

DATE OF MEETING DECEMBER 11, 2024

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DEBORAH BECK, PARKS AND OPEN SPACE PLANNER |

SUBJECT PARK AMENITY IMPROVEMENT REQUESTS UNDER THE PARTNERS IN PARKS PROGRAM

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide information on three Partners in Parks (PIP) Program requests to the Finance & Audit Committee for consideration and approval |

Recommendation

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council approve the allocation of the 2024 Partners In Parks Program funding to amenity improvements at these proposed park locations:

- I. \$45,000 for a hard surface sport court at Everest Drive Park;
- II. \$15,000 for storage and seating at Beaufort Food Forest; and
- III. \$40,000 for shade structure and platform at Stevie Smith Bike Park.

BACKGROUND

The PIP program was initiated by the City Council in 1982 to develop neighborhood parks and meet evolving community recreation needs. Each year since, the City has allocated funds for the program, and the program has continued to expand in many ways. City Plan further reinforces this collaborative development of sport facilities and amenities through partnerships to meet community wellness needs. Furthermore, by listening to community requests and engagement, the City can ensure that parks and open space amenities meet community evolution and diversion.

Funds from the PIP program are approved and allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. The City oversees the execution of the project and disbursement of the funds. Fundraising proceeds are added to the project and the project will not proceed until the fundraising as outlined in the group's proposal is successful. Currently, \$100,000 remains in 2024 to support these requests for partnership projects and amenities.

A number of community requests for partnership funding have emerged this year and staff have met with each group to determine eligibility. Staff feel that the following projects could be implemented in 2025 in collaboration with partners to meet community wellness desires.

DISCUSSION

Everest Drive Park is a .44 ha forested park in the Pleasant Valley neighbourhood. The parkland was acquired in 1995 through subdivision. The park is zoned PRC-2 and a playground was installed through the PIP Program in 1998 – including a climbing structure, swings, picnic table and pea gravel fall protection.

With over 100 homes in the immediate neighborhood and additional homes in the neighboring Brannen Lake neighborhood walking over to use this park, there has become a desire to improve or enhance this space. At a meeting held on 2024-NOV-17, 30 (adults and children) attendees requested some upgrades and additions to their playground including a multi-use hard surface court to provide a safe space to play hockey, basketball or other court games as well as additional seating. See Attachment A for detailed site information, budget and fundraising details and community support.

Beaufort Park is a 3.9 ha community park located in the Hospital Area neighbourhood. A park plan was developed and implemented in 2006 to increase public use of this space, with a focus on wellness and accessibility. This park is zoned PRC-2 and now includes walking trails, a dog off-leash park, multiuse sports courts, a community garden, a community food forest, native plant plot, and forested areas.

City Plan includes many policies that support food security and the installation of infrastructure for food production. Irrigation was recently installed to help support the food production efforts. The food forest space has become a gathering place for neighbours and volunteers to share time together while they work to maintain the food forest. The volunteers have supported school and camp visits to this park, as well as PRC gardening workshops, over the past number of years. Currently Beaufort Park have been utilizing a mismatch of donated chairs and tables that do not meet City safety standards and often break or go missing. The volunteer group is requesting permanent site furniture and an accessible storage shed and extra tools. Attachment B outlines detailed site information, budget and fundraising details.

The Steve Smith Bike Park is popular destination at Beban Park. Following the adoption of the Beban Park Master Plan update in 2015, Council approved funding for the development of new community bike parks at Beban Park. The Stevie Smith Bike Park opened in 2017 and now lies adjacent to the BMX track and Mountain Bike Skills Park, and includes dirt jumps, return trails and a pump track. The park was funded with \$330,205 from City of Nanaimo and additional financial contributions by the Gyro Club and Stevie Smith Legacy Foundation.

The Stevie Smith Legacy Foundation recently added lighting to the facility to facilitate use of the park after daylight hours in all season. The foundation and their volunteers fully paid for and installed 12 lights, controlled by push button, until 10:00 PM. This lighting upgrade was completed in the Summer of 2024 and has opened up a safe place for youth wellness all year round. Now, the group would like to develop a shade structure and viewing platform to enhance the space in all weather and provide a space for spectators that is safe and separated from the ride lines. See Attachment C for site details, 2024 contributions to the park from the Foundation, and request budget details.

OPTIONS

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council approve the allocation of the 2024 Partners in Parks Program funding to amenity improvements at these proposed park locations:
 - i. \$45,000 for a hard surface sport court at Everest Drive Park;
 - ii. \$15,000 for storage and seating at Beaufort Food Forest ; and
 - iii. \$40,000 for shade structure and platform at Stevie Smith Bike Park.
 - The advantages of this option: \$100,000 is available annually in the Partners in Parks budget to be allocated at Council's discretion. Earmarking this money and the projects now will ensure that the projects can be implemented in 2025 or beyond once partner commitments are in place.
 - The disadvantages of this option: None identified.
 - Financial Implications: The Partners in Parks budget for 2024 would be fully allocated. The 2025 – 2029 Financial Plan includes funding for future years to address projects as they emerge.

2. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council approve only some of the recommended project funding from the 2024 Partners in Parks (PIP) Program.
 - The advantages of this option: Some project funding could remain in the 2024 budget to be allocated at Council's discretion.
 - The disadvantages of this option: Any remaining funds in the 2024 budget would not carry forward for allocation in 2025. Projects that are not approved may request funding again in 2025. This could reduce the funding available for new groups that request project funding from Council in 2025.
 - Financial Implications: To be determined.

3. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council provide alternative direction. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- The Partners in Park Program is a successful partnership program that helps build park amenities that meet evolving community needs.
- Three groups are requesting funding from the 2024 budget allocation for future collaborative projects
- If approved, projects would not proceed until the fundraising as outlined in the delegation's proposal is successful.
- Additional funding for the Partners in Parks Program will be available in the 2025 budget cycle to support future community requests.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: Everest Drive Park
ATTACHMENT B: Beaufort Food Park
ATTACHMENT C: Stevie Smith Bike Park

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