

From: **"Mochrie, Paul" <Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca>**

To: **"Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"**

Date: 7/2/2021 4:49:37 PM

Subject: Memo: Proposed sculpture for False Creek near Stamps Landing, Boy with a Shark

Attachments: image001.png

ACCS-ENG GM Memo (Mayor & Council ) Proposed Vancouver Biennale Public Art Project - Boy Holding a Shark (2021-06-30).pdf

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Dear Mayor & Council,

The attached memo from Sandra Singh, General Manager, Arts, Culture and Community Services and Lon LaClaire, General Manager, Engineering Services, regarding the proposed sculpture for False Creek near Stamps Landing, Boy with a Shark. Key points:

- Vancouver Biennale has proposed a sculpture for a City-owned plaza near Stamps Landing.
- Reviews are currently made only on a technical basis, led by Engineering with input from the Public Art program.
- The project has drawn considerable public attention and comment, which pointed to certain constraints of the proposed site.
- Due to technical considerations, the proposed site is not suitable.
- City staff will continue to work with Vancouver Biennale to identify a site for Boy Holding a Shark.
- City staff are developing a temporary projects policy that will clarify City processes and allow for adjudication of future proposals.

Should you have any questions, please contact Sandra directly, at [Sandra.Singh@vancouver.ca](mailto:Sandra.Singh@vancouver.ca) or Lon directly at [Lon.LaClaire@vancouver.ca](mailto:Lon.LaClaire@vancouver.ca) and they will ensure they are responded to through the weekly Council questions process.

Best,

Paul

**Paul Mochrie** (he/him)

City Manager

City of Vancouver

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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam), Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

## MEMORANDUM

June 30, 2021

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager  
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager  
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk  
Lynda Graves, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office  
Maria Pontikis, Director, Civic Engagement and Communications  
Anita Zaenker, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office  
Neil Monckton, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office  
Alvin Singh, Communications Director, Mayor's Office  
Branislav Henselmann, Managing Director, Cultural Services, Arts, Culture & Community Services

FROM: Sandra Singh, General Manager, Arts, Culture and Community Services  
Lon LaClaire, General Manager, Engineering Services

SUBJECT: Proposed Vancouver Biennale Public Art Project "Boy Holding a Shark" on False Creek South Seawall East of Stamps Landing

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### Purpose

This memo is to provide a status report on the City review of the Vancouver Biennale (VB) public art project *Boy Holding a Shark*, proposed for installation on the False Creek South Seawall east of Stamps Landing. This is one of several VB public art exhibits that Engineering Services (Engineering) and Arts, Culture and Community Services (ACCS) have been working on. This particular project has received a very large amount of public feedback and significant attention in the media.

### Summary

Engineering and ACCS have completed an internal review of this site also incorporating relevant comments received from members of the public. Engineering and ACCS staff do not recommend approving *Boy Holding a Shark* at this site due to the issues brought forth from this review. Staff will respond to VB and work with them to identify and review other potential locations.

## **Background**

### *About the Vancouver Biennale*

Vancouver International Open Spaces Sculpture Biennale is a non-profit charitable organization that exhibits art in public space across the Lower Mainland and other Canadian cities. Historically, most installations were in parks, but in recent years VB has focused on City land. In 2021, two art projects have been installed and one is currently being created under the Cambie Bridge. *Boy Holding a Shark* is the fourth and last art project that the City is working with VB on in this cycle.

### *Overview of Proposed Site*

The proposed site for *Boy Holding a Shark* is on the South False Creek Seawall, which carries high volumes of people walking and cycling, especially in the summer. The specific location is approximately 60m east of Stamps Landing where there is a promontory with benches and landscaping. Engineering completed safety improvements on the seawall here in 2018 to separate walking and cycling paths to help reduce pedestrian/cycling conflicts. Please refer to the attachment for site map and photos.

### *Public Art Review Process*

The City does not have a formal policy for reviewing external proposals for temporary public art installations on City land. Current process includes no adjudication or other qualitative review of proposals, no oversight by Public Art Committee, and no formal process for review. The practices currently in place centre on technical review led by Engineering in consultation with ACCS and other internal stakeholders. Engineering manages approximately four projects a year through this process.

## **Discussion**

### *Review Process for Boy Holding a Shark*

Engineering and ACCS began a detailed internal review of the proposed site for *Boy Holding a Shark* in April 2020. Two significant issues were raised through this review: the interaction between the public art and the seawall traffic and the integration of the art within the public realm.

