

**Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Parks and Recreation
Services & Budgets Committee Meeting
Held at the Vancouver Park Board Office on
Tuesday, April 28, 2009**

ATTENDEES:

Park Board Commissioners

Loretta Woodcock, Chair
Constance Barnes, Vice Chair
Aaron Jasper
Ian Robertson

Park Board Staff

Anita Ho	Director, Corporate Services
Liane McKenna	Director, Vancouver East District
Peter Kuran	Director, Stanley District
Meg Elliott	Senior Business Analyst
Thomas Soulliere	Manager, Recreation Services
Darren Peterson	Sport Strategy Coordinator
Jim Mc Kenzie	Active Communities Coordinator
Shala Hay	Recorder

Guests

Susan Urton
Alan Herbert
Ajay Patel, Chair, Vancouver Sport Strategy Implementation
Committee

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm, with the following Agenda:

1. Approval of Minutes of March 10, 2009
2. Motion referred from Board meeting of April 6, 2009
3. Active Communities
4. Sport Strategies Update
5. Operating Budget – March Statement (to be reported to the Board in June, 2009)

The Chair acknowledged today as the 25th Anniversary of the Day of Mourning for workers who have been killed or injured on the job or died of an occupational disease. Since 1998 work-related accidents in BC have claimed the lives of an average of 155 workers per year; however there remains little public attention paid to workplace deaths.

1. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Services & Budgets Committee held on Tuesday, March 10, 2009 were adopted as circulated.

2. Motion referred from Board meeting of April 6, 2009

The following motion was referred to the Services & Budgets Committee at the Park Board meeting of April 06, 2009:

Moved by Commissioner Jasper,

THAT staff report back to the Services and Budget Committee on the service impact due to staff cuts and review alternative reductions to other areas of operation.

Staff presented a report to outline the initiatives and impacts of the 2009 budget. A target savings of \$1.9 million has to be achieved for the year, this would be achieved through Efficiency Savings of \$0.3 million, a Hiring Freeze of \$1.179 million, Other Reductions of \$0.2 million, and New & Non-Recurring expenditure reductions of \$0.275 million. Staff stated that every attempt has been made to ensure that these reductions have minimal impact on staff and services, with no facility closures, and that they are achievable to meet the budget reduction in 2009.

Discussion:

The Committee questioned the impact if the revenue target is not achieved. Staff stated that further expenditure cuts would have to occur in order to balance the budget; these may have service impacts and may result in increased user fee levies.

The Committee inquired about the status of the shuttle service at Stanley Park in terms of seeking external funding. Staff informed the Committee that alternative solutions are being sought such as funding by external companies through advertising and donations, as well as, having the shuttle only available at specific times. These initiatives are aimed at having the shuttle service operational in 2009.

The Committee referred to the second part of the motion and inquired whether alternative reductions to other areas of operation are being reviewed, and whether the upcoming corporate review would lead to more efficiencies and alternative solutions. Staff stated that the Core Services/Shared Services Review, scheduled to commence next month, may identify further areas for efficiency and effectiveness. Staff further stated that the City realizes that the current hiring freeze is not a long term solution.

The Committee asked what the timelines would be for completing the review and implementing solutions. Staff stated that based on the terms of reference, the audit completion timeline is between 2-3 months; however it may not be possible to implement the measures identified in 2009, implementation may occur in 2010 and 2011.

The Committee questioned the impact on playing fields in the Vancouver East District, due to longer periods between lawn mowing. Staff stated that the reductions are only being implemented on natural and passive parts of neighbourhood parks, with no impact on sports fields.

The Committee questioned how service requirements would be met for the unfilled maintenance worker position at False Creek Community Centre in the Stanley District. Staff stated that there are currently 3 building service workers at the Vancouver Aquatic Centre and their shifts would be re-scheduled to incorporate service at False Creek Community Centre.

The Committee concluded that staff reports state that there are currently no community centre closures, no decrease in community centre operating hours, no playing field impacts and minimal reductions in supplies. Staff will report back to the Committee if there are any further budget impacts and to provide a monthly budget update.

3. Active Communities

Staff provided an update on the Park Board's Active Community Program. Active Communities Vancouver (ACV) is an initiative supported by the City Council and the Park Board, with a primary goal of establishing programs to encourage citizens to become more active. ACV organises team walks, walks in the park and jogging trails, with over 44 walks listed on their website. Their programs include: "Step Out Walks", "Active Adventure Passport", "Athletes in Vancouver", "Active Outreach –Red Fox", "Stay Active Eat Healthy" and "Positive Ticketing". They also conduct surveys to provide 'active' measurements of residents in Vancouver with comparisons to the entire BC population.

