



April 6, 2022

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

FROM : Donnie Rosa - General Manager, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT : **CRAB Park Remediation & Encampment Relocation - Board Briefing Memo**

Dear Commissioners,

The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on the ongoing work by Park Board staff to safely maintain CRAB Park, while also supporting those individuals seeking shelter in the park. Our City of Vancouver and BC Housing partners continue their work to connect individuals experiencing homelessness with safe indoor spaces and essential support services.

As part of these collaborative efforts, I am designating an area within the park where temporary daytime shelter will be permitted to facilitate the relocation of the encampment within the park so that Park Operations staff can undertake some critical park remediation.

Park Remediation

The majority of the tents in CRAB Park are located on a sloped area along the southwest corner of the park. Both campers and staff have raised concerns about the deterioration of and damage to the slope due to the encampment. This damage is causing slipping and tripping hazards and the area is filled with metal and sharps that require immediate attention. Staff have also heard from those camping in the park that the slippery sections and uneven ground is presenting mobility challenges, and that generally sleeping conditions are worse on the slope.

Re-turfing the slope is the most effective means of remediation, and the area will need to be cleared for staff to safely complete this work. Additionally, the remediated area will need to remain closed to the public until the new turf has become established (2-4 months, weather dependent).

Temporary Daytime Shelter Area & Encampment Relocation

As the campers currently located on the slope will have to move for this remediation work to proceed, pursuant to Parks Control By-law, section 11B(b), I am designating an area in the park where temporary daytime shelter will be permitted effective April 7, 2022. This will allow people currently seeking temporary overnight shelter in the park to keep their tents up during the day as well if they relocate to this designated area. Overnight shelters erected elsewhere in the park will need to be removed daily, and no shelters will be permitted in the area requiring remediation. Staff will be working with campers to move their belongings to the new area by April 25, 2022.

For your reference, I have attached copies of the GM Notice and accompanying letter that will be distributed to all individuals currently sheltering in CRAB Park tomorrow morning (April 7). The letter also includes an overview of the ongoing work by staff to support those experiencing homelessness in the park, along with further details on the relocation and remediation plans. I ask that you not share this information until after the notice has been distributed in the morning.



I have also attached a Q&A to help address any potential questions that may arise, however all enquiries can be redirected to my office. Amit Gandha, Director of Parks, will be the appointed spokesperson for this ongoing operational matter.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

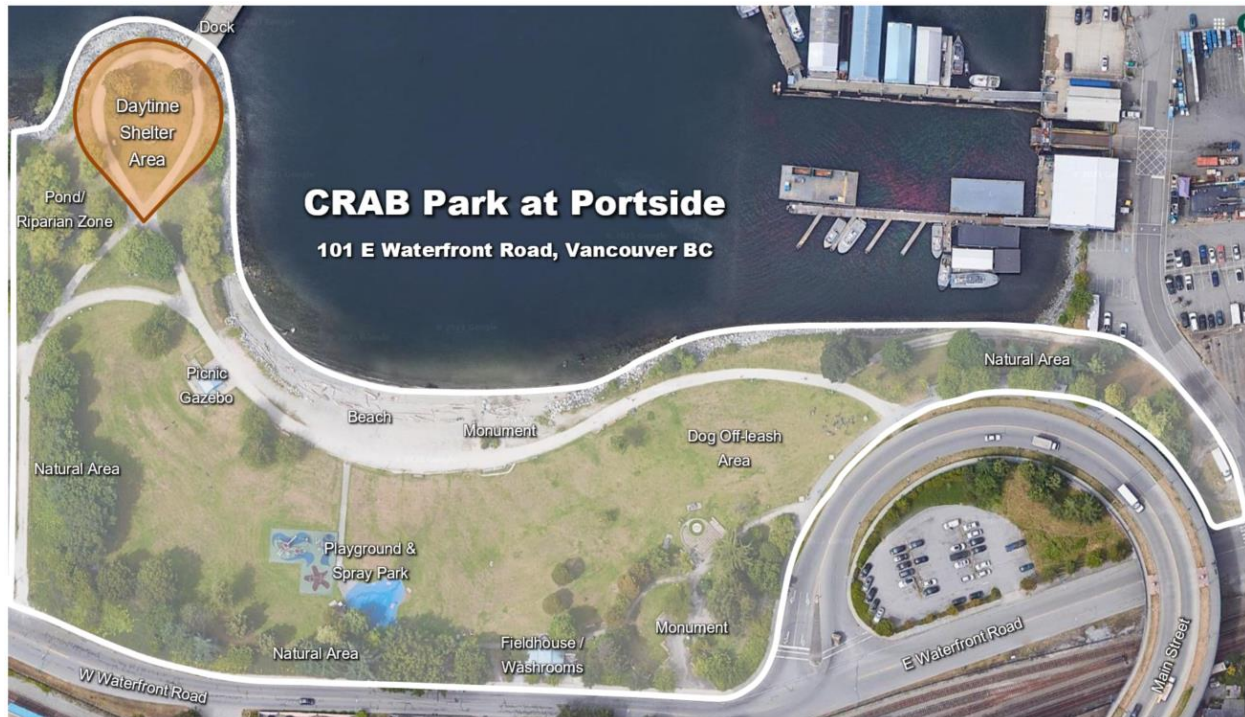
Donnie Rosa (*they/she*)
General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

