

**Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Parks and Recreation
Planning & Environment Committee Meeting
Held at the Vancouver Park Board Office on
Thursday, October 08, 2009**

ATTENDEES: Park Board Commissioners

Sarah Blyth, Chair
Ian Robertson
Stuart Mackinnon
Loretta Woodcock

Park Board Staff

Piet Rutgers	Director, Planning and Operations
Liane McKenna	Director, Vancouver East District
Ron Caswell	Manager, Golf and Park Operations
Mark Vulliamy	Manager, Research and Planning
Shala Hay	Recorder

Commissioner Jasper was out of the country.

Delegations:

- Peter Guo, Fraser River Community Member
- RL Barclay, Fraser River Community Member
- Diana Livingston
- Heather Priti
- Robyn Worcester, Stanley Park Ecology Society
- Tim Pezarro, West Point Grey Soccer Club
- Anne Thompson, Vancouver Field Hockey Association
- Gordon Johnson, Vancouver Youth Soccer Association
- Craig Woods, President, Vancouver Field Sports Federation

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm, with the following Agenda:

1. Presentation of Gift by the Western Arts Circle
2. Approval of the Minutes of the meeting on September 10th, 2009
3. Floyd's Ice Rink Proposal
4. Dog Off Leash –Public Consultation Results
5. Synthetic Turf Sites: Public Process Update

1. **Presentation of Gift by the Western Arts Circle**

The Western Arts Circle presented to the Committee a painting by Gordon 'Kit' Thorne entitled 'Alexandra Park Bandstand', as a donation to the Park Board. The piece was selected as it symbolises the relationship between Vancouver parks and the artists who paint in the parks; it also represents an important part of the Western Arts Circle history.

2. **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Planning & Environment Committee held on Thursday, September 10th, 2009 were adopted as circulated.

3. **Floyd's Ice Rink Proposal**

Stan Floyd, founder of Floyd's Help Hockey Association, presented to the Committee his concept for basic functional ice rinks that may assist in addressing the rink shortage situation in Vancouver. These rinks will be enclosed to shelter athletes from the elements and this will also allow them to remain functional during the rainy winter months. The structures, although not as aesthetically appealing as conventional outdoor rinks, would cost a fraction of the cost at just over \$1 million each compared to around \$15 million for a conventional rink. Floyd proposed that financing could be raised by pre-selling rink times to main user groups. This concept was successfully implemented in Burnaby where he developed the Columbian 4Rinks.

Discussion:

A member of the Committee asked whether Stan had any locations in mind for his idea. Stan informed the Committee that he had started looking at sites with Lacrosse boxes but realised that they would be cost prohibitive to transform. The purpose of his presentation was to approach the Board to find a suitable location for his concept.

A committee member inquired from staff when was the last time research was done on the usage and inventory of rinks in Vancouver. Staff stated that research was conducted between 2003 and 2004 jointly with UBC, where it was found that rink usage was on the decline. This was mainly due to a gradual decrease in the population of school age residents and lower participation rates by an increasingly diverse population in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. The study also showed that the only segment that was increasing was Women's Hockey, but overall demand has been decreasing. Since the research was done, three additional rinks were constructed, and there still remained two rinks short to fill the demand.

A member of the Committee questioned whether the demand for ice rinks may have risen since the time of the analysis and inquired into the cost of conducting a new analysis. Staff stated that at the time the cost was around \$30,000.

Staff advised the Committee that additional ice rinks, if any, would have to be looked at in the context of the Capital Plan preparation.

The Committee concurred that Floyd's Ice Rink proposal would be received for information and thanked Stan Floyd for his presentation.

3. Dog Off-Leash –Public Consultation Results

Staff provided feedback to the Committee based on the direction received at the June 8th, 2009, Staff Briefing, regarding Dog Off-leash issues in City parks. There are currently 32 Off-Leash Parks in Vancouver. Two new dog-off leash areas were put forward for the Committee's consideration, one at Devonian Harbour Park and the other just off Second Beach in Stanley Park. Extended off-leash hours at Fraser River Park and Portside Park were also put forward for the Committee's consideration. Feedback from the public consultation on these recommendations was presented to the Committee.

Staff informed the Committee that both Devonian and Stanley Park serve high density communities and the introduction of off-leash areas at both sites may reduce off-leash activities at other sites. Out of the 26 comments received during the consultation process for the Stanley Park location, 25 were in favour and no negative comments were received. At Devonian Harbour Park 33 comments were received and 26 were in favour. The main concerns related to conflict with the adjacent pedestrian/cycle paths. Concerns regarding the impact on wildlife in the park were also raised. The proposed hours at both locations are 6am to 10am and 5pm to 10pm. Signs and enforcement were seen as keys to successful implementation.

