

## VanSplash Advisory Group Meeting Three

February 13, 2019, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Vancouver City Hall

**Members in attendance:** Anthony Abrahams, Jean Campbell, Kaye Chapman, Michael DiPietro, Dale Edwards, Abby Ferris, Samantha Garrett, Igor Kopecky, Carol Martin, Bronwen Mears, Anthony Mehnert, Barry Morris, Stevie Nguyen, Charles Tai, Arthur Tsai, Jarrett Vaughan, Peter Wong

**Regrets:** Cliff Cheng, Catherine Rose, Marianne Wieland de Alvarez

**Park Board staff presenters:** Leila Todd, VanSplash Project Manager

**City of Vancouver staff presenters:** Matt Halverson, Facilities Planning; Michel Desrochers, Long-Term Financial Planning

**Other Presenters:** Melissa Higgs, HCMA Architecture + Design

**Third-party facilitator and notetaker:** Jennifer Miller, Emina Dervisevic

### Summary of Meeting

#### Welcome, agenda review and housekeeping:

- Facilitator reviewed the agenda – purpose of the meeting is to provide information that the Advisory Group needs to undertake its work to review and comment on the DRAFT VanSplash strategy
- International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Core Values – Value 6: “public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way”.
- A lot of information to take in, participants are encouraged to do whatever they need to do to be comfortable
- Facilitator reviewed the Advisory Group meetings Code of Conduct
- Review of the Facilitator role – IAP2 Code of Ethics
  - Advocacy: We will advocate for the public participation process and will not advocate for interest, party or project outcome.
- Leila: Emails with regards to VanSplash received in the past, but they were about the Advisory Group recruitment process; today a phone call was received; the individual had many concerns about VanSplash and some about the facilities tour – why a mix of facilities from Vancouver and other municipalities and why the aquatic tour minutes are not posted yet; procurement process. Leila explained that concerns would be brought to the Advisory Group.
- Other concerns the individual had:
  - Value of indoor and outdoor neighbourhood pools across the City
  - Wants the focus to be on all the pools – indoor and outdoor pools
- If anyone is willing and interested in connecting with this person, Leila can connect the members with this person.

#### Facilities tour highlights and reflections:

- Jennifer (facilitator) provided copies of the report, which covers what pools were visited, and information about the pools visited.
- Participants were invited to share their opinions in response to three questions:

- *What stood out to you from the facilities tour?*
- *Highlights in terms of learning/observations?*
- *A-ha moments?*
- Advisory Group member: from the Surrey visit, what became clear was that Surrey values their outdoor pools and that they are free for patrons (they have 6 indoor pools, and 8 outdoor pools).
- Advisory Group member: Surrey outdoor pools are operated privately and not by the municipality (i.e. operation is contracted out)
- Advisory Group member: I went back to the Guildford pool and really noticed it has no natural light, and it is awkward to move through the building if you are observing. I also noticed that the sky bridge feature was not used much at all while I was there.
- Advisory Group member: It is important to remember that Guildford facility had a few phases of work – first, it was a community centre, then library, and then it was developed as a pool.
- Advisory Group member: Edmonds had a deeper area in the leisure area that was accessible and had lanes on the side; my a-ha moment was: “OMG, Kerrisdale is in a bad shape.”
- Advisory Group member: My learning is that there is a good way and bad way to spend the money on facilities; UBC is a bad way, Guildford was a good use of money for the facility (besides the fact that they didn’t have much deck space); Surrey pools are one and two years old, and most of our facilities are 20+ years (Kerrisdale was built in the 1950s).
- Advisory Group member: UBC was a bit of a show-stopper; I swim there a lot, why is it a bad way to spend money?
- Advisory Group member: They built their pool as a training facility, but then they ran out of money, no deck space, no spectator space; they didn’t think about all the capabilities – they have a 51 m pool with one bulkhead; if they had 52 m with two bulk heads, it would be much more meaningful / flexible; where do all of the athletes go when they are not in the pool? Outside or in the gym space – that is not a good experience for athletes; it is so disconnected.
- Advisory Group member: There are a lot of things to learn from that pool - the competition aspect drove the development, but a few things should be noted – during the day there is tremendous natural light; in the evenings, it feels like you are in the laboratory (in Hillcrest, they have beautifully brought in wood and natural light, etc.); also, having a 50m pool, and a 25m pool, and a hot tub, the usage of the facility is fantastic; every day of the week you could swim 50 m; they satisfied a lot of different needs.
- Advisory Group member: UBC was a little lower in construction cost than Guildford; based on what they spent, they got good value.
- Advisory Group member: I did the calculation, and every pool is losing money except for Edmonds (what are they doing correctly so that they are on the positive?); Guildford is losing around \$2 million (why are they losing money?). *(Facilitator note: As per the information shared during the facilities tour and included in the tour report, the Guildford pool operating costs are approx. \$3.3 million and revenue is approx. \$1.5 million)*
- Advisory Group member: It was explained that they off-set the \$2 million by the rec centre and the library.
- Jennifer: For Edmonds the pool costs number provided didn’t include some of the building overhead; we couldn’t get the same numbers as other facilities to compare apples with apples. *(Facilitator note: Following the meeting, staff at the Edmonds facility also clarified that “the revenue for the pool is also*

