

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY OF NANAIMO
PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE COMMISSION, HELD IN THE
CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE BOWEN PARK COMPLEX,
ON MONDAY, 2004-OCT-25, AT 12:00 NOON**

PRESENT:

Members: Commissioner L. McNabb, Chair
Commissioner B. Holdom
Commissioner D. Tyndall
Commissioner P. Field
Commissioner S. Lance
Commissioner D. Johnstone
Commissioner B. Lane
Commissioner C. Tang
Commissioner J. Whiteaker

Guests: Councillor J. Manhas
Councillor R. Cantelon
Councillor L. Sherry
Michael Harmes, Cultural Committee

Absent: Commissioner B. Sperling
Commissioner G. Baltzer
Commissioner A. Young

Consultants: Dr. Don Hunter
Mr. David Reid, Lanarc

Staff: T. Hickey
B. Meunier
R. Harding
C. Connett, Recording

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan.

Mr. D. Reid, Lanarc, noted that the Master Plan process started in the Spring and included a meeting with Commission, meetings with community groups, a public survey, public open houses and a preliminary meeting with the Commission Master Plan Committee and staff in July.

Survey Results Review.

Dr. D. Hunter advised that 3,000 surveys were randomly circulated with a return of 1,237 (42%). This level of response guarantees a high degree of confidence.

The question to what extent do you feel that City of Nanaimo parks, recreation and cultural services provide benefits to your household had 62% of respondents record good-great benefit, 27% some benefit and 11% little-no benefit. To what extent do you feel these services benefit the community had 89% of respondents record good-great benefit, 9% some benefit and 2% little-no benefit.

Methods of promotion reflected that 81% of the respondents use the Parks, Recreation and Culture Leisure Guide as their main method of learning about programs and services sponsored by the department. This is one of the highest responses PERC has seen in a community survey.

The question asking what limits participation in parks, recreation and cultural services saw 54% respond that very little limits their participation and 25% respond that cost/fees/charges limit their participation. Because of the disparity in the City between income levels in the north and the south, most of the people in the 25% group were from the south.

Satisfaction levels with the number of public facilities was generally quite good with the least satisfaction in the area of arenas at 3.26; and the highest satisfaction with swimming pools at 3.95. Satisfaction with the quality of facilities is also very good overall with swimming pools at 4.14 and Performing Arts Theatres at 3.96. The lowest level of satisfaction was recorded for rehearsal space at 3.37 and arenas at 3.45.

Satisfaction with the number of parks and open spaces is very high overall and satisfaction with the quality of parks and open spaces was 4.07 for Waterfront Parks with Art in Public Places the lowest at 3.38. Public comments include wanting more access to the water (ocean/lakes) and “complete what you are doing with trails and pathways”.

The question asking about new facilities you would pay additional taxes to support saw 43% of respondents wanting more waterfront parks, 39% wanting more trails and pathways, 33% wanting more Arenas and 33% wanting conservation of environmentally sensitive areas. Sportsfields were rated a low priority in the survey, but in meetings sport groups were very concerned with the quality of School District fields.

57% of survey respondents participated in programs and staff helpfulness and quality of instructors were rated extremely high. All areas, including the registration process, program location, program price, quality of equipment and program variety were highly rated.

The question related to the proposed Oliver Road Leisure Centre saw the multi-purpose activity space rated the highest at 61%, wellness space and trails both at 42% and a community playground at 41%. An indoor pool ranked fairly high, but this does not meet with the other survey results where the respondents were very pleased with the quality and number of pools. This facility is located in an area where there are many young families moving in, as well as retired people.

Major Issues Identified.

Parks and Open Space.

Mr. David Reid, Lanarc, noted that major issues under Parks and Open Spaces include Parkland and Open Space Systems, Special Projects, Urban Forest Master Plan, Outdoor Facility Development, Integrated Park Site, Management and Maintenance Plans.

- Parkland Acquisitions – there is a public desire for more waterfront parks, upland parks, linear open space and trailways.
- Open Space Protection - partnerships should be included as well as co-operation with the Regional District regarding estuaries, environmentally sensitive areas, land outside City boundaries such as Witchcraft Lake, Westwood Ridges, Mt. Benson and regional trail systems.
- Special Projects – the new access to downtown from the parkway via the Third Street connector provides the opportunity to create a “Nanaimo Recreation Campus” gateway to the heart of the City. This would involve the Third Street property, Malaspina University-College and the School Board. A trail link from the downtown area to the Malaspina University-College residences; and a waterfront/Convention Centre/Commercial Street/ Piper Park linkage is also recommended. Paddling is one of the fastest growing community activities and groups have identified the need for better launching access and a waterfront facility. A strategic parks and trailway plan needs to be developed for Linley Valley with the west terminus being the Oliver Road Leisure Centre. North Nanaimo and Lantzville should work towards a joint waterfront access plan.