The existing off-leash hours at Fraser River Park are 6am to 10am and 5pm to 10pm. The proposed extended hours are: October 1st to April 30th – off-leash all day; May 1st to September 30th – off-leash during the hours of 6am to 10 am and 5pm to 10pm. The Board received a signed petition with over 400 names in favour of permitting dog off-leash activity in the park all day. 112 Responses were also received from the consultation, with 88 in favour.

The existing off-leash hours at Portside Park are 6am to 10am and 5pm to 10pm. The proposed extended hours are: September 1st to June 30th – off-leash all day; July 1st to August 31st – off-leash during the hours of 6am to 10 am and 5pm to 10pm. There was not a lot of interest expressed during the consultation, only 2 responses were received and both were in favour.

Discussion:

A member of the Committee asked whether the off-leash area in Fraser River Park extends to the picnic area. Staff stated that the entire park is off-leash during the designated times, this includes the picnic area. The Committee member stated that this may be disturbing to patrons of the picnic area. Staff advised that a "no dog" zone could be imposed around the picnic area, similar to what is done at playgrounds. A Committee member asked whether there are any statistics on the level of usage of the picnic area. Staff stated that the area is heavily used in the summer and is booked via the Park Board's online picnic booking facility.

A Committee member noted that there is a difference in the extended hours at the two sites. Staff stated that this is because each area is unique based on the level of usage. Staff advised the Committee that the area at Portside Park is not as heavily used.

A Committee member inquired into whether there is recorded data on the number of calls made to Animal Control regarding incidences at Fraser River Park. Staff stated that they are not aware of any incidences but in the comments received by residents there were reports of children being hit by dogs and parents having to step in as their children were being approached by dogs, most of these incidences occurred during the hours when the dogs should have been on-leash.

The following delegations requested to speak to the Committee:

- Peter Guo, Fraser River Community Member
- RL Barclay, Fraser River Community Member
- Diana Livingston
- Heather Priti
- Robyn Worcester, Stanley Park Ecology Society

The following is a summary of comments provided by the foregoing delegations:

- There is a recurring problem at Fraser River Park where dog owners do not obey the dog off-leash hours
- Dog owners are often unable to control their dogs as they chase children on bikes and go after food in people's hands
- Several dog owners do not pick up after their dogs which pose a health hazard
- Thinks that until dog owners who use the park become responsible the hours should not be extended
- Don't think the existing signage is effective
- Thinks that the park should be off-leash all the time and people who are opposed should go to another park
- Disagrees with the statement that dog owners who use Fraser River Park are not responsible
- 419 signatures were attained from users of Fraser River Park who strongly support the park being off-leash all of the time
- It is difficult for people who live further away to get to the park on mornings during off-leash hours and it is not safe to walk their dogs at night
- Dog walking integrates the community as it allows residents who would not otherwise walk around the neighbour to get out and socialise
- It also helps in maintaining safety
- There is a lack of legal off-leash areas near Coal Harbour
- In one month 260 names were received from persons in support of a petition for off-leash facilities in Coal Harbour
- Devonian Park would certainly help in meeting the high demand in the Coal Harbour area
- Hopes that additional sites near Coal Harbour would also be considered
- The Stanley Park Ecology Society feels strongly that the introduction of off-leash hours in Stanley Park and Devonian Park would result in the loss of wildlife habitat
- The proposed site at Stanley Park is informally known as Woodpecker Heights and it is also close to the nesting sites of herons

- Devonian is home to a variety of wildlife, including gadwall ducks, swallows and black birds
- The imposition of off-leash hours at these locations would result in wildlife harassment as there already are reports of attacks on wildlife by dogs in Stanley Park
- This imposition would force the wildlife in those areas to relocate permanently
- Thinks fencing may mitigate the risks in these areas
- At Devonian Park the main concern is the pond and adjacent grass, if this area is protected by a fence this may greatly reduce the impact

Discussion:

The Committee expressed concern about the imposition of an off-leash area in Stanley Park. Members also stated concerns about the wild life at Devonian Park and the impact on the picnic area at Fraser River Park. A Committee member recommended that staff look into the use of fencing to mitigate the impact in these areas and determine the estimated cost.