*not 100% for the pool alone. We sell BActive passes that give you access to the weight room, fitness, etc. All the revenue goes into the pool's account. Some people buy passes and never use the pool. So technically, some of that revenue is for the 'dry' side only.")*

- Advisory Group member: There are very few pools with high dive boards; if Canada wants Olympic champions, we need high dive boards.
- Advisory Group member: I am not a diver, but I feel the same way; if you are going to attract elite athletes to your community or your facility, there is a need for high dive boards.
- Advisory Group member: Was it explained at the UBC tour, why they didn't build a high diving board?
- Response: Cost.
- Advisory Group member: I just had the realization of how old the facilities are that people are holding on to; the community is so fearful of losing the facilities because nothing has been built in a long time.

### **Aquatics planning and service delivery presentation + Q&A**

- Leila: Just a reminder that – as valuable as design suggestions are – it is important to stay focused on the planning; through this process I am happy to work with D+A and collect your design suggestions and pass them on to colleagues that work on design of the facilities. However, VanSplash is a planning strategy and planning is the focus of this group.
- Leila: Also, I heard questions through the tour about the consultant that was hired to develop the VanSplash strategy, and there was interest in knowing about consultants hired for the facilities we saw or who will be leading the design of new facilities. We don't know when and who will be building those buildings. There is a procurement process and future consultants will also be hired through a restricted procurement process based on their expertise.
- Lastly, engagement doesn't stop with the Advisory Group; the work that the Advisory Group does will be part of the engagement input, but site-specific engagement will continue as the process gets to that stage. For example, if planning for a new facility is underway, there will be additional engagement with that community.
- Presentation by Leila Todd:
  - The purpose of planning strategy (why plan), and what to consider and balance;
  - Explanation of the planning process (municipalities want to provide the best services to the people – optimum service levels);
  - Review of gaps – informed by equity and social justice, but not just that; also, which facilities are carrying most of the burden, and which facilities are not fulfilling the needs;
  - Like we went on our aquatic tour, municipalities learn from each other + but also include own municipal experience;
  - Regulatory framework – talking about building code, BC Public Health Act, Vancouver Coastal Health etc.
  - Engagement will come as different components; we hear from so many people – our residents, our Commissioners, Council; we need to be aware of population changes and other considerations;
  - How to get to a Strategy – we collaborate with a number of City groups and there are many factors considered.
  - Demographic analysis - 40% of population lives in the blue (high-density) area of the city (Downtown and surrounding areas);

