

# PARK RANGER SERVICE MODEL

## Phase 1 Report Back

Park Board Committee Meeting  
Monday, October 18, 2021



# Purpose of Presentation



To report back to the Board on the first phase of the Park Ranger Service Model Review, which has focused on core service funding needs and bylaw enforcement challenges.





# Background



- Park Ranger program initiated in May 2000
- Rangers served as ambassadors
- Primary role was to increase public awareness of park by-laws, rules, and regulations, and direct queries where appropriate
- Monitor city-wide recreation activities in parks
- Deal with issues that could be resolved through information, education and/or conflict resolution
- Other issues referred to enforcement departments

- Park Rangers join 2010 Winter Games By-law Enforcement team
- January 2010, Park Board Ticket Offences By-law enacted
- Rangers enforced City and Park Board by-laws by issuing tickets
- July 2010, Smoking Regulation By-law passed
- October 2021, Park Board Ticket Offences By-law updated to expand Rangers ticketing authority to include feeding wildlife
- Comprehensive review of all park by-laws and fines is underway

- Park Rangers ability to respond to escalated conflicts remains limited
- Heavy reliance on other enforcement resources and agencies
- Enforcing park by-laws is not a priority for these various other groups
- Necessary support is often not available

- In 2017, a motion to address [Park Ranger Funding and Safety](#) concerns was referred to staff for consideration
- In the [subsequent report back](#) in November 2017, staff outlined some of the efforts made to improve park maintenance, safety, & security, which included:
  - increased presence at parks most impacted by drug use and homeless encampments
  - a new Ranger station and dedicated patrols in Andy Livingstone Park

- Additional funding to increase the number of Park Ranger regular positions from five (5) to twelve (12)
- Shift coverage from 7am to midnight, seven (7) days per week
- Service agreement with the City's Engineering Streets division to temporarily assist with the maintenance of six DTES parks
- Security attendants added to more frequently service the playgrounds and public washrooms in Andy Livingstone and Creekside Parks (2017 only)



The Board approved the recommendation for staff to develop a comprehensive and sustainable Park Ranger Service Model, in consultation and collaboration with the Vancouver Police, City of Vancouver, and community partners, to address safety, security, cleanliness and maintenance concerns in Vancouver parks.





# Discussion

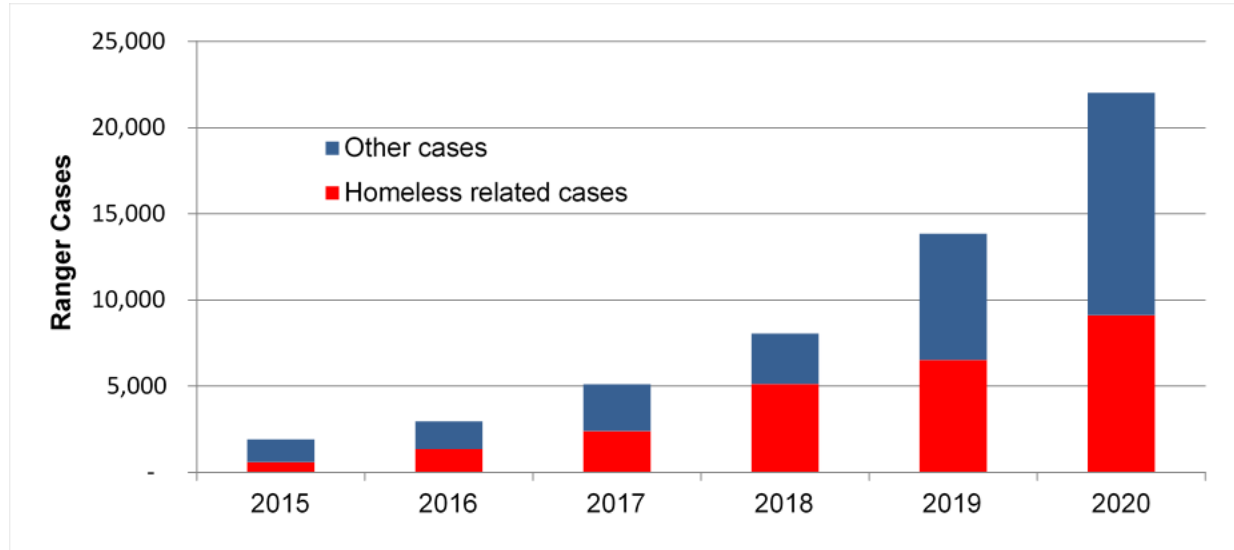


- Large-scale encampments have occurred within a number of Vancouver parks
- Park Rangers dedicate large amounts of staff resources towards encampment prevention, management and removal
- Park Rangers work respectfully with people living in public parks and provide referrals to shelters, housing, and support services
- Park Rangers also work cooperatively with the City's Urban Issues Team to clear homeless encampments when necessary