Given the scale of the artwork, the proposed location does not provide a safe place for the public to take in the sculpture at its full scale. Views to the sculpture would primarily be available from the seawall paths, conflicting with pedestrian and cyclist movement and creating safety issues related to pedestrian/cyclist conflicts. This is a significant issue that cannot be resolved.

Public realm integration is a key review component taken into consideration for any type of infrastructure whether it be public art or a utility pole. Consideration is given to how the component, the public art in this case, fits within the surrounding topography. The height of this piece at 7.8m would be 3 to 4m higher than the surrounding landscape thus not integrating with its surroundings.

In addition to the internal review, the Biennale was asked to notify nearby residents and users of the seawall in order to provide an opportunity for comments. The City received 213 comments in response. These comments were tracked and relevant issues raised were addressed in the technical review.

### *Summary of Key Comments*

- Safety:
  - Adjacent cycling path is narrow and has a blind curve
  - Plaza is small and surrounding area has congestion issues
  - Covid-19 physical distancing concerns
- Impact:
  - Siting would negatively impact current users of the space (seniors, daycare children, families, and homeless individuals)
  - Artwork lacks relevance to the site and the neighbourhood
- Scale/Height of Artwork:
  - Size of artwork overpowering; too large for the mini-park setting
  - Artwork scale intrusive on the natural landscape
  - Height of artwork too tall to view from plaza; will limit viewing to pedestrian and cycling paths

In addition, a petition generated in opposition to the installation at this site and titled “Stop False Creek South Sculpture!” was submitted to the City on May 14, with approximately 1500 signatures.

### *Results of Assessment*

Engineering and ACCS do not support the proposed site for *Boy Holding a Shark* due to the technical constraints of the site and the public realm integration.

### *Future Considerations*

The attention drawn by the proposed installation and comments received by the City have emphasized gaps in the current City processes for permitting public art uses of City lands:

- The lack of an established policy leaves current processes unclear and non-transparent for organizations working with the City
- Lack of clear intake process and deadlines for applications leaves City staff unable to manage workload and ensure timely processing of applications
- Lack of standards for length of installations has reduced faith in the community that temporary projects will indeed be temporary
- Need for clearly articulated adjudication process to make qualitative judgments, align proposals with City goals (e.g. *Culture|Shift*), and ensure appropriate use of public space

Given this, staff are planning a temporary pause of consideration of new regular proposals for temporary public art installations on City property until a policy can be developed. Staff will continue to work on proposals currently in process but pause intake of new proposals barring exceptional circumstances (such as the temporary commemorations of Residential Schools now

underway). The goal would be to have a policy in place in time for a late 2021 intake of applications, looking ahead to the following summer.

### Next Steps

- Following distribution of this internal memo, Engineering will follow up with VB with the decision and rationale for not supporting this site, and will offer full support for working with them on other potential locations for *Boy Holding a Shark*.
- Members of the community who have contacted the City about this proposed installation will be informed of this decision.
- Communications staff are informed of the project and will be able to support with further media inquiries as they are made.
- Key messages:
  - The City supports organizations wishing to temporary install public art works on City land
  - Due to technical considerations, the proposed site is not suitable
  - City staff will continue to work with Vancouver Biennale to identify a site for *Boy Holding a Shark*
  - City staff are developing a temporary projects policy that will clarify City processes and allow for adjudication of future proposals.

### Final Remarks

Public art plays an important role in the life of the City, integrating the work of artists into daily life and reflecting complexities of place, publics and culture. The attention drawn by this proposal has highlighted challenges with the current lack of formal policy on temporary installations. City staff commit to move forward in developing a policy that brings clarity to the process and allows for careful consideration of new projects.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact us directly.



Lon LaClaire, M.Eng., P.Eng.  
General Manager, Engineering Services

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Sandra Singh  
General Manager,  
Arts, Culture and Community Services

604.871.6858 | [sandra.singh@vancouver.ca](mailto:sandra.singh@vancouver.ca)

Proposed Vancouver Biennale Public Art Project "Boy Holding a Shark" – Site Map and Photos



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Dimensions:

7.8m height x 1.8m diameter at top x  
0.85m diameter at base

(25½' h x 5'11" d at top x 2'9" d at base)