Discussion:

The Committee inquired into whether ACV has an "Active Adventure Passport" program specifically targeted to seniors and statistics on the rate of seniors' participation in walking in Vancouver. Staff informed the Committee that they have walk programs for adults that engage the entire family but none of these are specially targeted to seniors. They currently do not have the requested statistics but they could look into it.

The following delegation requested to speak to the Committee:

- Alan Herbert

The following is a summary of the comments provided:

- Proposed the development of a network of pedestrian walkways, building on the concept of the bicycle model
- These should be designed to evoke a sense of history and story-telling to create a sense of city pride
- Pathways should tell the history of the surrounding neighbourhoods and should have poetic and captivating names

- There is a need to provide more accessible pedestrian walkways catering to persons with limited mobility.
- These walkways would also provide areas for socializing

Discussion:

The Committee commented that Mr. Herbert was a Councillor and member of the Planning Commission for many years and thanked him for contributing his experience and expertise to the Committee.

The Committee stated that the Park Board is currently working on a similar initiative at the West End Greenwood area tying in history to scenic walks. Mr. Herbert mentioned that Bute Street provides another excellent opportunity for this concept.

The Committee asked whether Mr. Herbert considered applying his vision to park spaces in addition to city walks as the Park Board would be interested in working with him on some of these initiatives. Mr. Herbert stated that he thinks the best place to start would be by identifying existing areas in the system and to improve and build on these, for example, there are 4 walks in Yaletown and 1 Downtown Eastside walk which are not shown on any maps. They should therefore start off by focusing on these existing walks.

The Committee inquired about Active Communities Program brochures and other forms of support that may be required, and also how the program could engage more seniors on these walks. Staff informed the Committee that the Park Board's role focuses on promoting its own network which already has similar initiatives that engage seniors and tie the various parks together in the walk programs. Staff suggested that a range of agencies be involved in the introduction of these series of walkways, including the Heritage Commission and the Engineering Department, to come up with unique ways to develop these systems. There should also be a focus on community centres to promote more participation in activities among seniors.

The Committee proposed that staff follow up on the feasibility of a couple of pilot walks focused around History and Heritage. These theme walks should be modelled after the Arts & Culture and Olympics walks that the Park Board already has. The Heritage Commissioner and the Planning and Engineering Departments should be included in these discussions.

The following delegation requested to speak to the Committee:

- Susan Urton

The following is a summary of the comments provided:

- There is a need for proper soft surface terrains that put less stress on the body
- Safety issues in public parks and walkways need to be addressed, this should include more well lit areas
- There is a need for safer parking at community centres for persons taking these walks

- Federal Government funding is required to develop the infrastructure to support 'Active' initiatives

The Committee thanked the delegations for their comments and recommendations on Active Communities in Vancouver.

4. Sport Strategies Update

Ajay Patel, Chair, Vancouver Sport Strategy Implementation Committee, and Darren Peterson, Sport Strategy Coordinator, provided an update on the Sport Strategy to the Committee.

The following is a summary of the presentation:

- Vancouver Sports Strategy (VSS) is an initiative supported by the City Council and the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
- Its vision is to ensure that by 2015 Vancouver will have a dynamic and forward looking sports system
- VSS was developed in response to the need for more involvement in sports and physical literacy among Vancouver residents to sustain a healthy lifestyle throughout their lifespan
- It is based on the Canadian Sports For Life (CS4L) framework and came about as a result of the Canadian Sport Policy in 2002
- It includes both recreation and sports activities for juniors, adults and seniors
- VSS would like to act as an advocate for sports in the city advising on the development of sports programs.

Discussion:

The Committee questioned how VSS fits in with the Vancouver Field Sport Federation (VFSF), as the Park Board currently looks to VFSF for guidance on field use and other sports related decisions, and whether VSS would now become the voice for sports. The delegation stated that VSS works together with VFSF; however VSS has a broader perspective. Their connection with neighbouring municipalities, while concentrating their efforts on The City of Vancouver, leads to a greater coordination of effort among municipalities. This cohesion among neighbouring municipalities prevents duplication of facilities and programs. VSS would like to act as an advisory body to the Park Board on sports related matters.

