



July 31, 2023

MEMO TO : Mayor and Council, Park Board Commissioners

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

SUBJECT : **South Vancouver, Marpole Neighborhoods & Memorial South Park Pond - Infrastructure Improvements – Board Briefing Memo**

Dear Mayor Sim and Park Board Commissioners,

This memo is further to your letter of July 18 regarding the June 28 approved motion of Vancouver's Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities and specifically the concerns expressed by area residents on the state of the pond at Memorial Park South, and its importance to the health, well-being and enjoyment of South Vancouver residents. Following is an update on the assessment of and considerations for the repair of the pond, including challenges, background information and next steps.

Current State and Challenges

The Park Board is the City of Vancouver's largest civic user of potable (drinking) water. Within the park system, potable water is employed for a variety of uses including grass field irrigation, drinking fountains, pools, spray parks, buildings, emergency response, and aesthetic water features. Lately, in addition there have been calls for cooling features such as misting stations in parks in response to drier, longer, and hotter summers.

Park water features were generally built during a time of sufficient potable water supply, less regional population demand, and fewer regulatory requirements. Most water features in Vancouver parks are fed with potable water and many are recirculating, and [City By-law](#) compliant. Others, like the Memorial South Park Pond, do not recirculate water ("once-through" systems) and as a result, use millions of litres of potable water annually and are not By-law compliant. Up to 11 million litres per year of potable water had previously been added to maintain the Memorial South Pond water levels annually.

This pond is a beloved place for residents who have enjoyed its aesthetics for many years. It retains some water naturally as a seasonal wetland, but not during periods of drought we now experience most summers. Worth mention is that with Metro Vancouver's Stage 2 Watering Restrictions, which come in effect starting Friday August 4, 2023, ponds like these cannot be topped up with drinking water. The preliminary estimated cost to rebuild this pond as a By-Law compliant water feature through the installation of a non-permeable pond liner is in the range of \$500K to \$1M. This represents 25 to 50% of the 2023-2026 capital budget of \$2M for all Park Board water feature conversion / upgrade projects.

On April 25 City Council considered a [report](#) related to the [motion](#) entitled Water Works By-law Exemptions and/or Viable Exceptions for Notable Decorative City Water Features. The pond in Memorial South Park was not on the list of By-law exceptions approved by City Council.

Staff are finalizing a Water Assets Condition Assessment and Rehabilitation Planning study. This study includes a technical and regulatory review of 64 existing decorative fountains, waterfalls,



ponds, spray parks, and wading pools in parks. It also includes habitat considerations where seasonal wetlands with no added potable, chlorinated water provide habitat for native birds, insects, and amphibians. This study will provide information about asset rehabilitation including cost estimates for bringing features into compliance with regulatory requirements.

Additional Information

Water use priority considerations are guided by Metro Vancouver, City policies and by-laws, and [VanPlay](#), the Board's Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan (2019/20). VanPlay specifies the goal to reduce potable water use in parks through service review, innovative design, new technologies and increasing the use of recirculating systems.

Since 2021, Engineering Services and Park Board staff have been collaborating on a draft update [Water Priority Action Plan](#). Key drivers to its development include population driven water demand, climate change, municipal bylaws, the transition to consumption charges, infrastructure condition, non-compliant water features and the development of a water budget and prioritization of water use in parks.

The financial investment required to renew and retrofit all assessed water features far exceeds available capital funding, and maintaining renewed water features has implications on the Park Board's operating budget. Compiling better information about these and other park assets will assist the Board and staff with prioritizing capital investment and taking operating costs into account.

Next Steps

Staff are finalizing the Water Priority Action Plan, and the Water Assets Condition Assessment and Rehabilitation Planning Study and aim to present them to the Park Board in October, 2023. This will include comprehensive recommendations for the Board who will make the decisions on where to prioritization investments within the funding available in this Capital Plan, including the next steps for the Memorial South Park Pond. Staff will look to the Board to provide direction if action is to be taken on this pond sooner than October.

Regards,

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

Steve Jackson
Acting General Manager - Parks and Recreation

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