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Copy to: PB Leadership Team
Park Operations
PB Communications
City Manager
GM, Engineering Services
GM, Arts, Culture & Community Services
City Outreach Services (ACCS)
BC Housing

Notice from the General Manager of the Park Board

Effective Thursday, April 7, 2022, pursuant to the Parks Control By-law, the General Manager of the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation designates the northwest point of CRAB Park at Portside (shaded orange in below map) as an area acceptable for temporary daytime shelter.



For more information call:
211 - Shelter and Street Help Line | 311 - City Services

Effective Thursday, April 7, 2022, temporary daytime shelters will be permitted in the northwest point of CRAB Park at Portside, as shown in the above map.

Address: CRAB Park at Portside, 101 E Waterfront Road, Vancouver, BC



General Manager - Vancouver Park Board

April 7, 2022

Date



April 7, 2022

Letter to all Campers sheltering in CRAB Park:

Since February 28, 2022, Park Board staff have held weekly meetings in CRAB Park to discuss issues that arise due to the current encampment in the park. These meetings have been open to all campers in CRAB Park. In addition to these meetings, staff have engaged with legal counsel for Ms. Bamberger.

At these weekly meetings, and in correspondence with Ms. Bamberger's counsel, staff have discussed a number of concerns related to the encampment in the park. Following are responses to the concerns raised, including any actions taken where applicable.

- **Power for Charging Phones**

Power for charging phones has been made available at the onsite gazebo.

- **Potable Water Access**

Potable water access has been installed.

- **Portable Washroom**

The portable washroom was replaced and re-located near the campers.

- **Access to Food, Showers and Laundry**

BC Housing and City of Vancouver Arts, Culture & Community Services staff have identified locations and venues where individuals can attain food, shower, laundry services, and supplies. These services will not be provided in the park.

- **Storage**

Park Board staff have received requests to provide a shipping container in the park for the purpose of storing food, supplies and belongings. Staff believe that this type of container in the park is incompatible with the use of the area as a park.

Park Board and City staff can provide large totes for those relocating within the park and for offsite storage. The Osborn shelter at 27 West Hastings St, operated by the PHS Community Services Society, offers limited space for those wanting to store their belongings. Individuals requesting this option will need to complete a form with information on retrieving and accessing their belongings. A copy of the form will be provided to each individual and PHS. Park Rangers can transport the containers to the location upon request. There is a maximum of one large city tote per person due to the limited space at The Osborn.

- **Confiscation of Belongings**

There were concerns expressed that the belongings of individuals may be confiscated by Park Board staff. We confirm staff have no intention to confiscate any personal belongings. Each individual is responsible for their own belongings and is required to comply with the requirements that no building materials, propane tanks, motor vehicles, generators, or industrial equipment will be brought into parks. Owners must remove prohibited items when requested, or staff will arrange removal to enforce regulations and to ensure everyone's safety.



- **Eroding/Damaged Slope Area**

The majority of the tents in the encampment are situated on a sloped area along the southwestern corner of the park. Campers and Park Operations staff have raised concerns about the deterioration of and damage to the slope due to the encampment. This damage is causing slipping and tripping and the area is filled with metal and sharps that require immediate attention. Staff have also heard from those camping in the park that the slippery sections and uneven ground is presenting mobility challenges, and that generally sleeping conditions are worse on the slope.

At the weekly meetings with campers, and in correspondence with Ms. Bamberger's counsel, staff have discussed possible options to address the deterioration of the slope area. The campers proposed the installation of either gravel or woodchips to stabilize the slope, and propose that this work could be done without the need to relocate the existing tents. Park Board staff are of the view that due to the slope angle, the installation of gravel or woodchips would worsen, not improve, the situation as it would be adding loose material to the already eroding soil. Additionally, even if woodchips or gravel were a suitable remedy, the area would need to be cleared in order to apply a full covering of the materials. Only placing gravel or woodchips between the existing tents would not accomplish the goal of preventing unsafe conditions on the eroding slope.

Campers also suggested that artificial turf be installed on the slope. As this would represent a significant change to the nature and design of that area of the park, it would require Board approval. Additionally, if it were approved, it would require the installation of an appropriate base to support the artificial turf installation. To design a base and install artificial turf on the slope would take considerable time, and the area would need to be completely cleared to undertake the work.