The Committee asked whether the other Metro Vancouver cities that are involved in these initiatives are providing contributions. The delegation stated that neighbouring cities are partners in these initiatives and this connection allows the cities to capitalize on more opportunities as it provides access to a larger network of facilities and infrastructure, as no one city has the capacity to meet all their needs. These other municipalities are not however currently contributing in terms of funding.

The Committee inquired into the current status of the original group of stakeholders established by the Park Board since fall. The delegation informed the Committee that they are currently in the process of determining the roles of stakeholders, in terms of which groups should be allowed to vote at the table especially on matters that do not directly pertain to their particular areas of interest.

The Committee asked when another status update would be available. Staff informed the Committee that the Second Annual Sports Summit will be hosted in October and another update would be provided after this event.

5. Operating Budget – March Statement (to be reported to the Board in June, 2009)

Staff presented the Operating Statement for March 2009. Revenue has decreased by \$0.2 million and expenditure has decreased by \$0.1 million, in comparison to last year. Overall there was a decrease of \$0.1 million in net expenditure when compared to March 2008 (not including the impact of inflation). In all the Park Board is on track with expenditure; however revenue has decreased in comparison to 2008 despite the increase in fees. In order to meet the budgeted total revenue, \$38.9 million has to be generated by the end of 2009.

Discussion:

The Committee asked whether a realistic update on the progress of the budget, in terms of achieving the \$38.9 million target, would be available at the end of summer. Staff stated that based on the past trend approximately 48% of revenue is generated between the months of May to August and the budget status could be determined after this period.

The Committee inquired into the impact of weather conditions on the decrease in revenue. Staff informed the Committee that weather has had a large part to play in the results, for example Fraserview Golf Course was closed for the entire month of January due to the snow and the impact was almost a \$0.3 million revenue loss.

The Committee inquired into whether revenue drops like this have occurred in recent years. Staff informed the Committee that in 2008 there were drops in revenue in the months of April and July which were reported to the Board.

A member of the Committee inquired as to why the situation was not addressed last year and efficiency measures put in place to prevent the situation we are now experiencing. Staff stated that action was taken to address the situation and expenditures were reduced to off set the revenue decline last year. Some of the initiatives that were implemented last year have also been repeated this year to achieve savings.

Staff informed the Committee that they would like to receive direction to determine what should be done to address the budget variance. The Committee inquired into how the loss in revenue could be recouped. Staff informed the Committee that they are increasing marketing in the golf courses to increase usage in the month of September which is

traditionally a low revenue month and members of the media were invited to view the golf course in the hope that this would result in media articles to attract the public.

The Committee stated that further measures need to be taken to reduce expenditures to achieve the savings target for the year, rather than waiting until the end of summer to determine the progress. This may result in unavoidable minimal impacts to service and additional reductions in non-core areas should also be looked at. The Committee questioned the impact of the Council's decision in the elimination of civic purchase of bottled water on the budget and suggested that there be more discussions around this.

The Committee requested that these items be included in the next Services and Budgets Committee meeting, to determine what are core and non-core areas, to find further areas for reducing expenditure, and to discuss the impact of the elimination of bottled water sales.

The Committee questioned if staff is looking at ways to capitalize on the opportunity provided by the current global economic situation to promote the usage of local facilities as an alternative to travelling abroad on vacation. Staff informed the Committee that they have been utilising this opportunity and "Go Play" is one such initiative developed to capitalize on this. There has also been a greater focus on the local market for golf. Staff also mentioned that they have been working closely with Tourism Vancouver to come up with a coordinated strategy.

A Committee member asked whether it would be possible to implement marginal increases in fees for seasonal passes for tour companies. The Committee stated that it may be too late to implement this as these companies are now locked in to the current prices and may have to absorb the loss. The Committee asked whether staff considered increasing parking fees in the park. Staff stated that these fees have already been adjusted to reflect the current market rates.

Staff informed the Committee that various marketing initiatives have been implemented to help in mitigating the impact of lower revenue and more options for reducing expenses and increasing revenue are still being explored. Staff requested that Special Events permits be included as a topic for discussion at the next Services and Budgets Committee meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00pm.

The next Services and Budgets Committee Meeting was re-scheduled to May 26, 2009, at 6:30 pm.

Anita Ho, Director,
Corporate Services

Commissioner Loretta Woodcock,
Chair