parks include narrow lanes, difficult hair-pin turns, unmarked pathways that lack visual distinction and deteriorating surfaces. These issues can be rectified by twinning and widening lanes – using the worn out grass alongside paths as an indicator of the necessary width –, using standardized colours and signage for marking paths, and resurfacing certain pathways.

Suggestions for other parks include creating a perimeter pathway around parks either by allocating space on the roads or through park land; paths to connect to destinations within the parks; and connections to existing greenways, bike routes and schools. These upgrades would make for equally suitable paths across the city alleviating the heavy use of the seawall.

The Bicycle Advisory Committee requested further consultancy on the submission, support for the project under the Capital Plan and consultancy on any future park redesign.

Discussion

A member of the Committee asked if staff are working with the Engineering Department to look for economies of scale in this project and whether this project ties in with the next Capital Plan process. Staff replied that they are continuously working with the City Engineering Department since many of the bike paths in Vancouver overlap between Park Board and City jurisdiction. The goal is to achieve a consistent look across Park and City routes through signage and surface treatment and to address these issues on a priority basis. Staff added that they are currently undertaking a consultancy of the Stanley Park pathways which will be paid for through 2011 funding. A pathway construction budget will be proposed for the next Capital Plan.

A member of the Committee asked which items can be identified as “smaller cost items.” Staff answered that pathways are the most expensive to produce but that adding paint and signage to existing routes are feasible with current funds.

A member of the Committee asked which areas in Stanley Park the wider paths had been proposed and whether the loss of the adjacent green space would be worth the increase in that width. The delegation answered that staff would need to review the paths to finalize an appropriate width. Since heavy traffic on the routes has forced users to walk on the grass beside paths the green space has already been worn down to dirt and will not suffer a loss by being covered by a widened asphalt path. A standard of 6 metres in width in high-traffic areas is preferred by the delegation.

A member of the Committee asked if signage would help alleviate issues with knowledgeable cyclists being interfered with by uninformed pedestrian. The delegation answered that surface treatments such as bike stencils, coloured lines and different surface material will help all users be more aware of the path's use and direction.

A member of the Committee asked who should be providing basic education programs for cyclists who do not know or do not follow basic rules of the road. The delegation responded that Community Centres, park staff, signage along routes, and bike rental shops could all help. The delegation added that problems seem to exist where there are more visitors/tourists.

A member of the Committee asked when a draft of the intended project upgrades will be ready and how it will work under the Capital Plan. Staff answered that the small cost projects will be considered for completion in 2011 and that further consultation with the BAC and City Engineering will take place before the proposal is incorporated into the Capital Plan.

3. AAA Relocation Proposal

Staff presented a proposal to investigate the relocation of the AAA Horse and Carriage (AAA) operation in Stanley Park. The most recent renewal of service between the Park Board and AAA took place in May 2008 and consisted of a 5 year extension and a commitment of \$100,000 by AAA to invest in capital improvements. No capital improvements have been done to date.

The proposal relocates the staging area for horses to the adjacent information kiosk and adds a new permanent ticket booth and public washroom to an existing info booth building. The first step will be to hire a traffic consultant to review the staging area and architect to provide a feasibility study with construction cost estimates, upon which a cost sharing plan would be established. The main goal of design is to consolidate all the necessary buildings into one while increasing the level of service with new public washrooms.

Based on the study estimates the proposal would come back to the Board with a recommendation for approval of scope, capital investment, and any modifications to the AAA agreement. Once the approval has gone through, relocation of the carriage building and construction of the staging area can commence in advance of the ticket booth and washroom construction.

The following delegations requested to speak to the Committee:

- Gerry O'Neil, AAA Horse and Carriage
- Herb Challier, AAA Horse and Carriage

The following is a summary of the foregoing delegations:

- Major concern for design is the need for staff washrooms, as 90% of employees are women and it is important for them to have access to safe washrooms. Also do not want them to have to wait in public lines.
- Is surprised that the existing funds will be used for just the studies. Agreeing to allocation of funds on good faith that it will be successful.
- Cannot have project go on forever, needs to happen soon; hope the Board will finish within a few months.
- Initially had agreed to pay for the washrooms, but the current proposal has all the funds allocated to paying for studies. Would like to have additional funding to pay for washrooms.

Discussion

A member of the Committee asked what is the size of the proposed ticket booth. Staff answered that although the designs are not final it is about 100 square feet. Staff will work with AAA to establish an appropriate size and balance the cost.

A member of the Committee asked since the loss of the 14 parking spots beside the proposed location would not have a large impact on visitors, would there be any consideration for just removing the spots and creating a lane to help make space for increased traffic. Staff answered that is something for the traffic consultant to review. It is not their goal to remove spots, but there are other possibilities to increase lane sizes and retain some parking spots.

