



**BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

**MARCH 8, 2017
MARCH 9, 2017 (reconvened)**

A Special meeting of the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation was held on Wednesday, March 8, 2017, at 6:05 pm, at the Park Board Administration Office. Subsequently, the Special meeting reconvened at 6:03 pm on Thursday, March 9, 2017.

PRESENT: Commissioner John Coupar
Commissioner Casey Crawford
Commissioner Catherine Evans
Commissioner Sarah Kirby Yung
Commissioner Stuart Mackinnon
Commissioner Erin Shum, Vice-Chair
Commissioner Michael Wiebe, Chair

GENERAL MANAGER'S OFFICE: Malcolm Bromley, General Manager
Shauna Wilton, Deputy General Manager
Cheryl Chan, Manager, Executive Office & Board Relations
Carol Lee, Meeting Clerk

WELCOME

The Chair acknowledged that the meeting was being held on the unceded traditional territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations.

The Chair also acknowledged that March 8 is International Women's Day.

1. Cetaceans at the Vancouver Aquarium

Chair Wiebe suggested that an exception be granted to the Vancouver Aquarium to allow up to 15 minutes for its presentation.

MOVED by Commissioner Kirby-Yung
SECONDED by Commissioner Evans

THAT the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation suspends the rules to allow the Vancouver Aquarium up to 15 minutes for a presentation.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Malcolm Bromley, General Manager, Park Board, advised that the staff report provides options to conduct a plebiscite, as requested by the Board on January 23, 2017.

Shauna Wilton, Deputy General Manager, Park Board, led the review of a presentation summarizing the staff report, and highlighted:

- January 23, 2017 Park Board resolution
- Park Board/Vancouver Aquarium relationship
- Parks Control By-Laws related to the subject of cetaceans

- Park Board activities since 2014 regarding cetaceans in captivity
- Current state
- Analysis of options:
 - Plebiscite process
 - Accept the Vancouver Aquarium’s Plan not to breed beluga whales and to phase out display by 2029
 - Amend the Parks Control By-Laws
 - Maintain the status quo.

Mr. Bromley responded to questions from the Board. There was discussion regarding: the jurisdictional review in progress; confirmation that there will be financial implications with any legal action launched by the Vancouver Aquarium in response to a Park Board decision; and the process to amend the Parks Control By-Laws.

Vancouver Aquarium representatives John Nightingale, CEO; Martin Haulena, Veterinarian, and Derral Moriyama, Board Chair, jointly provided a presentation and commentary on:

- Vancouver Aquarium’s 1996 commitment not to collect whales and dolphins from the wild
- Community support for the Vancouver Aquarium
- Financial support provided to the Park Board
- Infrastructure revitalization plan
- Activities of the Marine Mammal Rescue Centre
- February 20, 2017 announcement:
 - Maintain a non-breeding beluga whale population
 - Expand beluga whale research
 - Discontinue with the display of beluga whales by the end of 2029
- Research conducted by the Vancouver Aquarium on beluga whales and further research required
- Vancouver Aquarium’s goal to help save endangered wild species such as beluga whales
- Vancouver Aquarium confirmed its ability to continue after major changes relative to the display of cetaceans
- Vancouver Aquarium’s expectations that it would continue successfully without belugas.

The Vancouver Aquarium representatives responded to questions from the Board. There was discussion regarding:

- Plans for transition to a new research location after 2029
- Plans for return of a non-breeding beluga whale population to the Vancouver Aquarium
- Concerns regarding the safety of the Vancouver Aquarium facility given the undetermined cause of the recent deaths of the two beluga whales
- Plans in the event that Bill S-203 is enacted
- Examples of research that have been applied to benefit wild cetacean populations
- Opportunities for research to be continued without cetaceans in captivity at the Vancouver Aquarium
- Likely consequences to rescued animals if the Vancouver Aquarium is not permitted to keep cetaceans

- The majority of animals rescued by the Marine Mammal Rescue Centre are released back to the wild
- Confirmation that the Vancouver Aquarium accepts the jurisdiction of the Park Board to amend its By-Laws with respect to keeping cetaceans in captivity
- Confirmation that capital expansions have been funded by taxpayers
- Expectation that the research and public engagement at the Vancouver Aquarium will be diminished without cetaceans.

Recess

The meeting recessed at 8:05 pm and reconvened at 8:21 pm.