After full consideration of the options suggested by both campers and staff to address the erosion and related safety concerns, I have determined that re-turfing the slope is the most effective means of remediation. I have also concluded that the area must be cleared of all tents and materials to facilitate this necessary work; the equipment needed to prepare the slope requires space to navigate and the installation of the new turf requires the area to be clear. To avoid any potential risk for staff or campers, no one can be permitted in the work zone until the work has been completed and the turf has had sufficient time to become established.

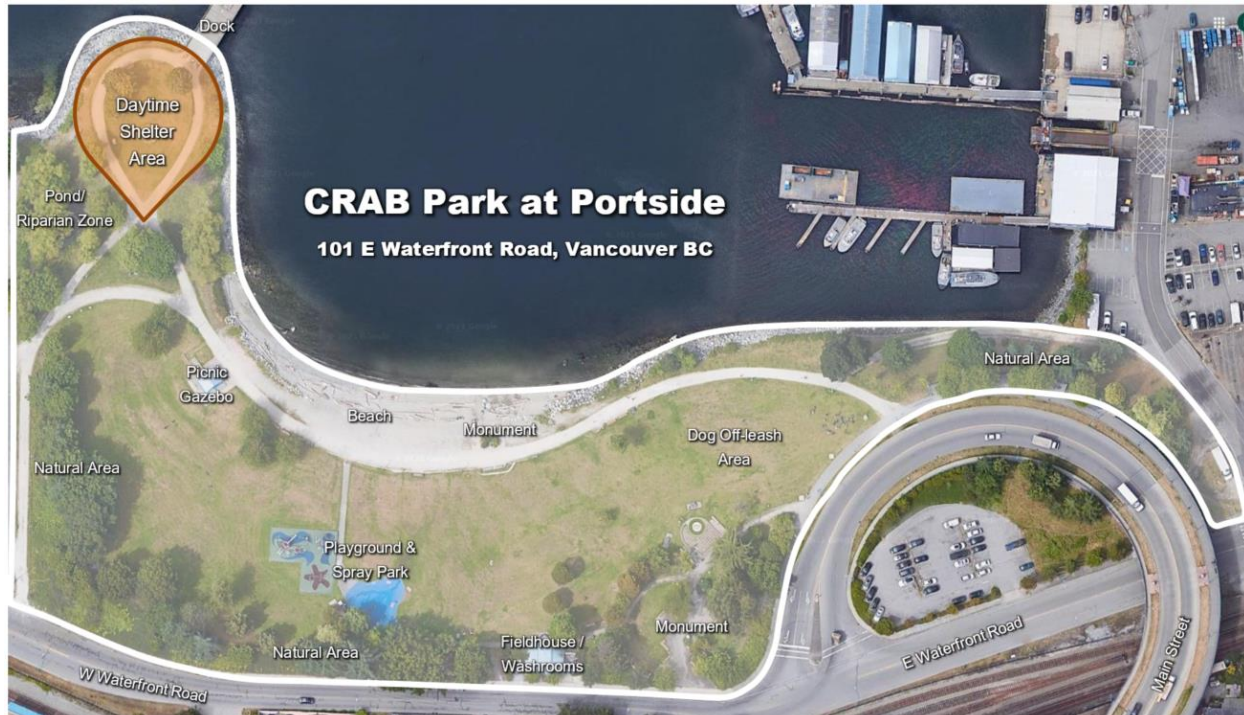
Daytime Shelter Area

As the campers currently located on the slope will have to move for this remediation work to proceed, I have designated an area in the northwest section of park where daytime sheltering will be permitted (see area orange shaded area in below map). This level area has been identified as sufficiently large to accommodate the allowable 9 square metres (3m x 3m) for one tent per individual who is currently camping on the slope. As individuals relocate, Park Board staff will monitor available space to recommend adjustments to the designated area if needed.

Individuals will not be permitted to move items such as motorcycles, generators, wood, pallets, propane tanks, or building materials. These types of items are not allowed in parks as they create safety concerns, reduce space to accommodate individuals seeking shelter, and contribute to additional deterioration and damage to the park.

Relocation Timeline

Park Board staff have asked individuals at the park and Ms. Bamberger’s legal representation for a reasonable timeline for individuals to relocate within the park and have received feedback ranging from one (1) day to four (4) weeks. As such, staff have determined that two (2) weeks should be sufficient for most individuals to transition to the area designated for daytime shelter (see map below). We anticipate that everyone wanting to relocate into the designated area will have done so by April 25th at the latest.