- Why do people use aquatics? As a core business for municipalities, we provide aquatics because people need to learn a skill (not to drown);
- Geographic analysis – For example service gaps are in the South of the city for indoor pools
- Facility analysis - Renfrew, Killarney and Hillcrest – the best utilized facilities currently; operating efficiency? Vancouver Aquatic Centre – \$4.35 (subsidy per swim) and Kensington - \$0.76 (subsidy per swim)
- How can facilities provide what is needed? Capacity is set as a target for frequency of swims;
- VanSplash developed a target – the target is five swims/capita (every person in Vancouver swimming five times a year); this is an aspirational target. We find across Canada that smaller communities tend to see swims per capita of 7-8, where in urban centres the number is closer to 3-4. The VanSplash target of 5 swims per capita would be approximately 3.3 million swims in 2016, and approximately 3.8 million swims in 2041;
- Target setting is a tool for measuring progress, we all set targets to achieve a goal and during the process we consider quality of experience as well.
- Operational Considerations: Staff work 24 hours (pools get cleaned, water gets changed overnight; important to think of all these operational considerations, we receive feedback from operations staff on how things are working and what things are not working);
- Advisory Group member: The emphasis is on the subsidy, but this is a public facility, and a public good warrants some kind of subsidy or other; a subsidy should be a consideration, but it shouldn't be the idea of how to succeed or not;
- Leila: subsidy is just a terminology used to explain what matches revenue to cover costs. Costs are one more lens for evaluation; in the municipal world, we need to be responsible to the public in terms of how we use money.
- Advisory Group member: VAC numbers are not accurate because none of the training swimmers ever swipe a card;
- Leila: There is always a +/- range of uncertainty with data, but we have to consider what we have. The point is also to see the trend amongst facilities.
- Matt: this is quite right; when we look at VAC, we understand that some facilities may require a higher subsidy. I agree with the Advisory Member who spoke previously that it is ok that swims are subsidized. Community pools are not expected to be a money-makers - if they were we would see more privately-operated pools. It is important that if we are investing in a facility at a higher rate that we are doing it with eyes wide open because the facility delivers on strategic objectives;
- Leila: The revenue data does not include only passes; there are other ways of looking at income generating; old pools are also less efficient;
- Advisory Group Member: Why does the presentation not focus on beaches? Are beaches not included as part of this process?
- Leila: Beaches were not covered in the presentation as examples because the VanSplash Advisory Group was brought together to address issues raised in Board meetings; but beaches are also part of the strategy and part of the work of this group, should the members like to discuss them
- Jennifer: the Advisory Group is tasked with reviewing and providing input on all of the VanSplash recommendations, and that includes beaches, spray parks, etc. It will be up to the group to decide where to focus its work when we start getting into the recommendations.

- Advisory Group member: Everything comes down to how much money we have to build the pools – why are we not looking for community sponsorships – local business people, donations for pools, etc.

### Capital planning and facilities management, and overview of Vancouver aquatics facilities presentation:

Presentation by Michel Desrochers:

- The difference between ‘capital’ (relates to the physical infrastructure) and ‘operating’ (relates to the range of activities that deliver services);
- Explanation how pools fit into the wide range of assets owned by the City:
  - Classification: the City’s assets are classified in four major groups (streets & sidewalks, underground pipes, buildings, and parks & open spaces); pools are classified as buildings;
  - Replacement value: all City assets account for approximately \$26 billion; with pools accounting for approximately \$0.4 billion of this total;
- Important to be aware that non-City partners are also involved in owning aquatics infrastructure and offering aquatic services (e.g. YMCA/YWCA);
- Three fundamental goals for capital planning: renew aging capital assets, add new or expand existing capital assets to serve population growth; change capital assets to respond to new needs and policies;
- City’s Capital Planning Framework: 30-year vision, 10-year strategic outlook, 4-year plan and 1-year budget; in the last decade, a significant amount of efforts has been placed on improving the longer term (10-yr and 30-yr timeframes);
- Having a good understanding of historical trends is a very helpful tool when planning the future;
- It is important to understand the ‘geography of service delivery’ when planning out a network: is the service primarily local in nature? district (several communities at a time) in nature? city-wide in nature? regional (Metro Vancouver) in nature? is it a mix of these?
- It’s important to review the location and size of facilities when renewing them – this is not something new and recent examples involving change of location include the City Archives (currently underway), Hillcrest Centre and Library (2010), Mt. Pleasant Centre and Library (2009), Central Library (1995);
- Financial literacy – “who pays” (City contributions, development contributions, partner contributions) and “when to pay” (reserves, pay-as-you-go, debt);
- From a system perspective – think what will work for citizens today and well into the future; it will be a long process to renew, expand and enhance the pool network; not all answers need to be made in 2019.
- Advisory Group member: When building aquatics facilities, should we be thinking about co-locating with additional services – ice rink, library, etc.?
- Michel: The City explores two basic ideas when renewing existing facilities or building new facilities: co-location (a building with multiple uses) and functional integration (if two or more uses are co-located in a building, can the building be planned and designed in a way that allows the uses to evolve over time without having to perform major building interventions/renovations?). When it makes sense, the City will pursue co-location and there are many examples of co-location in Vancouver (e.g. Hillcrest Centre, Firehall Library). Functional integration is currently an emerging field for the City, and it may shape how future facilities are planned and designed. Swimming pools are ideal for co-location, but are more challenging when it comes to functional integration because pool spaces are highly specialized. Final note: the vast majority of uses in City facilities need to be subsidized, thus there are few opportunities to co-locate with a ‘revenue-generating’ use.