The Board heard from 24 speakers who provided comments and responded to questions from the Board regarding:

- Benefits of conducting research in marine mammal facilities
- Need for standards to ensure the humane treatment and welfare of animals in human care and verification that the standards are being met
- The 13 research papers published by the Vancouver Aquarium over the past 30 years
- Recommendation that the importation of cetaceans to the Vancouver Aquarium be banned until there is a binding plebiscite conducted in 2018
- Concern that the opposing view to the Vancouver Aquarium was not granted equal time to present its case
- Number of cetacean deaths at the Vancouver Aquarium
- A capital investment to expand a facility that will close in 2029 is ill-advised
- Ability to conduct research in the wild with the use of drones
- Suggestion that Option 3 (i.e. amendment of the Parks Control By-Laws) and establishment of an Oversight Committee is the only viable option
- Value of research conducted at the Vancouver Aquarium
- Need to allow the public to express its opinion in a plebiscite

Motion to Suspend Rules

MOVED by Commissioner Mackinnon

SECONDED by Commissioner Shum

THAT the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation suspend the Park Board rules to extend the meeting to 11:00 pm.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

- Options to engage the public without keeping cetaceans at the Vancouver Aquarium

Recess

The meeting recessed at 10:03 pm and reconvened at 10:13 pm.

- The proposed plebiscite will not permit the residents outside of Vancouver to vote on the issue
- Need to view science through the lens of ethics
- Recommendation to proceed with Option 3, with an exemption for rehabilitated cetaceans that are deemed non-releasable, and the establishment of an Oversight Committee
- Some research can only be conducted in a controlled setting
- Research is vital to the survival of endangered species
- Natural behaviours cannot be observed in an unnatural environment
- Suggestion to use the funds proposed for the infrastructure renewal of the Vancouver Aquarium to construct sea pens.

Recess

The meeting recessed at 10:56 pm until Thursday, March 9, 2017 at 6:00 pm at the Park Board Office.

Meeting Reconvened

Vice-Chair Shum reconvened the Special meeting of the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation on Thursday, March 9, 2017 at 6:03 pm.

WELCOME

The Vice-Chair acknowledged that the meeting was being held on the unceded traditional territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations.

1. Cetaceans at the Vancouver Aquarium (Continued)

The Board heard from 20 speakers who provided comments and responded to questions from the Board regarding:

- Encouragement that the Board amend the Parks Control By-Law to require the Vancouver Aquarium to cease the practice of cetacean captivity
- In-house research conducted at the Vancouver Aquarium is not published but is equally valuable
- Opinion that, in a democratic society, residents should have a voice in what occurs in their parks
- Whether the Board has consulted with First Nations regarding their views on keeping cetaceans in captivity
- Preference for the Vancouver Aquarium to conduct its research in the wild
- Value of research conducted at the Vancouver Aquarium with respect to the future rehabilitation of marine mammals

- Suggestion to use the funds proposed for the infrastructure revitalization of the Vancouver Aquarium to develop a marine reserve along the coast

Motion to Suspend Rules

MOVED by Commissioner Evans
SECONDED by Commissioner Shum

THAT the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation suspend the Park Board rules to hear from those speakers who submitted a request to speak after the registration deadline.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

- Suggestion to use the funds proposed for the infrastructure renewal of the Vancouver Aquarium to expand the Marine Mammal Rescue Centre
- Issue with the Vancouver Aquarium primarily being a business, not a research facility
- Scientists' statement of support for research conducted at the Vancouver Aquarium
- Recommendation that commitments not be made to the Vancouver Aquarium until the results of the 2018 plebiscite are known
- Concern that the Vancouver Aquarium is spreading false information to support its plans for an expanded research program
- Incongruity in the silence of the Vancouver Aquarium in efforts to protect the orca whales in the Salish Sea from the dangers due to increased shipping as a result of the Kinder Morgan expansion project
- Positive experience of students visiting the Vancouver Aquarium.

In summary, the Board heard from a total of 44 speakers, of which 14 spoke in support of, and 29 were opposed to, the Vancouver Aquarium keeping cetaceans in captivity. One speaker spoke neither in support nor in opposition to keeping captive cetaceans at the Vancouver Aquarium, but expressed the opinion that the question should be put to a plebiscite.

Recess

The meeting recessed at 8:05 pm and reconvened at 8:20 pm.

Chair Wiebe reviewed the four options outlined in the staff report.

MOVED by Commissioner Mackinnon
SECONDED by Commissioner Kirby-Yung

THAT the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation directs staff to bring forward for enactment by the Board, an amendment to the Parks Control By-law to prohibit the importation and display of live cetaceans in Vancouver parks and report back not later than May 15, 2017.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

The Board adjourned at 8:56 pm.

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Malcolm Bromley
General Manager

Commissioner Michael Wiebe
Chair