- Over the past five years, the Park Ranger program has experienced a dramatic increase in service requests
- The majority related to challenges arising from complex health, urban, and social issues and the impacts on park safety and cleanliness
- These issues have been further exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic with increased demands put on outdoor public spaces
- Social issues related cases (e.g. mental health, drug addiction and temporary structures in parks) rose by 40% in 2020



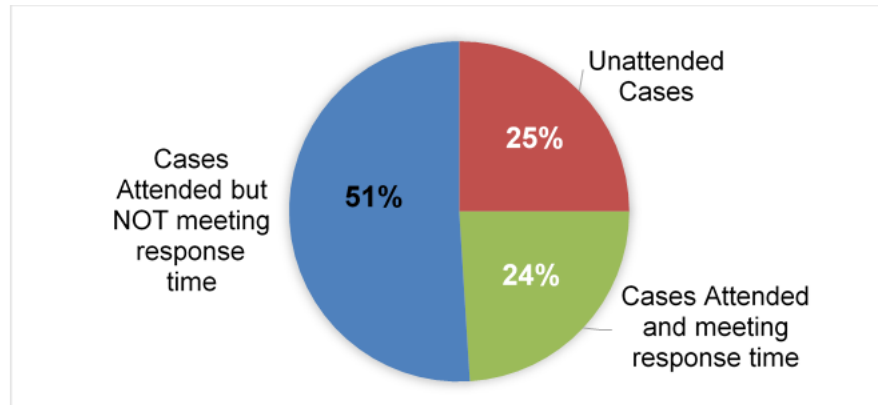
- Figure 1 below, the number of Park Ranger cases has increased by 1,153% from 2015 (1,909 cases) to 2020 (22,010 cases)



**Figure 1:** Park Ranger Case Volumes 2015-2020

- Funding and resources for the Park Ranger Program have not kept pace with expanding community needs and service requests
- Rising case volumes have overwhelmed the Ranger team
- Urgent and high risk matters, such as managing encampments and addressing wildlife issues in parks, are prioritized over regular work
- Triaging process impacts response times and results in many service requests going unattended

- Figure 2 below, in 2020 less than a quarter of all cases were addressed within the 72 hour response time target, and 25% of the cases received no response at all.



**Figure 2** – Park Ranger Response Time (within 72hrs) Outcomes - 2020

- Detrimental impact on other core services, resulting in a:
  - reduced ability to respond to lower priority/low risk issues
  - delayed service request response times
  - reduced litter and needle picking, impacting overall park cleanliness
  - reduced maintenance of natural and synthetic turf
  - reduced trail maintenance and park conservation efforts
  - reduced sense of some parks feeling welcoming and safe



- Ranger core services currently include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - providing park visitor information and wayfinding
  - educating the public about park conservation, regulations, and by-laws
  - monitoring city-wide recreation activities in parks
  - monitoring and maintaining order and safety in parks; performing needle sweeps
  - protecting & securing park facilities, amenities and natural assets
  - supporting special events and filming



# Proposed Park Ranger Service Model - Phase 1



# Proposed Model - City-wide Park Ranger Patrols

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- maintain regular city-wide patrols at all parks
- develop “regional” hubs to support equitable delivery of services city-wide
- supports front-line park ambassador role
- supports delivery of core services

# Proposed Model – Teams to Support Urban Issues

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- creation of specialized Ranger Task Teams to respond to issues in the urban core
- enhanced training programs will focus on trauma informed, harm reduction approaches
- primary responsibilities will include:
  - ensuring that parks, washrooms and other amenities remain safe and clean
  - maintaining regular patrols of all urban parks; needle sweeps & clean-ups
  - focusing on emergency response/emerging issues



