



**Parks Master Plan Steering Committee
Meeting #1
City Hall Victoria 7:00 p.m.
December 12, 2006**

Present: Councillor Madoff, Larry Hutchins, Vernon Weibe, Dennis Seed, Helen Tremain, Brian Melnyk, Lynette Hebert, Katia Gauvin, Hal Gibbard
Staff: Mike Leskiw, Manager, Parks Division; Gary Darrah, Manager, Park Design; Tricia Bowen, Recording Secretary

Absent: Alison Meyer (ill)

1 Welcome

- Councillor Pamela Madoff welcomed members to the inaugural meeting.

2 Introductions of staff and committee members including contributions

- Each member of the committee introduced themselves and gave a brief background of their interests and areas of expertise.
- Mike Leskiw thanked committee members for joining this steering committee.

Action: Gary Darrah to organize binders for committee members

Action: Gary Darrah to provide the City /Departmental Org Charts for members

3 Review Terms of Reference & Project Timelines for Parks Master Plan

- Gary Darrah reviewed the Terms of Reference
- During the coming months, committee members were asked to provide feedback about challenges, deficiencies, what's working and what's not, goals, recommendations, strategies, management practices, park acquisition, public use of lands not owned or operated by the City (eg school lands)
- Members asked to review committee responsibilities
- Staff will be facilitating and minute taking during meetings

Discussions took place about

- Logistics, committee operations, meeting schedule
- How focused does group want to be
- Should the group look at opening up discussions beyond parks setting
- Should the master plan include open space as well as parks? (eg greens on Harris Green area, greenways, etc.)
- Defining 'parks' – will it include small pocket parks, greenways
- How a public survey will be undertaken - hire a consultant?
- Staff time involved, budget for committee
- Consideration for safety, seniors and people with disabilities who use parks
- Linkage with the recreation and community services delivery model (formerly recreation renewal)
- Communication with sports organizations re sports fields involvement
- Programming
- Possible walking tours within parks

Timelines for Steering Committee

- Meetings will happen over next year, scheduled for two Tuesdays/month
- Depending on progress made during the year the task may be finished at the end of 2007 or the committee may be required to continue into 2008.
- A tour of the parks in the City will take place in the near year.
- Once completed the Parks Master Plan will go to Council for adoption. This will also require a change to the Official Community Plan.

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Overview of Parks Division

Staff reviewed some recent departmental initiatives including

- FIFA Under 20 Soccer coming in July 2007
- Beacon Hill Spray Park development
- Ross Bay Cemetery improvements
- Tax Boulevard Program
- Street Tree Management Plan and connection with the urban forest
- Dogs in Parks committee work
- Pesticide Bylaw

Discussions took place about the process, efficiency, objectives, conflicting programming in parks and playing fields and the need for a comprehensive list of present parks.

ACTION: Gary Darrah to provide list of parks within City and bordering parks in other municipalities.

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What is a Parks Master Plan?

Staff reviewed particulars and a power point presentation with mission statement, vision and an overview. Items for possible consideration are:

- Current policies - but it was noted that this was not the major focus
- Dogs in Parks - Phase 1 is now under evaluation
- Sports Field Policy
- Community Garden Policy
- Parks Preservation
- Parks Bylaw
- Beacon Hill Management Plan
- Heritage Management Plan
- Ross Bay Cemetery Management Plan

Copies of the above are available on the City of Victoria website.

Staff further explained that this is a system wide planning exercise, identifying general public needs and priorities, stewardship. It will be the overall blueprint for many years and forms the foundation for more specific plans and procedures, which will require periodic updating. The plan will be used by staff and has a life of 10 years.

Key focus areas:

- Existing inventory
- Acquisitions
- Park facilities and amenities
- Parks operations and maintenance
- Park administration
- Consultation of stakeholders – identify who they are
- Budget and staff requirements and resources

Input from many citizens and stakeholders is expected and necessary, as part of the public survey. The committee must balance off conflicting uses that arise (eg sports fields in portions of parks, natural areas management, etc)

Outcomes

- Parks staff and Council need to know what the City is doing well, not doing well, what is should be doing
- There is a need key recommendations for next several years

Councillor Madoff added that citizens seem to be happy with the ways parks are being operated at the current time. She is hoping to confirm that through the survey results.

ACTION: Gary Darrah to email Summary Notes from first public meeting held in January and June 06.