The Committee concluded that the proposals should come before the Board taking into consideration the concerns raised by Committee members and stakeholders, and looking into ways of addressing these concerns. Options could be provided based on the different views expressed. Signage should also be examined to ensure that they are uncluttered and clearly visible. An emergency number should also be included on all signs. One member recommended displaying the 311 hotline number.

4. Synthetic Turf Sites: Public Process Update

Staff provided the Committee with an overview of feedback from the public consultations on the possible introduction of synthetic turf at the following sites: Jericho West, Jericho East, Rupert, Beaconsfield, Memorial South Park oval and Memorial South Park North West field. Feedback came by way of open houses, social media (Facebook), email and through the Park Board website. Based on responses from the open houses for the six locations proposed, the number of respondents in support of or neutral to the proposals exceeded those who were opposed. Jericho East had the largest support from respondents (69%); while Beaconsfield had the lowest support (38%), with the majority of respondents being neutral (40%). Approximately 80% of persons who provided feedback identified themselves as field sport participants; not much feedback came from the general public.

Staff has been in consultation with the Vancouver School Board (VSB) and it was recommended that Jericho may not be the most suitable location on the westside. It was suggested that VSB sites should be considered. VSB is keen on working with the Park Board to conduct open houses for their sites. The site at Prince of Wales would provide an immediate opportunity. A second location at Churchill could also be explored; however DCL funding can not be utilized for this location, but some funding from the infrastructure program, should it become available, could be allocated to this. The next step would be public consultation on these sites. A Board report on this should be ready by mid November.

Discussion:

A Committee member inquired into whether upgrading of the track at Memorial South could be looked into if this site was selected. Staff stated that it would be considered as there is an allocation in the capital plan for track upgrades. Another Committee member inquired into whether other user groups of the oval would be consulted. Staff stated that they would seek feedback from the various user groups of the oval.

A Committee member asked when an update on the infrastructure program is expected. Staff stated that it is expected to be available in the next few weeks or month.

The following delegations requested to speak to the Committee:

- Tim Pezarro, West Point Grey Soccer Club
- Anne Thompson, Vancouver Field Hockey Association
- Gordon Johnson, Vancouver Youth Soccer Association
- Craig Woods, President, Vancouver Field Sports Federation

The following is a summary of comments provided by the foregoing delegations:

- The West Point Grey Soccer Club would strongly support the site at Prince of Wales and would like Jericho to be considered as well, providing that the public is in favor of these sites
- Thinks that using school sites would allow more usage of the fields
- The introduction of synthetic turf would make the fields available from November to February facilitating year round usage
- There is a high demand for field hockey sites
- The existing fields are booked to capacity and there is a waiting list for users
- Once there is an additional field available it would free up the rest of the fields for other users
- Synthetic turf is preferred by field hockey players
- The Vancouver Youth Soccer Association would like there to be one field on the east side and one on the westside, both should be soccer friendly
- Strongly support the possibility of a third field on the southeast side
- Happy that Jericho is still a possibility despite the issues
- Thinks that Prince of Wales and Memorial South Park are good sites.
- A need for six new sites was identified, two have already been developed, 2 are under construction and the Vancouver Field Sport Federation (VFSF) have been working with the Park Board to identify the remaining two sites.
- VFSF would like to work with the Park Board to develop three sites rather than two and think there is a possibility to get three for almost the price of two
- VFSF thinks that the best three are Memorial South Park, Prince of Wales and Churchill
- Recommend that the Park Board: proceed with looking into the development of Memorial South Park; work with the VSB on public consultation for Prince of Wales; work with the VSB and other parties to see if there is a way of obtaining funding for the third site
- VFSF thinks that Beaconsfield and Rupert are fair but that area is already clustered with other sites
- The VFSF is not in support of Jericho West and has mixed feelings about Jericho East
- Think it might be possible to obtain federal government funding for the site at Churchill

Discussion:

A member of the Committee inquired into whether the Comosun site is off the table. Staff informed the Committee that the schools involved preferred not to include this site, also in terms of ground condition, it is the worse site on the list.

A Committee member inquired into whether the VSB would make a contribution to the project if one of their sites was selected. Staff stated that, based on the past experience, only the land would be contributed.

The Committee concluded that staff should proceed with the public consultation on the site at Prince of Wales and proceed with further consultation with field users of Memorial South. The possibility of obtaining funding for a third field should also be explored. Staff will report back to the Board on the findings.

The meeting adjourned at 8:46pm.

Piet Rutgers, Director,
Planning and Operations

Commissioner Sarah Blyth,
Chair