# Proposed Model – Teams to Support Urban Issues

- assisting with those experiencing homelessness in parks; connecting individuals with appropriate support services
- managing encampments and temporary structures
- conducting fire patrols in Stanley Park



# Proposed Model – Enhanced Enforcement Capabilities

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- creation of some new positions with Peace Officer status to support Rangers with by-law enforcement
- Peace Officer status provides authority to demand identification; non-compliance can result in detainment/arrest
- encourages increased by-law compliance and less reliance on other enforcement agencies
- supports setting enforceable fines for other by-law offences (amplified sound, beach fires, unpermitted events, feeding wildlife etc.)
- enables Park Board to prioritize enforcement efforts to not further marginalize equity deserving groups or people disproportionately impacted by the housing crisis, opioid epidemic or impacts from COVID-19



# Financial Considerations



- The accumulated operating labour cost deficit from 2015 through 2020 was \$2.2M.
- In Q2, the overspend forecast for wages in 2021 is \$1.1M
- Has affected the ability to deliver core services in other areas of Park Operations such as:
  - managing invasive species
  - maintaining and improving park cleanliness
  - field maintenance



- Park Ranger Program will require additional ongoing base funding of \$1.8 million
- Potential sources of funding:
  - An investment request through the 2022 Service Planning and Budget Process
  - Fee increases or new revenue opportunities
  - Internal budget allocations within Park Board



## Conclusion & Next Steps



- The Park Ranger Program is integral to ensure safe, accessible, and welcoming spaces for all
- Park Ranger Service Model review to ensure that Rangers receive the support they need to deliver their core services
- Increasing the number of full-time Rangers will address current service demands
- Additional coverage will support regular city-wide patrols
- Additional coverage will allow for a designated teams to respond to emerging issues

- New positions with enhanced enforcement authority will support Rangers with by-law enforcement
- Will require additional funding through the Service Planning and Budget process
- Staff are also continuing to review the expanded core services currently falling under the Park Ranger
- Further opportunities to improve service delivery, to provide role clarity, and to address ongoing capacity and funding issues

- A. THAT the Vancouver Park Board endorse the proposed Phase 1 changes to the Park Ranger Service Model as outlined in this report, which includes:
  - i. Increasing the regular full-time staff complement to support expanded year-round coverage with additional daily shifts; and
  - ii. Create new positions with Peace Officer status to provide enhanced by-law enforcement support
- B. THAT subject to the Board's approval of Recommendation A, staff be directed to seek an additional \$1.8M of funding through the 2022 Service Planning and Budget Process, along with considerations of reinvestment opportunities through increases in fees and internal budget allocations, in order to implement the proposed changes.



Moved by Comr. Dumont

- A. THAT the Vancouver Park Board endorse the proposed Phase 1 changes to the Park Ranger Service Model as outlined in this report, which include:
- (i) Increasing the regular full-time staff complement to support expanded year-round coverage with additional daily shifts; and
  - ~~(ii) Create new positions with Peace Officer status to provide enhanced by-law enforcement support~~
  - (ii) Exploring the creation of new positions with enhanced by-law enforcement authority that would be included as part of the regular full-time staff complement.

- B. THAT subject to the Board's approval of Recommendation A(i), staff be directed to seek an additional \$1.8M of funding through the 2022 Service Planning and Budget Process, along with considerations of reinvestment opportunities through increases in fees and internal budget allocations, in order to implement the proposed changes.
- C. THAT, subject to the Board's approval of Recommendation A(ii), staff will report back to the Board with recommendations for the mandate of the new enhanced by-law enforcement positions, including details on the proposed position title, job scope, training requirements, and schedule coverage.

Moved by Comr. Irwin

- B. THAT subject to the Board's approval of Recommendation A(i), staff be directed to seek an additional \$1.8M of funding through the 2022 Service Planning and Budget Process, along with considerations of reinvestment opportunities through increases in **fin**es, fees and internal budget allocations, in order to implement the proposed changes.
- C. THAT, subject to the Board's approval of Recommendation A(ii), staff will report back to the Board with recommendations for the mandate of the new enhanced by-law enforcement positions, including details on the proposed position title, job scope, training requirements, and schedule coverage.

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