#### Presentation by Matt Halverson: real estate facilities management

- At the forefront for the City is to lead by example – we hold ourselves to a higher standard in terms of building inclusive, accessible, and sustainable facilities. We test higher standards on our own facilities before requiring external bodies to meet the same objectives; the City is thinking long-term; we are long-term building owners and are making decisions based on economic, environmental, and social resilience;
- CoV Facilities Planning Framework – the City owns 650 facilities that are managed by service group. Buildings required to deliver services are considered first from a perspective of service need, and then through a series of lenses including geography, facility condition, seismic condition, sustainability, accessibility, and others.
- Part of Facilities Planning's role is to help translate service needs into space needs to inform the facility development;
- Facilities Planning work starts with a clear understanding of service need. The service groups (in this instance the Park Board) are responsible for assessing and communicating service need.
- The aquatic strategy (VanSplash) will inform future processes that establish specific service need. Measurable targets within the strategy are essential in guiding future decisions.
- Different ways of looking at needs – expressed needs, minimum-service level needs, addressing inequity; important to consider that the City has a responsibility to welcome under-served groups and lower barriers – higher investment is required to provide some groups with equitable access;
- Life of a facility – there are multiple steps in the process of development of a facility; from Needs Assessment through Functional Programming and several steps of design and construction; community engagement is built into all steps, so aquatics strategy should be appropriately high-level to inform future decisions and recognize there will be many opportunities to address project-specific concerns
- Aquatics Portfolio – 1970s era of development; most of our aquatics facilities are 40+ years old with two major renewals and one addition having been delivered since 2001.
- Co-location – seek to meet public service needs as efficiently as possible; consider functional co-location with programming efficiencies (locating community centre, library, recreation facilities together for programmatic synergies) vs. heat recovery co-location (capturing waste heat from ice rinks to heat pools).
- There is a change in the service needs expectations – building codes, seismic, Health Act and WorkSafe BC, codes and policies regulating sustainable, accessible and inclusive design; universal bathrooms / changerooms, ramps, natural light, water temperature options, viewing, health and wellness (use of leisure pools by all ages); storage – new things to think about in terms of design.

#### Aquatics best practices, trends and innovation presentation:

##### Presentation by Melissa Higgs, HCMA Architecture

- History of aquatics – in my experience from early childhood, pools were just lane swimming;
- In a westernized culture, the earliest pools were public bathhouses – it was about sanitation, wellness, socializing;
- Slide the City (North Vancouver) – an example of fun, community pride, connecting with neighbours;
- Different ways of looking at aquatics uses – formal, informal, structured and unstructured;

- We are seeing globally that there is an Increased focus on wellness – example: TuWass Aquatic Centre in Germany – this pool provides lane swimming but offers a diversity of leisure and wellness pools in the same facility, including indoor/outdoor pools. This facility also takes the sauna and steam offerings to a whole other level – with different temperatures and meditation/rest areas adjacent to the sauna and steam;
- Public sauna in Finland – café inside it, a public facility that is located along the waterfront and provides direct access to ocean swimming from the facility - connecting sauna and ocean swimming in a climate not dissimilar to ours;
- Having unique experiences is influencing what people’s dreams are around aquatics;
- Social role evolving; community driven;
- How do we broaden the cultural role of aquatics – and can we apply some of this thinking to Vancouver?
- Placemaking (example: an outdoor wading pool in Edmonton that becomes an ice-rink in winter time)
- Harbour decks;
- Natural pools - rely on filtering pool water using plants instead of chlorine - there are hundreds of examples of natural outdoor public pool facilities in Germany, and one in North America (the first) is located in Minneapolis. Our current regulations do not permit natural pools, but we hope this may change over time;
- Expectations will continue to change:
  - Increased social role
  - More niche and experiential aquatic experiences
  - Increasing focus on inclusivity
  - Increasing demands for air and water quality excellence
  - Rising energy costs
- Have to take into consideration how to balance the demand for leisure and wellness, all of these changing expectations, with ongoing demand for more traditional competition and training facilities / uses.

#### **Evaluation, next steps and wrap-up**

- Next meeting is March 11 with a focus on review and comment on the VanSplash Draft Vision and Principles