

DATE OF MEETING JULY 29, 2024

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**SUBJECT                    OPTIONS FOR ADDITIONAL ACCESSIBLE WASHROOMS AT  
WESTWOOD LAKE PARK**

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report**

To present options for adding an additional accessible washroom at Westwood Lake Park beyond what is already included in the capital project design and obtain direction to implement Council's preferred option.

### **Recommendation**

That Council direct Staff to proceed with Option 3 – Convert One Non-Accessible Washroom into One Accessible Washroom and increase the 2024 project budget by \$100,000 funded by \$35,000 from the City Wide Parks DCC Reserve Fund and \$65,000 from the Special Initiatives Reserve.

## **BACKGROUND**

Westwood Lake Park (the Park) is one of Nanaimo's best loved parks and has been the focus of several improvement projects over the past few years. These improvements have been guided by the extensive public engagement completed in 2021, which was reported to Council at the 2022-MAR-16 Council meeting. Some of the most strongly desired elements that emerged from the public engagement process which are being addressed through the phases of the Park Improvements project to date are:

- expanded and improved parking at First Beach (2023),
- integrate "green approaches", including rainwater capture and shade tree planting (2023 and part of current phase of work),
- maintain the natural park aesthetics (2023 and part of current phase of work),
- address universal accessibility (2023 and part of current phase of work),
- improve traffic flow for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists (2023 and part of current phase of work),
- updated washroom facilities,
- create structures for events and group park use,
- expand beach areas, and
- add site furnishings, including seating and tables.

This project was presented to the City's Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness (ACAI) in November of 2023 while in an early conceptual development phase. Numerous

potential park improvements were discussed as part of this presentation, including the intent to create a single accessible washroom which would be part of a larger washroom facility.

The design of the current phase of improvements is now nearly complete; a Building Permit submission was intended to be made in mid July 2024 which would then lead to an anticipated start of construction in September 2024.

On 2024-JUL-10 this project was again presented to the ACAI, this time at a much more mature level of design development. Following this presentation, the ACAI made the following motion:

"That the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness recommend that Council direct Staff to draft a report that includes options for adding an additional accessible washroom at Westwood Lake beyond what is already included in the design."

Council received this motion at the 2024-JUL-22 Council meeting and provided that direction to Staff.

The purpose of this report is to provide those options and seek direction to proceed with Council's preferred option.

## **DISCUSSION**

The total number of washrooms and accessible washrooms to be constructed within this phase of the Park improvements is a function of numerous factors, including:

- current needs based on documented park utilization,
- projected future needs,
- available space,
- available budget, and
- Building Code requirements and accessibility design best practices.

Balancing these needs in a way which provides the best value for the City and the best amenity for the community is an important first step in planning a project like this. A certain number of washrooms need to be created to meet current and future needs, there is only so much space available to construct those washrooms, and Building Code requirements for accessibility must be followed. All of this must be accomplished within the available funding; any additions to one element will require subtractions from other elements to maintain the balance of priorities required when working within a funding envelope.

By working with the project's architect and reviewing historic use data it was determined that six washrooms should be created to meet current park user needs and a seventh washroom be added to account for increased future usage.

Of these seven units, one would be a very large (approximately 12'x12') universal and accessible washroom. The remaining six units would be large (approximately 6'x5') universal washrooms. These six units will include many features which facilitate a heightened degree of accessibility, such as being navigable with many mobility assistance devices, grab bars, a respite bench, wall hooks, and others, but would not fully meet Building Code requirements and

accessibility guidelines for an accessible washroom. All washrooms have been designed to also function as private change spaces.

While the following options include impacts to the project schedule and budget, it should be noted that the impact to the project schedule is anticipated to affect the completion date, not the start of construction.

Construction will be starting September 2024 for this project.

### **Detailed Discussion – Option 1 – Continue with Current Configuration**

The current design achieves a good balance between the above noted factors; this facility would:

- establish an adequate number of washrooms for both current and future use,
- fit well within the available space while facilitating other park uses,
- require no additional funds to complete,
- provide an enhanced level of service to those who require accessible washrooms, and
- meet or exceed all Building Code requirements and accessibility design best practices.

This facility would not:

- Satisfy the desire for an additional accessible washroom expressed by the ACAI at their July 2024 meeting.

This option presents no further impact to the schedule and requires no additional funding.

