



CITY OF RICHMOND

REPORT TO COMMITTEE

TO: City/School Board Liaison Committee

DATE: November 6, 2003

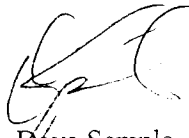
FROM: Dave Semple
Director, Parks

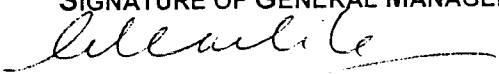
FILE:

RE: Block Booking/Grass Cutting

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Block Booking/Grass Cutting Agreement between the City of Richmond and the Richmond School Board be endorsed for the 2003/2004 season.


Dave Semple
Director of Parks
(3350)

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STAFF REPORT

ORIGIN

Since 1968, the City of Richmond and the Richmond School Board have had an agreement in which the City covers the costs of school grounds maintenance and the School Board, in turn, covers the direct costs of block booking school gymnasiums for community use. In 1984, the agreement was reviewed by both parties and the principles were sustained. Council has had a long standing policy of reporting annually on this agreement. This procedure was reaffirmed by Council on July 4, 1997: "The Board of School Trustees (Richmond) assume the direct cost of the booking of its facilities by the City, subject to the City agreeing to assume all costs as per the Ground Maintenance Agreement; further, that the School District and City staff continue to monitor this arrangement on an annual basis to ensure that equity is maintained."

This report provides an assessment of this arrangement and includes the most recent figures for comparison.

ANALYSIS

The comparison of School District and City costs is based on a School District fiscal year of September 2001 to August 2002 and a City fiscal year of January 2002 to December 2002.

The School Board's cost comprises two amounts; rental custodian cost of \$104,158 (janitorial cost of twenty minutes before and after rental) and formulated costs of \$142,643 (for heat and building costs). The total cost to the School Board is \$246,801.

Under School Board policy, a percentage of money collected from private rentals of schools goes back to the schools. This is based on the percentage of time the schools are used by Continuing Education, Community Services and private rentals. This policy has helped to encourage principals to make schools more accessible.

The community's access to school facilities approaching 30,000 hours is the real benefit to the citizens of Richmond.

The City's cost for grass cutting, sports field set up, aerating and specifically requested services is \$261,105.

Although there are additional costs for both park and school board maintenance which more than doubles this amount, Richmond unlike most other cities enjoys parkland throughout the combined school and park property sites. The resulting standard of school ground development and maintenance is equal to that of the parkland which our citizens have grown to expect.

The City's cost fluctuates from year to year due to weather conditions. The drought experienced in 2002 meant that this year's cost was \$38,000 less than the previous year. The deterioration of the drainage infrastructure makes the grass cutting in wet weather particularly challenging and the cost go up. The City has purchased four-wheel drive tractors but the real need is to replace worn out agricultural drain tiles. There are 121 kilometres of drain line in the school and park system. About half of that length is agricultural tile and has been in the ground for more than 25 years.

The costs are also rising, not only due to the usual inflation and additions to the inventory, but also due to a trend to turf grown on sand on new sites. Sand based turf does maximize the use of the available land but there is a significant cost to the maintenance of such turf. Each of these fields cost around \$15,000 per year to maintain.

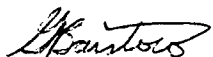
The City and School District staff have successfully worked together for many years. The City does not do all school grounds maintenance. The District staff maintain the shrub borders around the school buildings. The playgrounds and goal post responsibility is split between School District and City Staff for efficiency based on School/Park site rather than property. There is an economy of scale on the combined property sites that makes for efficient maintenance if both properties are treated as one.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

None. The 2004 budget has been prepared on the assumption that this agreement will continue.

CONCLUSION

Staff feel that the continuation of the agreement with the City of Richmond and the Richmond School Board regarding grass cutting and block booking should continue as it is a benefit to the citizens of Richmond, and that staff monitor it on an annual basis.



Gord Barstow
Manager, Parks Operations
(1210)

GSB:gsb