To help facilitate remediation efforts, no new tents will be permitted on the sloped area. Any tents erected outside of the designated daytime shelter area must be taken down and moved by 8am daily so that staff can maintain the area to ensure it is safe for use during the day, and also available for anyone seeking shelter overnight.

Your cooperation will be needed to support these relocation and remediation efforts. We look forward to continuing to work with you in seeking suitable indoor spaces and making the park safe and welcoming for all.

Donnie Rosa
General Manager
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

/ag/clc



Questions & Answers

CRAB Park Remediation & Encampment Relocation

Q. Why is the remediation and encampment relocation required?

- A. The majority of the tents in the park are in the sloped section of the park, located along the south-western portion of the park. Campers and staff have concerns about the deterioration of and damage to the slope due to the encampment. This damage is causing slipping and tripping hazards and the area is filled with metal and sharps that require immediate attention. In order to remediate the slope, Park staff require the area to be cleared to ensure equipment and staff can access the area safely. In order to facilitate these repairs and the encampment relocation within CRAB Park, the General Manager has designated an area where temporary daytime sheltering will be permitted.

Q. Does the General Manager have the authority to allow for daytime sheltering?

- A. The Park Board General Manager, pursuant to section 11B(b) of the Parks Control By-law, is issuing a notice designating an area in the park where temporary daytime shelter will be permitted. This will allow individuals seeking temporary overnight shelter in the park to keep their tents up during the day as well if they relocate to this designated area. Overnight shelters erected elsewhere in the park will need to be removed daily.

Q. How long will people have to relocate their tents to the new area?

- A. We are planning for a two week transition period and expect this will allow enough time for everyone's tents and belongings to be relocated to the designated area by April 25. Park Board and City staff are supporting these moves by providing large totes for those relocating items within the park or to offsite storage. Park Rangers will be available to transport containers to a PHS Community Services Society shelter that offers limited storage.

Q. Is the City/Park Board condoning encampments?

- A. The City of Vancouver and Vancouver Park Board agree that encampments do not represent an appropriate solution to the homelessness crisis and are deeply concerned about the safety and wellbeing of people experiencing homelessness across the city, including those experiencing homelessness and sleeping in CRAB Park. The City and Park Board continue to advocate to and work with senior government on a variety of options to meet the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness in Vancouver, including the provision of emergency shelters and longer term options, such as the expedited creation of more social and supportive housing.

Q. How will this relocation and clearing of the existing encampment be enforced?

- A. Park Rangers will seek compliance and support of the individuals in keeping the park safe and clean. Ongoing regular communications and designating an area where temporary shelters can remain during the day reflect some of the efforts being made to encourage cooperation and compliance.

Questions & Answers

CRAB Park Remediation & Encampment Relocation

Q. Will we see daytime sheltering permitted in other parks?

- A. This measure is being taken to specifically support clearing the area requiring remediation in CRAB Park. If this work is delayed, the area will continue to deteriorate, potentially to an extent that could require closing the entire park. CRAB Park is small in scale and is not a site that can withstand a large number of tents and structures.

Q. Encampments continue to be an issue in the city – why not make them permanent and offer services to people sleeping in the park?

- A. We recognize that people experience homelessness for a number of different reasons and some may not want to move into the housing options available, but encampments are not a solution. The City and Park Board continue to advocate to and work with senior government on a variety of options to meet the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness in Vancouver, including the provision of emergency shelters and longer term options, such as the expedited creation of more social and supportive housing. In partnership with BC Housing, the City of Vancouver's Homelessness Services Outreach Team continues to connect with individuals experiencing homelessness, including those currently sleeping at CRAB Park, to connect them with safe indoor spaces and other services

Q. What sort of remediation work is required?

- A. The damaged areas will require removal/grading of the top layers for metals and sharps, followed by adding new soil and seed to re-grow turf. The timeline to complete this work will depend on the weather, but staff estimate that this area of the park will be closed for roughly two to four months to allow time for the new turf to fully establish.

Q. How many people currently live in the park, and how many have been housed?

- A. We estimate there are between 25-40 people currently living in CRAB Park. In partnership with BC Housing, the City of Vancouver's Homelessness Services Outreach Team continues to connect individuals experiencing homelessness with safe indoor spaces. Since July 2021, 44 people living in CRAB Park have been housed.

Q. Is this park still a shared space? What are you doing to ensure the park is safe and accessible to all members of the community?

- A. We care deeply for the safety of the individuals living in the encampment as well as anyone who visits CRAB Park. Park Rangers, Park Operations and City Outreach staff maintain the area and routinely check in on people in the park.

Park spaces are not designed to facilitate tents or structures for extended periods, nor do parks have the necessary utilities such as power, water, and sewer. Our primary focus continues to be working with our partners to help support individuals experiencing homelessness in the park by connecting them with indoor spaces and other essential services.