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Brainstorming and discussion

Committee members discussed who they should be contacting throughout the process:

- Neighbourhood Associations
- Parks, Recreation & Community Services Advisory Committee Chair (Pam Grant)
- Friends of Beacon Hill Park and Friends of Summit Park
- Sports user groups
- Community Association Network (CAN) Note: not all neighbourhood associations are involved with CAN)
- General Public
- Victoria naturalist societies
- Cemetery Society
- Heritage and historical groups
- People with disabilities – Integration Victoria, Resource Centre
- Gorge Waterway Veins of Life Society
- Victoria Harbour Authority
- First Nations
- Schools
- YM-YWCA, Boys and Girls Club - engage youth as well as staff
- Skateboard park users
- Other municipalities – Parks
- Business community, Urban Development Institute
- Tourism Victoria
- Fitness clubs in hotels around the Inner Harbour
- Cedar Hill Golf Course (trail)
- Galloping Goose Trail
- Seniors
- Recreational groups, boot camps, program coordinators
- Cycling Coalition + Capital Bike & Walk Society (John Luton)
- Conservation groups
- Environment & Shoreline Advisory Committee

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Review options for public survey

Gary Darrah commented that the City's Citizen Survey 2005 has interesting information in it. Staff involved in putting it together may be able to provide assistance in formulation of survey questions as they had a high response rate.

Dogs in Parks did a mail out survey for off leash areas, set up survey tables in six off leash parks and held face to face interviews with both dog owners and non dog owner. It was very intensive. Committee members are now reviewing results.

The following options were presented for carrying out a survey.

- Hire someone – staff can learn about the science of doing survey (data analysis and the way the question is asked) possibly through - Common Ground, UVIC
- Mail out
- On line
- In park on site –using commissionaires (with mixed success for Dogs in Parks survey)
- Phone survey
- One on one discussion
- Focus groups

The committee needs to discuss putting a plan together and determining who will administer it. Questions should be consistent with everyone and survey takers need to be trained to ensure consistency in process

ACTION: Staff to determine if in-house help is available and who would develop the survey packages and questions.

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Parks Field Trip

Discussions took place about organizing a half day tour in the new year so that committee members can familiarize themselves with the City parks. Unfortunately the tour will not include the over 100 parks but committee members will be given information on the inventory of parks. Some members asked if photographs could be presented as well.

ACTION: Gary Darrah to check with Doug Leslie about having 11 x 17 maps distributed to members. Maps to include City parks, school grounds, etc. May also include a BCAA booklet

ACTION: Gary to come up with list of sites and determine date and time for tour. Saturday or Sunday ok.

ACTION: Consider inviting Parks, Recreation & Community Development Advisory Committee members on the tour.

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Review Information Package

Gary Darrah distributed various types of surveys, the 2003 Citizen Survey, the Parks Division Business Plan, and a spreadsheet of parks by neighbourhoods to members.

ACTION: Members to review survey and a sample parks plan and bring comments to next meeting.

- Staff explained that some areas are considered community parks. They have facilities and amenities that people from around city use. (eg Topaz Park, Beacon Hill, Regional parks)
- Some amenities are not captured under City parks. (eg Olive Street Common, Fernwood Common). The group needs to determine if they are to stay the way they are.
- Should be renamed Parks and Open Space Plan?
- City may decide to purchase parcels of land to include as part of the Parks Plan. Members could identify what pieces of property would be good to buy to add to other parks.
- The role of schools (Vic High – Fernwood) needs to be acknowledged
- The role of open space visually - trees, grass, not as much paving - need to acknowledge
- Mike Leskiw added that some schools have City owned property. If pieces came up for sale they would be returned to City. What would happen to that property? Keep as open space?

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Discuss how the committee would like its meetings run

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Next meetings:

January 16 + 30 7:00 p.m.

Location: Parks Yard

ACTION: Gary Darrah to book meeting space; agenda to be prepared with time for 'open discussion' added. Agenda and draft minutes to be emailed out in advance.

Homework:

A variety of master plans were distributed to members.

ACTION: Each member to review a plan and report back what they liked about master plan document, conclusions, recommendations, holes, etc.

ACTION: Gary Darrah to organize a minute taker for meetings.

ACTION: Gary Darrah to request either Joe Daly or Alison Meyer give 20 minute review of Greenway process at the January 16 meeting.