



March 28, 2019

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

FROM : Malcolm Bromley
General Manager, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT : **Centerm Expansion Project – Board Briefing Memo**

Dear Commissioners,

The purpose of this memo is to provide you with background information and an update on the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority's (VFPA) Centerm Expansion Project, to summarize the potential impacts to CRAB Park, and to identify potential park enhancements using the VFPA's community investment.

Background

Since 2015, Park Board staff have been working closely with City staff in assessing, understanding, and providing feedback on VFPA's Centerm Expansion Project submissions. This has included two In Camera Board reports and three Board Briefing memos to keep Commissioners apprised of the process and directions.

Centerm is a container loading facility owned by the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority. It is leased to and operated by DP World. It is located approximately 350m northeast of CRAB Park. The proposed Centerm Expansion Project will increase the size of the terminal area by 4.6 ha, expanding the associated transportation network to increase the container handling capacity.

CRAB Park at Portside is leased to the City of Vancouver by VFPA. It is the only park close to the heavily urbanized Downtown Eastside neighbourhood that provides access to the water. It is known for its panoramic views of the harbour and North Shore Mountains. The park is popular with local residents and has a viewing pier, beach, playground, and washroom. The park also contains a memorial to missing and murdered women.

Jurisdiction and Review Process

Development activities by federal agencies, including VFPA, are exempt from municipal government oversight and regulation. The project does not require a Development Permit from the City of Vancouver and is not required to pay Development Cost Levies (DCLs) or other charges typical to other forms of development in the city.

Marine jurisdiction in the Inner Harbour is federal (including intertidal zone to high water mark, seabed, water column, fish, and navigation), based on the Six Harbours Agreement (1924). The Province of BC does not have jurisdiction in the Inner Harbour.

The Vancouver Fraser Port Authority manages its own environmental assessment process, including public engagement, under its responsibilities defined by the Canada Marine Act. Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and Environment Canada also regulate some aspects of the review and permitting process.



The Province of BC's Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) exempted the Centerm Expansion Project from an additional Environmental Assessment (EA). The EAO stated "because the PER review for CEP [the assessment by VFPA] is sufficiently similar to the EAO's EA review process in scope and rigour, a requirement to also undergo an EAO EA review would be an unnecessary duplication of process".

Potential Impacts to CRAB Park

In 2017, Park Board staff reviewed a large number of documents submitted as part of the VFPA's project and environmental review process for the Centerm Expansion Project. The focus of the review was to identify potential impacts to experiential or environmental values in CRAB Park from expansion of the terminal, including shoreline or adjacent marine areas.

The potential impacts identified include:

- Visual impacts: Loss or changes to important views from CRAB Park;
- Acoustic (noise) impacts: Increase in noise in CRAB Park from industrial activity;
- Water quality and tidal flushing: Degradation of marine water quality from release of contaminants from terminal construction, operation, or changes to tidal flushing; and
- Impacts to fish and wildlife: Reduced fish and wildlife habitat that limit access to nature in or near CRAB Park.

Park Board staff did not review impacts to safety, transportation, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, and heritage values. These issues were reviewed by the City of Vancouver or Metro Vancouver Regional District staff with more technical experience or regulatory authority.

Preferred Improvements to CRAB Park

While not required as part of a development review process, VFPA proposed a voluntary community investment during their public engagement process in February 2016 for the Centerm project. In its public engagement in May 2017, VFPA proposed that 50% of the community investment would go to improvements to CRAB Park because of the importance of the park to the community and public concern about potential impacts to the park. The overall value of the investment has not officially been defined or communicated. However, VFPA have communicated to City and Park Board staff that the total community investment will be significantly below staff's initial expectations.

Following the In Camera Park Board meeting held on May 15, 2017, the General Manager and Board Chair jointly wrote to the VFPA (Tim Blair) to identify potential improvement projects to offset potential impacts to CRAB Park from the Centerm Expansion Project, and to request an opportunity to discuss these options in more detail (see attached). This letter identified the expansion of CRAB Park into the undeveloped VFPA-owned lands to the west of the existing park as the preferred mitigating action. This enhancement would mitigate lost views of Burrard Inlet and the North Shore, and additionally would best advance key Park Board priorities such as:

- supporting Downtown Eastside vulnerable populations through equitable access to high quality greenspace (the Downtown Eastside is park deficient);
- creating and enhancing shoreline habitat (supporting the Park Board's Biodiversity Strategy); and
- supporting the city-wide focus of expanding waterfront park access.



Other enhancement options identified were:

- Improvements to park facilities such as paths, recreation features, seating areas, planting and beach areas, and shoreline facilities;
- Improvements to access and transportation to better connect CRAB Park to the surrounding neighbourhood and other parks; and
- Marine habitat enhancement including intertidal and subtidal areas.

The receipt of this letter was acknowledged by VFPA (Tim Blair) on June 15, 2017 via email. On January 24, 2018, a more comprehensive response was provided by Tim Blair. It included the statement: “expansion of the park, changes of use or additional connections to the park to/from the west are not being contemplated at this time, but the Park Board's interest in these matters is acknowledged. It is expected that the City would engage with the Park Board on future planning processes for the Central Waterfront area”.

Current Update

In January of this year, VFPA informed City staff that the major permits are now in place and detailed design was about to begin. Physical construction work on land is expected to begin in May or June 2019, and it is anticipated that the project will be completed by 2021. More details can be found on the Port of Vancouver's [Centerm Expansion Project website](#), including an [illustrative construction timeline](#).

In January of this year, the VFPA again communicated to City staff that a community investment would be provided as part of the Centerm Expansion Project, with 50% provided for improvements to CRAB Park. The magnitude of the community investment has still not been publically announced by VFPA.

Park Board staff recommended that a community investment for CRAB Park could be best used to renew the playground and fence the off-leash area to provide safe separation from other park uses. It is important to note that this was identified as a preliminary recommendation and the Park Board would review and approve once there has been formal commitment from VFPA on the value of the community investment.

Staff are anticipating more information will be forthcoming from VFPA through the City of Vancouver, and that potential opportunities to address Park Board priorities, as noted above, will exist with future planning processes for the Central Waterfront area.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm Bromley'.

Malcolm Bromley
General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

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Copy to: PB Senior Leadership Team
PB Communications