



## CITY OF VANCOUVER

### OTHER REPORT

Report Date: April 8, 2005  
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TO: Standing Committee on City Services and Budgets  
FROM: Vancouver Athletic Commission  
SUBJECT: Vancouver Athletic Commission - 2004 - 2005 Annual Report

#### RECOMMENDATION

THAT this report be received for information.

#### CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager submits the foregoing for INFORMATION.

#### PURPOSE

The Vancouver Athletic Commission Annual Report is respectfully submitted to Vancouver City Council. The report outlines the Commission's functions and activities for the period of April 2004 to April 2005 and current trends in the sports it regulates.

#### BACKGROUND

The Vancouver Athletic Commission (VAC) was established in 1945 to control and supervise professional boxing and wrestling in the City of Vancouver. More recently, professional kickboxing was added as a responsibility. A professional fighter is defined as one who receives a purse or prize for his/her efforts, hence the term 'prizefighter'. In compliance with the *Criminal Code of Canada*, such contests require a duly appointed civic or provincial authority to regulate these events. The Vancouver Athletic Commission has undertaken that responsibility for the City. Over the years, the Commission has unsuccessfully appealed to have the provincial government regulate these sports as is the common practice in North America.

The Vancouver Athletic Commission:

- licenses promoters;
- sanctions events and matches;
- names a medical officer;
- establishes rules and regulations;
- certifies fighters are medically fit;
- holds purse money and other expense moneys in bond;
- examines and holds contracts between promoters and fighters;
- collects a modest seat tax;
- exacts fines for failure to perform;
- appoints all judges, referees, timekeepers and other minor officials, or delegates that responsibility;
- reports all results to the Canadian Professional Boxing Federation;
- liaises with the Vancouver Police Department;
- liaises with the PNE Coordinator of events;
- files an annual financial statement with the City;
- establishes security requirements with venue proprietors and promoters;
- carries out other related duties; and
- notifies the City of Vancouver Licensing Department of events.

#### *Terms of Reference*

Section 338 of the *Vancouver Charter* empowers Council to establish the Vancouver Athletic Commission and the City of Vancouver By-law No. 2875 provides the Vancouver Athletic Commission's mandate.

The Vancouver Athletic Commission is a working volunteer committee that serves and protects the interests of the City. It consists of five members - four appointed annually by City Council and the fifth being a Councillor. The City Clerk's Office provides a meeting coordinator and an initial contact person for those seeking the expertise of the Commissioners. The current members have considerable, continuous experience in this specialized area. While commissioners or their equivalents in Nova Scotia, Ontario, Manitoba and in some Alberta municipalities receive salaries or stipends with allowance for travel and incidental expenses, the Vancouver Athletic Commission is self supporting and has never requested funding for the hundreds of hours of expert legislated volunteer service. Modest revenues (a seat tax of ten cents per seat and an event fee of \$150.00) enable members to attend annual general meetings of the Canadian Professional Boxing Federation if funds are available.

The Vancouver Athletic Commission is proud of its record in these dangerous sports. No athlete has endured serious injury in the ring; no litigation against the City has occurred concerning contracts, purses, fees or services provided; and no incidents at venues have occurred that have not been acted upon without dispatch. The Commission members are all life-long impartial professional residents of Vancouver. They are:

- George Angelomatis, Vice-Chair - Provincial Court Judge, and  
- over 25 years service in amateur boxing;
- Robert Gatto, Treasurer/Signing Officer - Retired Vancouver Secondary School  
Department Head, and  
over 30 years experience on the VAC;
- Donald McIntyre, Recording Secretary/Signing Officer - Retired Vancouver Secondary  
School Principal, and  
- over 25 years experience on the  
VAC;
- Roy Nosella, Chair - Retired Delta Elementary School Principal, and  
- over 35 years experience on VAC.
- Councillor Peter Ladner - Council Liaison
- Pat Boomhower - Meeting Coordinator, City Clerk's Office

The Commission doctor is Dr. Debbie Collins, a specialist in sports medicine. The doctor examines all boxers and kickboxers prior to and after fights. Our safety precautions include the authority of the doctor to stop a fight, having two doctors at ringside and an ambulance with trained attendants at ringside. Prior to the event, the neurologist at the local hospital is notified. Our doctor is recognized as an expert in the field and was assigned the responsibility of ring official by the Nevada Boxing Commission in Las Vegas, the premier site of professional boxing in North America.

