



MOTION ON NOTICE

Submitted at the Regular Board meeting held on 2020-07-27

Request for Non-Park Site for the Strathcona Park Encampment

MOVER: Commissioner Demers

WHEREAS:

1. The ongoing homelessness crisis in Vancouver has resulted in rising numbers of people seeking temporary shelter in public spaces and parks. When tents and other temporary structures that provide shelter accumulate or remain in place for extended periods of time, they can impact public access to park space and amenities and result in a strain on staffing and resources.
2. In February 2020, the Province unveiled new funding for 'navigation centres', an 'enhanced shelter model' that includes wrap-around services to provide additional resources and support to help people get off the streets.
3. On May 8, 2020, in recognition of the significant threat the COVID-19 pandemic poses to public health, safety and welfare, particularly to vulnerable segments of society, the Province of BC issued Ministerial Orders M150 and M152 under the Emergency Program Act, for the immediate evacuation of the encampment in Oppenheimer Park. A variety of housing and shelter options were provided to camp residents, with a few choosing to relocate to a waterfront lot owned by the Vancouver Port Authority, which is adjacent to CRAB (Portside) Park.
4. On June 10, 2020, the BC Supreme Court granted the Port Authority an injunction requiring the camp members to vacate the land next to CRAB Park, citing concerns that the growing size of the encampment would lead to the same health and safety concerns seen at Oppenheimer Park.
5. On June 16, 2020, Vancouver Police enforced the court ordered injunction to clear the camp from Port Authority land; the camp subsequently relocated to Strathcona Park.
6. On July 14, 2020, the Board approved amendments to the Parks Control By-law regarding temporary shelter in parks, with the goal of recognizing the needs of all park users, including those currently experiencing homelessness. Amendments also included provisions to more effectively manage temporary structures and tents of those seeking shelter in parks.
7. The current encampment in Strathcona Park occupies an area that compromises the regular activities and maintenance of the park. Alternative options for park users of this neighborhood are limited.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Vancouver Park Board officially request the City of Vancouver and the Province of British Columbia for one or more alternative, non-park sites to temporarily host the encampment currently found in Strathcona Park until more suitable housing options can be provided.