

Date: October 14, 2009



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: The Hollow Tree Stabilization Agreement Extension

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board accept the Stanley Park Hollow Tree Conservation Society's request to extend the current term of the agreement with the Board, for the purposes of Hollow Tree stabilization, to December 31, 2009 and

THAT this extension be the last given to the Stanley Park Hollow Tree Conservation Society so that Park Board staff has enough time to ensure a safe condition for the Hollow Tree and complete the landscaping prior to the 2010 Olympic Games.

BACKGROUND

Windstorms starting in December 2006 accelerated the rate of decline of the Hollow Tree (snag) in Stanley Park. In November 2007 staff responding to an increasing rate of lean of the snag, fenced the site off and retained a structural engineer to examine stabilizing solutions to render the snag safe for public examination.

On March 31, 2008, the Board received a staff report on the Hollow Tree and passed the following resolution:

“THAT the Board approve the taking down of the Hollow Tree as it has become a public safety concern.”

Following a presentation from a sub-committee of the Vancouver Heritage Commission on June 9, 2008, the following motion was put to the Board and was defeated:

“THAT the Board reconsider the decision made at the March 31, 2008 Park Board meeting regarding the Hollow Tree.”

At the Board meeting of July 7, 2008, a motion was raised under new business and was passed by the Board:

“WHEREAS there has been concern about the Hollow Tree being taken down in Stanley Park; and

WHEREAS the Vancouver Park Board has previously voted to have the Hollow Tree taken down; and

WHEREAS the Vancouver Park Board needs an engineering report confirming that the Hollow Tree can be stabilized and made safe in an upright position on its current site;

THEREFORE be it resolved that the Board delay taking down the tree for 150 days to allow for a committee chaired by Lorne Whitehead to obtain from an independent engineering firm a suitable answer to maintain the Hollow Tree in its current location in an upright position within 90 days, and the committee has a further 60 days to raise funds required to implement an approved plan; and

Be it further resolved that the Board will not provide any funds for the retention of the Hollow Tree in its present position.”

As a result, staff ceased work on the Hollow Tree, leaving behind a structurally engineered steel attachment collar for temporary external bracing and two internal wood diaphragms to hold the separated members to the trunk together and prevent their collapse when the snag was being moved.

Subsequently, the Stanley Park Hollow Tree Conservation Society began the work on the Hollow Tree as outlined in their report to the Board entitled “Conservation Plan for Stanley Park’s Hollow Tree”.

Wooden braces were attached to the previously installed collar to temporarily stabilize the tree, and the overgrowing hemlock tree was felled and disentangled from the remaining Hollow Tree root structure. This root structure was partially excavated and examined.

On October 27, 2008, the Board formally received the report from the Conservation Society and passed the following motion:

“THAT the Board receive the following report for information, and encourage the Stanley Park Hollow Tree Conservation Society;

- 1. to continue fundraising;*
- 2. to prepare the required structural engineering report (with a seal of certification) on the entire project including:
 - a. methodology for straightening the Hollow Tree*
 - b. plans and specifications for the structure required to maintain the tree in a safe, vertical position**
- 3. to submit a final report for the Board at least two weeks prior to the end of the 60 day fundraising period (December 4, 2008); at which time the Board can consider approval of the concept, having the appropriate background materials in hand.”*

The drawings were emailed by Cascade Engineering to staff on December 4, and were reviewed and considered achievable by the City Engineering Department.

In January 2009, the Board approved the design for realigning and permanently stabilizing the Hollow Tree in Stanley Park via the following motion:

- A. *THAT the Board approve the attached design by Cascade Engineering Group for the realigning and permanent stabilizing of the Hollow Tree in Stanley Park*
- B. *THAT the Board encourage the Stanley Park Hollow Tree Conservation Society to complete their fundraising for the Hollow Tree stabilization*

The Society entered into a Licence Agreement dated March 26, 2009 in order to start work on this project. The Society estimated that the work would be completed by July 31, 2009.

The Stanley Park Hollow Tree Conservation Society project took longer than anticipated and a revised completion date was estimated to be September 30, 2009, two months later than originally estimated. The key reasons for the delay were technical challenges and availability of professional services volunteers.

An extension of two months was approved by the Board at a special meeting on August 10, 2009 to allow the Society to complete this work.

On August 28, 2009, a letter was signed by Park Board General Manager, Susan Mundick, and Harold Kalman, representing the Stanley Park Hollow Tree Conservation Society, extending the term of the Stanley Park Hollow Tree Restoration project until September 30, 2009.

DISCUSSION

The Stanley Park Hollow Tree Conservation Society contacted the Park Board in August 2009 requesting a meeting to discuss the progress of the restoration project. On August 28, 2009, Commissioner Jasper and Park Board staff met with Lorne Whitehead, Harold Kalman and Doug Campbell, representing the Stanley Park Hollow Tree Conservation Society.

Mr. Kalman outlined that the Society was experiencing further construction challenges resulting from delays in engineering re-design and steel fabrication, and availability of professional services volunteers. He also stated that work had lost momentum because of limited funding and the Society was forecasting a shortfall of approximately \$32,000.

In order to complete the Hollow Tree Restoration project, the Society asked if the Board would consider funding the remaining work necessary. Mr. Kalman identified the Forest Reserve Fund, capital generated from log sales after the 2006 windstorm, as a source.

Park board staff explained that this fund is dedicated to the forest regeneration management of the blow down areas in Stanley Park and 100% of it has been allocated. Commissioner Jasper expressed the budget restraints that the Park Board is facing and reiterated the motion passed by the Board on July 7, 2009 that:

“ Be it further resolved that the board will not provide any funds for the retention of the Hollow Tree in its present position.”

He added that, though the Board would not fund any of the Stanley Park Hollow Tree Conservation Society’s restoration work, Park Board staff have assumed the responsibility of repairing the landscape in the Hollow Tree area.

Mr. Campbell indicated that the Society would require a further extension to the Term of the Stanley Park Hollow Tree project.

On September 29, 2009, Park Board staff received a revised schedule from the Society for completion of the Hollow Tree Restoration Project. They are asking for a further extension of three months.

SUMMARY

The Stanley Park Hollow Tree Conservation Society has made substantial progress in their efforts to stabilize the Hollow Tree but there is still significant work to be completed. The Society’s challenges with their fund raising efforts and construction delays have prolonged the unsightly, under construction image of the Hollow Tree stabilization work area in Stanley Park. Staff recommends that the requested extension to the term of the Stanley Park Hollow Tree Restoration Project be given, as substantial work has been done to date but that this would be that last extension awarded to the Society. With the many people visiting the City of Vancouver and Stanley Park for the 2010 Olympics, time is needed in January for staff to ensure a safe condition for the Hollow Tree and complete the landscaping around the Hollow Tree in advance of the Games.

Prepared by:
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PK/bq