



April 19, 2023

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

FROM : Steve Jackson – Acting General Manager, Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT : **420 Protest Event at Sunset Beach Park – Board Briefing Memo**

Dear Commissioners,

The purpose of this correspondence is to provide you with an update on the 420 protest event taking place at Sunset Beach Park on April 20, 2023.

Background/History

Vancouver's 420 cannabis protest event has taken place annually since 1995. Prior to 2016, the event was held on the plazas, grounds and streets surrounding the Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG). Due to space constraints and associated public safety issues, as well as the redevelopment of the VAG north plaza, organizers selected Sunset Beach Park as the new location for their protest event in 2016. Despite concerns regarding the impacts to the public, local residents and nearby businesses, and the efforts made to find a suitable alternate location, unsanctioned and unpermitted 420 protest events took place annually at Sunset Beach Park between 2016 and 2019. After cancellations in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic, the annual 420 protest event was held at the VAG in 2022. Due to the space constraints at this location, the organizers will be returning to Sunset Beach Park in 2023.

Park Board Staff Role/Responsibilities

Although a special event permit has not been issued for this initiative, Park Board staff have engaged in a dialogue with the protest event organizers and have been working collaboratively with other key stakeholder groups (relevant City of Vancouver departments, the Vancouver Police Department, Vancouver Fire & Rescue Services, provincial and federal safety agencies, etc.) to ensure public health and safety. Operations and communications plans have been developed to guide the actions of the respective partners. The protest event organizers have also been provided with direction regarding expectations and requirements based on knowledge and experience acquired from previous 420 initiatives. This interdisciplinary planning approach has proved effective in mitigating risks and minimizing impacts of the event.

In addition to the abovementioned planning activities, the following actions will also be undertaken to further mitigate and minimize protest event risks and impacts, while still respecting charter right activities:

- No access will be provided to the Sunset Beach Park and Jervis Street parking lots (April 19 & 20) and the Vancouver Aquatic Centre parking lot (April 20) in order to discourage and impede load-in of large entertainment infrastructure and vendor equipment/supplies;
- No access will be provided to water and electrical sources at the Sunset Beach Concession building; and
- Park Rangers and City Protective Services (working collaboratively with Vancouver Police Department) will be deployed to monitor protest event activities and provide guidance/direction where appropriate.



Protest Event Set-Up & Execution

The expected schedule for the event is as follows:

- Set-up for the event at Sunset Beach Park is expected to take place between 4:00am and 12:00pm on April 20, 2023;
- Protest event programming (speeches and musical performances) will occur between 12:00pm and 8:00pm;
- At the conclusion of the programming, site tear down and clean-up will take place from 8:00pm to 10:00pm; and
- Any remaining site clean-up will take place on April 21, 2023, with all structures removed from Sunset Beach Park no later than 12:00pm.

Flyers and poster were delivered to area residents on April 17, 2023, to advise of the protest, the anticipated impacts and potential mitigation strategies. This neighborhood notification occurred within a three block radius of Sunset Beach Park.

Stakeholder Impacts

The stakeholder impacts associated with the 420 protest event at Sunset Beach Park have historically been broad and widespread. They include diminished air quality, amplified noise/music, traffic disruption, emergency medical responses, parking infractions, public service disruptions, and access restrictions to the seawall. Park Board services in the Park (concession and washrooms) and adjacent to the Park (Vancouver Aquatic Centre) will also remain closed on April 20 and not be available for public use (although portable toilets will be provided for protest event participants and other park users).

Previous iterations of the event have also resulted in additional event-related expenses for the Park Board and the City, including but not limited to staffing expenses, sanitation costs, lost revenues, parking, etc. The event has also caused damage to Park Board assets, most notably the large grass areas at Sunset Beach Park, resulting in park closures and loss of public use.

Park Board staff are tracking all costs associated with 420 and reserve the right to invoice the protest event organizers for payment of the abovementioned restoration and event-related expenses.

Next Steps

Further updates on this initiative will be provided to the Board at the conclusion of the event and as additional information becomes available.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Jackson".

Steve Jackson (*he/him*)
Acting General Manager – Parks and Recreation

/os/jk

Copy to: PB Leadership Team
PB Business Development
PB Communications
Paul Mochrie, City Manager