



## **Committee of the Whole Report**

### **For the Meeting of June 14, 2018**

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**To:** Committee of the Whole **Date:** June 4, 2018

**From:** Thomas Soulliere, Director, Parks, Recreation and Facilities

**Subject:** Park Furnishing Dedication Program

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council:

1. Approve amendment of the Recreation Fee Bylaw to include the Park Furnishing Dedication Program and fee schedule;
2. Direct staff to bring forth amendment to the Reserve Fund Bylaw and the Reserve Fund Policy to create a new reserve fund for Park Furnishing Dedication; and,
3. Authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to execute an agreement with the Parks and Recreation Foundation of Victoria to administer the program with all terms to the satisfaction of the City Solicitor.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Park Furnishing Dedication Program (formerly the Memorial Bench Program) is operated in partnership with the Parks and Recreation Foundation of Victoria (PRFV). This program allows citizens to commemorate or celebrate a cherished moment by dedicating a park bench or other furnishing in City parks. The program was suspended in 2013 to reassess program elements and costs.

The proposed updates to the Park Furnishing Dedication Program will:

- Offer flexibility in the types of amenities offered for dedication;
- Provide a transparent method of calculating dedication fees;
- Provide an improved user interface for potential donors, through the City's website, application form, and VicMap;
- Clarify roles and responsibilities through a formal agreement with the PRFV.

Pending Council approval, the improved program will be relaunched in Q3 2018.

## BACKGROUND

The original donation program was launched in 1993, and administered jointly through the City Parks division and Parks and Recreation Foundation of Victoria (PRFV). The purpose of the program was to provide opportunities for citizens to commemorate a loved one, or special date, on benches within City parks.

The program was suspended in 2013 to allow the City and PRFV to reassess the program objectives, impacts, costs and administration.

There are currently 634 dedicated benches located within City parks. The majority of these are located along the waterfront and in Beacon Hill Park.

## ISSUES & ANALYSIS

Under the original program, a donor contribution of \$2,500 resulted in the purchase and installation of a park bench with an engraved bronze plaque. After 10 years, donors had the option to renew their dedication for 10 more years for an additional \$500.

In reviewing the program, staff identified two particularly important opportunities for improvement:

1. The fee charged should be sufficient to cover the manufacturing and maintenance costs associated with the program.
2. Dedications should not be limited to park benches. As outlined in the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan, citizens place a high value on amenities that help to facilitate social interactions and gatherings in parks. There are opportunities to include other types of furnishings for dedication.

### *Flexible Approach*

The updated Park Furnishing Dedication Program aims to provide a variety of options for citizens to commemorate a special place, through the dedication of a quality amenity in a City park. To provide transparency and ensure that fees consider changes to material and labour costs over time, the formula below has been developed.

<b>Furnishing Capital Cost</b> (purchase or fabrication, plaque, installation)	+	<b>Maintenance Contingency</b> (25% of Amenity Capital Cost)	+	<b>Administration Fee</b> (Parks and Recreation Foundation Victoria)	=	<b>Total Cost of Dedication</b>
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An example of how the formula would be applied to determine fees associated with the dedication of a park bench is provided here.

<b>Furnishings Capital Cost</b> \$ 2,600	+	<b>Maintenance Contingency</b> \$ 650	+	<b>Administration Fee</b> \$ 250	=	<b>Total Cost of Dedication</b> \$ 3,500
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This approach allows for flexibility in the type of amenities dedicated, by providing a set calculation for determining fees. Dedications will be issued for a 10-year term, which aligns with the estimated lifespan of most park furnishings. The scope of this program excludes commercial/ corporate recognition, which may be the focus of future analysis.

### *Roles and Responsibilities*

The City's partnership with the Parks and Recreation Foundation of Victoria (PRFV) is an important aspect of this program. The PRFV is a registered charity that supports the enhancement of green spaces, leisure facilities, and recreation services in Greater Victoria. The PRFV utilizes its revenues to provide grants to local community groups and organizations. Recent grant recipients include the Yates Street Community Garden, Neighbourhood Garden of All Sorts (James Bay), and the addition of an accessible swing in Pemberton Park.

Under the renewed program, the City and the PRFV will enter into a formal agreement to execute this program as partners, with clear roles and responsibilities. The PRFV will act as the primary liaison to prospective subscribers, manage subscriber information, collect fees and issue charitable tax receipts. The City will be responsible for assembling, installing, tracking and maintaining the physical assets as well as managing the funding account. Fees collected will be held in a reserve fund and will be utilized by the City to fabricate, install and maintain the furnishings. This process is expected to create a positive experience for subscribers, who will have a single point of contact - with the PRFV from initial contact and throughout the program.

In 2018, the City and PRFV will focus on processing bench requests that have been received to-date; in 2019, the program will be open for additional amenities, such as picnic tables, drinking fountains, and games tables. Request for new amenities will be evaluated through the intake process and added to the City's inventory on an annual cycle.

### *Communications and Marketing*

The public launch of the updated program will commence this summer, and include social media, the City of Victoria website and a new, more streamlined application form. In addition, new mapping content has been developed for the public VicMap interface, to help subscribers identify which furnishing sites are available for dedications. This new mapping feature will:

- Make it easier for prospective subscribers to identify potential dedication sites;
- Reduce the requirement for on-site visits;
- Ensure future dedications support and align with planned park upgrades; and,
- Assist staff with asset maintenance and management

## **OPTIONS & IMPACTS**

Staff recommend that Council support this updated program for park furnishing dedications. The program will ensure that citizens have an opportunity to commemorate or celebrate individual, group or family connections with City parks. This program is designed to be cost-neutral for the City and sustainable over the long-term.

### *Accessibility Impact Statement*

With each dedication request, staff will conduct an assessment to ensure the furnishing meets accessibility standards. This assessment will include a review of the proposed site and access to the furnishing for citizens of all abilities.

### *2015-2018 Strategic Plan*

The Park Furnishing Dedication Program aligns with Objective 8: *Enhance and steward public spaces, green spaces and food systems*, in the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan.

### *Impacts to Financial Plan*

This program is designed to be cost-neutral for the City and allow individuals or groups to provide a financial contribution to local park amenities in exchange for recognition on the asset.

### *Official Community Plan Consistency Statement*

The Park Furnishings Dedication Program aligns with the broad goal identified for Parks and Recreation in the Official Community Plan and helps further Objective 9.6: *Cultivate partnerships with community associations, the private sector, other levels of government and the public to enhance the long-term sustainability and viability of parks and open spaces.*

## **CONCLUSION**

The Park Furnishings Dedication Program allows individuals and groups a method of reinforcing their connection with local parks. The updates to the program will allow the program to re-launch in a manner that is service-oriented, financially sustainable and aligned with City priorities.

Respectfully submitted,




for Derrick Newman  
Manager  
Construction and Parks Infrastructure



Thomas Soulliere  
Director  
Parks, Recreation and Facilities

**Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:**

  
Date: June 8, 2018

List of Attachments

Appendix A: Recreation Fees Bylaw Schedule I