A member of the Committee asked whether the existing booth could be moved temporarily if the traffic consultant is in agreement. Staff replied that there is existing infrastructure that can be used temporarily to continue with staging at the new area and that the business can still operate during construction.

A member of the Committee asked if neither the Park Board nor AAA can come to an agreement on design or cost of the new facility, and the temporary booth becomes a long term emplacement, will the eventual construction of the washrooms be phased. Staff answered that their recommendation is that relocation of the staging area, final design of the permanent ticket booth and modified AAA terms of agreement need to be approved at the same time. Upon approval by the Board, construction itself could be phased over a couple of years.

A member of the Committee asked if there is a possibility that the traffic study can be done in-house through the Engineering department. Staff answered that Engineering does not conduct the studies but traffic consultants typically work with the City Engineering department while preparing a traffic study.

A member of the Committee asked if the proposal were recommended would the project be done in time for the peak summer season. Staff replied that it would take approximately 1 – 2 weeks to issue a request for proposal to consultants and 2 – 3 weeks to source consultants, at which point consultants can commence working on the studies.

Staff advised the Committee that the item would come to the next Board Meeting scheduled for March 14th.

(A recess was taken at 7:33 pm. The meeting came back into session at 7:37 pm)

4. Aquarium Revised Concept Plan

Staff introduced John Nightingale from the Vancouver Aquarium and Mark Thompson from MCM Architects to present a revised expansion concept plan proposal for the Vancouver Aquarium. The Provincial and Federal Government provided \$25 million over a three year period for this project. They found that the initial Federal proposed revitalization was too ambitious and therefore a new redesign is presented.

The approved development permit allows for the expansion of the facility to the south, including a new entrance and a formal plaza, a new Arctic exhibit to the northeast, an upgrade to Avison Way, and the creation of service facilities on the north end. The revised proposal that lowers the costs of the project sees the existing arctic and BC wild coast exhibit locations flipped, the construction of two new bridged pools, and the levelling of the grade across these two areas.

The original plan proposed two restaurants in two different locations: one to service the Aquarium and one to service the park. This has been consolidated into one food service with two restaurants in the Aquarium that will face outwards to the park. Part of the proposed redesign to the north will be an upgrade to flowerbeds and greenery left over from old exhibits that currently look abandoned and an upgrade to Avison Way sidewalks and a restructuring of the road to bring it closer to the Aquarium facility.

Construction will be phased to allow for continuing operation of the Aquarium. The Aquarium is financially self-supporting and cannot incur the loss of revenue due to construction during the peak summer season which accounts for 70% of their operating revenue. The new proposal is using 16,000 square feet less than the original approved plan which is an approximately 20% smaller footprint.

Discussion

A member of the Committee asked if there are any completion dates imposed by the government since there are federal dollars attached to the project. The delegation answered that there are no strict deadlines because it is regular infrastructure money.

A member of the Committee asked if the new plan for the arctic pool is the same size as the original plan. The delegation responded that the original design was about 1.3 million gallons whereas the new plan is 1.2 million gallons.

A member of the Committee asked if the original plan ever included an expansion of the Aquarium's own food service operation. The delegation responded that it was in the plan but in a different location.

A member of the Committee asked if the Park Board will be losing out on revenue because of the decision to have one Aquarium food service and whether the proposed food service will be a concession rather than a restaurant. The delegation answered there was no business plan for the possible standalone food service which was more of a bistro than a restaurant. After speaking with a food service operator in the park it was agreed that there was a nearby restaurant for patrons and to build another so close by was not a viable option. Staff added that an agreement was reached with the Aquarium to compensate for the missed restaurant opportunity by receiving 4% of the Aquarium's cafeteria revenue and a guarantee of approximately \$2 million.

A member of the Committee asked whether the Aquarium would have to return to the Board for permission if they wished to expand into the 20% area that was saved under the footprint of the new plans. Staff answered that if the proposal is approved at the next Board meeting it will be considered final and any future extension of the facility would have to come back to the Board for approval.

A member of the Committee asked when the Aquarium would expect to begin the first phase and when it will be completed. The delegation replied that they expect to start in September 2011 and that although construction would continue into the summer of 2012, the entrance, plaza and ticketing area must be completed before then.

A member of the Committee asked if part of the proposal would include the installation of lighting in the transit loop from the Aquarium. The delegation responded they will hopefully solve this problem in the near future if they cannot have the lights installed in time for the 125 Celebration.

A member of the Committee asked whether the gift shop will be accessible from the outside or whether patrons would have to go through the entire Aquarium to reach it. The delegation answered that patrons will have to go through the Aquarium to access the gift shop, just as is the case in the current layout.

Staff advised that the revised development permit drawings will come back to the Board at the April 18th Board meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:33 PM.

Danica Djurkovic, Acting Director,
Planning & Operations

Commissioner Sarah Blyth,
Chair