Commission meetings are held at the call of the Chair and occur as required. They are related to proposed events, business arising at Canadian Boxing Federation's annual general meetings, persons seeking promoter's licenses and workshops related to procedural changes. The Commission meets at least once a month, although there may be long periods of inactivity followed by frequent meetings before and after promotions.

With the assistance of the City Clerk's Office, the Commission has a web page on the City of Vancouver website. The Public Involvement Coordinator has incorporated pertinent information for prospective promoters and citizens at large of the Commission's activities.

The Commission regularly receives numerous inquiries concerning possible licenses, promotions, and procedures.

The Vancouver Athletic Commission annually files a financial statement with the City.

## DISCUSSION

### 1. Significant Activities

#### *Boxing:*

The Commission is a fee-paying member of the Canadian Professional Boxing Federation (CBF). This federation sets national safety code standards, sanctions all Canadian Championships and maintains rankings of Canadian boxers. Since boxing is regulated (and unregulated) in a variety of ways across Canada, members of the federation include provincial, civic and First Nations representatives. With the support of Council, the Vancouver Athletic Commission has tried but unsuccessfully petitioned three provincial governments to establish a provincial boxing commission, as recommended in a national task force report.

Last June, Commission members attended the CBF Annual General Meeting. Commissioner Angelomatis was re-instated as a member of the Ratings Committee.

In the past calendar year the Commission did not sanctioned any boxing events. One planned event did not materialize. The Commission granted conditional approval to one boxing promoter subject to the presentation of a suitable card of professional boxing. The Commission also revoked the license of one boxing promoter in the past year for his failure to pay a fine for lack of compliance with regulations.

The state of professional boxing in Vancouver and across Canada continues to be very much in decline. Too few professional boxers are available and those willing to fight can obtain larger purses in the United States. Even novice fighters can receive better purses across the border at casino venues. Local promoters have difficulty filling a card and generating revenues. These discouraging conditions exist despite the fact the sport is receiving greater television exposure.

#### *Wrestling:*

The Commission also regulates professional wrestling in Vancouver. It continues to have excellent relations with World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), the major player in the wrestling entertainment business. Since its spectators include many young people, we have required patron searches upon entry, no alcohol sold at the venue, and adequate crowd security including uniformed Vancouver Police Department constables. These events can attract up to 17,000 spectators. The WWE provides its own medical and safety personnel. The WWE has complied with all concerns the Commission has brought to its attention. It regularly promotes two or three events each year in Vancouver.

Since our last report to Council, the Commission sanctioned one professional wrestling card held at the PNE Coliseum on July 2, 2004 which drew 7000 fans. In previous years, crowds were considerably larger.

#### *Mixed Martial Arts:*

There is a growing trend and fan base for other martial arts sports and/or mixed martial arts contests. These events tend to be club-based amateur cards. The line between amateur and professional fighting continues to be quite blurred. If these fighters receive a purse, they are prizefighters and subject to the laws of Canada. The Vancouver Athletic Commission regulates these prize fights.

Three well promoted mixed martial arts cards were held on May 14 and July 23, 2004, and March 26, 2005, at the Croatian Cultural Centre since the Commission's last annual report to Council. Over 1800 spectators attended. The promoter plans to hold several smaller events this year. The Commission suspended one participant in the past year for conduct during an event.

## **2. Future Directions**

The mix of either kickboxing or amateur boxing with professional boxing on the same card has proven less than satisfactory. Consequently, the Commission will not entertain future proposals of a mixed card to satisfy the number of rounds to constitute a show.

To assist with future activities of the Commission and volunteer development with regard to its unique role, the Commission has invited volunteers to assist at events.

## CONCLUSION

The foregoing information is presented to Vancouver City Council for information. The Commission appreciates Council's support of the Commission's work regulating professional boxing, wrestling and kickboxing in the City, and its reappointing of this working team of volunteers.

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