- Urban Forest Master Plan – public discussion is needed regarding tree management for environmental reasons versus property values and views. The existing Tree Protection Bylaw should be refined regarding tree protection, replanting priorities and protecting forests rather than individual trees. A Street Tree Planting and Maintenance Plan and a Street and Parks Design/Practices Plan both need to be developed.
- Outdoor Facility Development – trails and greenways connections to the E&N trail and Parkway Trail are a priority. Managing dogs in parks and the creation of more off leash dog parks is recommended. More sportfields and field amenities are recommended as are more youth outdoor facilities such as small skate parks in neighbourhoods and more sand volleyball courts.
- Integrated Park Site, Management and Maintenance Plans – the completion of “common areas” within existing park areas such as Beban is important. Special Event provisions including the management of, and maintenance of, special events is recommended. The priority of areas of beautification and the location and maintenance of natural areas needs to be identified.

Recreation and Cultural Facilities.

Dr. D. Hunter reported on the major issues related to recreational and cultural facilities.

- Arenas - one additional ice surface is needed plus the replacement of the Civic Arena, which has reached the end of its life span. The proposed twin arena complex will provide sufficient ice for the next ten years because the number of children in Nanaimo will continue to decrease for several years.
- Museum – the existing museum is good quality but requires more display space. Should a new facility be developed, easy access to the downtown area is critical and highlighting Nanaimo’s history related to the coal industry is suggested.
- Oliver Road Leisure Centre – multi-purpose activity/gymnasium space for drop in community use was identified as a high priority. Having reviewed the proposed plans, one comment would be that the fitness/wellness space seems a little small for the type of facility being built.
- South Nanaimo Community Centre – this would be a long-term project that may be considered over the next 8 to 10 years. Development in the Chase River area should be monitored closely to identify if and when a new centre is needed. Another option may be to add more multipurpose rooms to the proposed Nanaimo Ice Centre or work in conjunction with the School Board in adding to existing school facilities.
- Bowen Park Complex Retrofit – with two large multi-unit projects scheduled for construction in the downtown area and a retiring population being encouraged to locate there, it will be important to upgrade the ageing Bowen Complex facility. It needs to be made more open and welcoming, have a designated fitness area and instruction area for arts. This is considered a high priority.
- Beban Park Recreation Centre Retrofit – Beban Pool needs to be refreshed and upgraded with pool toys and promoted as a Family Pool. The addition of leisure elements to enhance rehabilitation services is also recommended. The existing fitness area is not accessible and by filling in the gap between the two facilities the fitness centre could be relocated, and more multi-use space created. This is also considered a high priority.
- Beban Park Centennial Building – user groups feel this facility could be improved for multi-purpose floor space; trade show, etc. A mini-plan will need to be developed for this facility in the next 10 + years.
- Nanaimo Aquatic Centre Improvements – comments were received regarding air quality, bulkheads and moveable floor improvements.

Mr. Michael Harmes, Cultural Committee member, asked where in the major issues is the provision for art galleries? Dr. Hunter noted that rehearsal space, more gallery and museum space should be addressed as part of the New Nanaimo Centre project because they are an integral component to the revitalization of downtown. He noted that the refurbishing of the Bowen Park Complex will create an arts learning centre.

Service Delivery.

- Cultural / Sport Tourism – a more coherent plan/strategy is needed for hosting special events/tournaments/festivals and for bringing people to Nanaimo. The sport community felt it was important to develop a Sports Council facilitated by the City.
- Marketing and Communications – groups felt that they could market with the City more often and the development of co-ordinated special event calendars would be beneficial. The suggestion was made to bring like groups together at least once per year to share information; and that staff could possibly assist with establishing e-mail groups.
- Festivals and Events – for its size, Nanaimo already has a significant number of special events but an Arts Festival would be a valuable addition. Groups may need help in knowing what assistance is available when hosting these events..
- Youth Services – there needs to be an increase in services such as “learn to” programs with marketing through the schools, drop in activities, more outdoor facilities such as sand volleyball and small neighbourhood skate parks. The youth interviewed did not want a stand alone youth centre but would like youth rooms within existing activities and access to gym.
- Links with other Departmental Initiatives – City staff and Commission will need to work closely each year in implementing and evaluating the Master Plan recommendations.
- Partnerships with School District 68 and others - stronger partnership guidelines need to be developed. It is suggested that the City work to develop a new partnership with the School District and that it be a full partnership in programming and development of facilities. A School Trustee sitting on the Commission may be helpful.

Mr. T. Hickey, Director, advised that a press release will be provided shortly regarding the survey information and the major issues as outlined today. A draft Master Plan report will be provided at the November Commission meeting and community input will be received throughout December and January. A final report will be received at the January Commission meeting.

Motion

It was moved and seconded that the Commission receive the information provided by Dr. D. Hunter and Mr. D. Reid.

Carried unanimously.

ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS: Nil

MEDIA QUESTION PERIOD. Nil.

PUBLIC QUESTION PERIOD. Nil.

Motion

It was moved and seconded that the meeting be adjourned.

Carried unanimously.

ADJOURNED: 1:15 p.m.