### **Detailed Discussion – Option 2 – Convert Two Non-Accessible Washrooms into One Accessible Washroom**

The current design could be slightly modified to convert two of the proposed non-accessible washrooms into a single accessible washroom. The resulting facility would:

- establish an adequate number of washrooms for current use,
- fit well within the available space while facilitating other park uses,
- provide further enhanced level of service to those who require accessible washrooms,
- meet or exceed all Building Code requirements and accessibility design best practices, and
- satisfy the desire for an additional accessible washroom expressed by the ACAI in their July 2024 meeting.

This facility would not:

- establish an adequate number of washrooms for both current and future use.

This option would add approximately 3 weeks to the project's schedule and up to \$20,000 to the cost of the project.

### **Detailed Discussion – Option 3 – Convert One Non-Accessible Washroom into One Accessible Washroom**

The current design could be more heavily modified to convert one of the proposed non-accessible washrooms into an accessible washroom. The resulting facility would:

- establish an adequate number of washrooms for both current and future use,
- provide further enhanced level of service to those who require accessible washrooms,
- meet or exceed all Building Code requirements and accessibility design best practices, and
- satisfy the desire for an additional accessible washroom expressed by the ACAI at their July 2024 meeting.

This facility would not:

- fit as well within the available space while facilitating other park uses.

This option would add approximately 6 weeks to the project's schedule and up to \$100,000 to the cost of the project. |

## **OPTIONS**

1. That Council direct Staff to proceed with Option 1 - Continue with Current Configuration.
  - The advantages of this option: This option directs Staff to proceed with the existing design. This design meets or exceeds accessibility codes and best practices for washroom facilities in public places, provides adequate washrooms to be responsive to current and future park usage levels, and fits well within the available space while facilitating other park uses. The project was ready for Building Permit submission in early July and this option would allow the project to proceed without further delay.
  - The disadvantages of this option: This option is not responsive to the desire expressed by the ACAI for an additional washroom.
  - Financial Implications: None.
2. That Council direct Staff to proceed with Option 2 - Convert Two Non-Accessible Washrooms into One Accessible Washroom.
  - The advantages of this option: This option directs Staff to proceed with relatively minor design changes. This design would meet or exceed accessibility codes and best practices for washroom facilities in public places, provide adequate washrooms to be responsive to current usage levels, fit well within the available space while facilitating other park uses, and be responsive to the desire expressed by the ACAI for an additional washroom.
  - The disadvantages of this option: This option will result in a facility which will not meet projected future usage levels and will introduce relatively minor further impacts on the completion schedule of this project.
  - Financial Implications: The 2024 – 2028 Financial Plan would be amended to increase the budget for the Westwood Lake Amenity Building project by \$20,000 funded by \$7,000 from the City Wide Parks DCC Reserve Fund and \$13,000 from the Special Initiatives Reserve. Both reserves have sufficient funding available to fund the increase. The current 2024 projected closing balance of the City Wide Parks DCC Reserve Fund is \$744,515 and the Special Initiatives Reserve has \$187,622 in uncommitted funding available.

3. That Council direct Staff to proceed with Option 3 - Convert One Non-Accessible Washroom into One Accessible Washroom.
- The advantages of this option: This option directs Staff to proceed with moderate design changes. This design would meet or exceed accessibility codes and best practices for washroom facilities in public places, provide adequate washrooms to be responsive to current usage levels, and be responsive to the desire expressed by the ACAI for an additional washroom.
  - The disadvantages of this option: This option will result in a facility which will not fit as well within the available space while facilitating other park uses and will introduce moderate further impacts on the completion schedule of this project.
  - Financial Implications: The 2024 – 2028 Financial Plan would be amended to increase the budget for the Westwood Lake Amenity Building project by \$100,000 funded by \$35,000 from the City Wide Parks DCC Reserve Fund and \$65,000 from the Special Initiatives Reserve. Both reserves have sufficient funding available to fund the increase. The current 2024 projected closing balance of the City Wide Parks DCC Reserve Fund is \$744,515 and the Special Initiatives Reserve has \$187,622 in uncommitted funding available.

#### **SUMMARY POINTS**

- Westwood Lake Park is one of Nanaimo's best loved parks and has been the focus of several improvement projects over the past few years. A new parking lot was constructed near First Beach in 2023, and a second phase of improvements which will expand First Beach, complete trail loops through the park, and create a new washroom facility are to begin construction in 2024.
- The new washrooms at Westwood Lake Park will be designed to meet the community's needs and enhance this beautiful park.
- Accessible washroom space will be provided at Westwood Lake Park as part of this project.

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

**ATTACHMENT A:** PowerPoint Presentation |

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