



Date: April 2, 2012

TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Kitsilano Beach Park Basketball Courts

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board approve a change to the current policy regarding the operation of the basketball courts at Kitsilano Beach Park, as outlined in this report.

POLICY

The Board has established the operating period for the Kitsilano Beach Park basketball courts. Changes to this policy must be approved by the Board.

BACKGROUND

Kitsilano Beach Park (Appendix A) has become one of the premier recreation destinations in the city, particularly during the summer months. The range of activities available is complimented by a number of facilities including: basketball courts, tennis courts, an accessible playground, beach volleyball courts, walking/cycling paths, extensive green space, an outdoor pool, a restaurant, a large beach area and easy access to the ocean. With the exception of the beach volleyball and basketball courts, the facilities at this park are available for year-round use. In recent years, staff have fielded an increasing number of inquiries from residents seeking to use the basketball courts during day-time periods of mild weather in the fall, winter and spring. As a result of these requests and the amount of time which has passed since the last review, staff have compiled the following summary of background material and are presenting a recommendation to adjust the policy.

In 1987, the Park Board passed a resolution which restricted access to the basketball courts from May 15th to September 15th each year. This limitation was implemented in response to noise complaints from residents in the local neighbourhood.

In 2002, the Park Board considered multiple resolutions in response to continuing concerns from local residents about noise and inappropriate language being used by players, including reducing the number of basketball courts from four to two, as well as reducing the height of the hoops to six feet. The Board's direction to staff in 2002 resulted in the current practices:

- i) Removing the four basketball hoops each September and reinstalling them in May;
- ii) Installing covers on the basketball hoops to prevent evening play during the open season from May 15 to September 15. Hoops are covered daily at sunset and uncovered in the morning.

In the ten years since the last Board resolution regarding the use of these courts, Kitsilano Beach Park has benefitted from physical improvements that make it one of the most attractive year-round locations for sport and physical activity in the city. In 2007, the Park Board, in partnership with the Canada One Foundation (formerly Metro Vancouver Basketball Foundation), completed a restoration of the basketball courts, including high-quality resurfacing. More recently, the children's playground area was redeveloped to be accessible and relocated further from the basketball courts, which had been identified as a priority through various public engagement exercises. Finally, the public tennis courts are on the list for refurbishment under the current Capital Plan with completion expected in 2013.

DISCUSSION

In the last ten years the Park Board has approved new policies and operational improvements that are relevant to the review of facility use, such as the basketball courts at Kitsilano Beach Park.

A significant policy development was the approval of the Vancouver Sport Strategy (2008) by the Park Board and City. It serves as a guiding document for connecting residents to programs, facilities and sporting events, with an overall focus on maximizing health and wellness. A key strategic goal identified in the policy is providing welcoming and accessible facilities that encourage residents to pursue sport at any level. The Park Board's recently updated Strategic Plan (2011) builds on this policy, emphasizing the importance of access to facilities that promote active living.

A further development has been the expansion of the Park Ranger program which now has year round park and beach patrols and is well-connected to community police operations. This monitoring and bylaw enforcement team has been effective in pro-actively addressing concerns that arise in parks, including issues relating to noise and inappropriate behavior. The Rangers are linked to the 3-1-1 Call Centre and can be dispatched as required to assist with non-emergency situations throughout the day and evening hours.

RECOMMENDATION

The recreation facilities at Kitsilano Beach Park are some of the best that the city has to offer. The issues identified in the 1980s and early 2000s relating to the use of the basketball courts by some players in the summer months led to a policy that reduced play time for all throughout the year. In light of the change in circumstances outlined above,

staff recommend a policy adjustment to allow for increased access, while also taking a responsible approach to mitigating potential issues.

The recommended adjustment is as follows:

- i) Leave the basketball hoops in place throughout the year.
- ii) Continue to limit evening play during the summer season from May 15 to September 15. Hoops are covered daily at sundown and uncovered in the morning.

This adjustment would enable residents and visitors to take advantage of the basketball courts in the same manner that other sports players can, including tennis players who can play year-round when the weather allows. The likelihood of late-night noise issues at this location decreases significantly through the fall, winter and spring due to the cool, wet climate and reduced hours of daylight. For this reason, staff would not utilize the basketball hoop covers between September and May. Staff appreciate that the popularity of the park in the summer months and proximity of the courts to residences requires sensitivity to the issue of late-night court usage. For this reason the practice of covering the hoops at sunset in the summer months is recommended to continue. Concerns relating to the use of the courts after sunset in the fall, winter and spring would be addressed through the 3-1-1 Call Centre or police non-emergency line, depending on the time of occurrence.

SUMMARY

Kitsilano Beach Park is a destination for recreation enthusiasts from the local neighbourhood and across the city. It is a park that promotes a wide range of healthy activities through quality facilities. Adjusting the operating period for the basketball courts to allow for year-round use aligns with Park Board priorities relating to active, healthy communities and the City's strategic objectives for sport and recreation. Staff recommend the Board approve the policy adjustment outlined in this report.

Prepared by:

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APPENDIX A

