Minutes – Executive Policy Committee – March 19, 2009

REPORTS

Minute No. 174 Assiniboine Park Conservancy Inc. - Strategic Plan
eFile PR-7.1

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

The Executive Policy Committee recommends to Council:

1. That the Strategic Plan from the Assiniboine Park Conservancy Inc. be received as information.

2. That the Assiniboine Park Conservancy Inc. be granted an extension of time of 180 days for the negotiation of a Management Agreement with the City of Winnipeg, and submission of same to Council for approval.

3. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

Agenda – Executive Policy Committee – March 19, 2009

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Fielding,

1. That the Strategic Plan from the Assiniboine Park Conservancy Inc. be received as information.

2. That the Assiniboine Park Conservancy Inc. be granted an extension of time of 180 days for the negotiation of a Management Agreement with the City of Winnipeg, and submission of same to Council for approval.

Carried

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On January 21, 2009, the Executive Policy Committee granted the Assiniboine Park Conservancy Inc. an extension of time of up to 60 days for presentation of its Strategic Plan.

On November 12, 2008, the Executive Policy Committee granted the Assiniboine Park Conservancy Inc. an extension of time until January 2009 for presentation of its Strategic Plan.

Further on November 12, 2008, the Executive Policy Committee received from the Assiniboine Park Conservancy Inc. a request for an extension of time to January 2009 for the presentation of the Assiniboine Park Conservancy's strategic plan to the Executive Policy Committee.

COUNCIL DECISION:

On June 20, 2007, Council adopted a new governance structure for Assiniboine Park, which included the following recommendations:

5. That within six (6) months of incorporation, the Corporation presents its strategic plan to Executive Policy Committee for review and referral to Council for approval.

7. That within twelve (12) months of incorporation, the Corporation negotiate a Management Agreement with the City of Winnipeg for approval by Council.

CHARTING OUR FUTURE
2009 AND BEYOND

ASSINIBOINE PARK CONSERVANCY

November, 2008

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CHARTING OUR FUTURE – 2009 AND BEYOND
ASSINIBOINE PARK CONSERVANCY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Winnipeg's Assiniboine Park is one of our most cherished assets. Winnipeggers see the Park as one of the best things about Winnipeg and believe it enhances the City's quality of life. With over 4 million visitations annually to the Park, the Assiniboine Park and Forest are one of the most frequently visited attractions in Manitoba.

In 2000, Winnipeg City Council established Assiniboine Park Enterprise (APE) to help modernize the operation of Assiniboine Park. APE was charged with responsibility for planning, managing and operating the Park as a business unit, including its physical and financial planning. In 2003, APE led a consultative process that focused on future development opportunities in the Park and culminated in the creation of the Assiniboine Park Framework Plan. This plan 'defines an integrated structure of land uses and development intended to guide the physical evolution of the Park in its second millennium'. Subsequent to this, in 2005, the Assiniboine Park Enterprise commissioned a governance review regarding the Assiniboine Park to include recommendations for its future leadership and organization. As a result of the recommendations of this report, the Assiniboine Park Conservancy was created.

The Assiniboine Park Conservancy is a private/public, not-for-profit Corporation that will establish a vision for the Assiniboine Park, create a plan to ensure it realizes its vision and govern the implementation of strategies towards the revitalization and transformation of the Park. The Board of Directors and Executive Management determined that it was important to embark on a strategic planning process that defines a clear and compelling vision, articulates its beliefs and principles and culminates in a strategic road map that will guide the organization into the future.

The following plan is the culmination of an analysis of existing information and previous studies and reports related to the Park, a facilitated planning session with the senior team members of the entities currently operating in the Park and a planning retreat with the Board of Directors of the Assiniboine Park Conservancy.

1.1 HISTORY

At its meeting of June 20, 2007, Winnipeg City Council approved a new governance structure for Assiniboine Park, beginning with the creation of a not-for-profit corporation that would operate independently from the City of Winnipeg with a mandate to lead, manage, fundraise, restore and redevelop Assiniboine Park and its amenities. Assumption of responsibility for management of Assiniboine Park would occur in a phased approach.

The Assiniboine Park Conservancy, Inc. was incorporated April 17, 2008 and a Chief Executive Officer commenced in early August, immediately working closely with the City of Winnipeg and other Assiniboine Park interests and business operations. In November, the Conservancy submitted to the City of Winnipeg, a proposed Work Plan for the creation of a comprehensive business plan that would build upon the Strategic Plan and define a new and sustainable future for Assiniboine Park. By agreement with the City of Winnipeg and in accordance with APC's Work Plan, a working Business Plan will be submitted to the City by the end of May, 2009 and will include:

- Major restoration and development plans for Assiniboine Park for the next 10 years
- Expected capital and operating costs associated with that restoration and development

- Conservancy plans for operating Assiniboine Park as one entity
- Integration of civic operated functions into the Conservancy
- Integration of functions performed by the three not-for-profit entities operating in the Park (Zoological Society of Manitoba, The Friends of Assiniboine Park Conservatory, Partners in the Park).

THE CONTEXT FOR PLANNING

Assiniboine Park has a long history in the city of Winnipeg and has played an important role in the lives of many. In developing a plan for its future, the APC considered its history and the role and purpose of Parks in general as well as the current economic, political, labour, citizen opinion and fundraising environment. The following is a summary of the existing environment.

The first formal parks were created to be passive and beautiful in contrast to urban life. Over time, they became a collection of important destinations and places. The characteristics of a good park are:

- It provides a range of things to do for different ages and types of people;
- It is easy to get to and connected to the surrounding community;
- It is safe, clean and attractive;
- It has places to sit; and
- It is a place to meet other people.

The layout of Assiniboine Park was created consistent with English Landscape Style developed by Olmsted. Its characteristic features include large open meadows, vista type views, strong emphasis on horticultural variety and flower gardens of all styles, a wide range of activities and interest and diverse recreational opportunities.

The Assiniboine Park Zoo, officially named in 1950's, is the oldest zoo in operation on the same site in Canada. Zoos have transitioned from being a collection of 'animal curiosities' for entertainment purposes to becoming collections of animals with significant educational objectives. Conservation of animal species became a focus of zoos in the late 1970's and became replicas of natural habitats. The major common areas of modern zoos are species preservation, biodiversity, research and education.

Except for the work done by Partners in the Park in the 1990's, there have been virtually no capital improvements to the Park since 1970. Almost 60% of funding for the Park is tax supported and City of Winnipeg funding has remained flat for some time. An increasing percentage of revenue has been generated from Park activities.

The deteriorating state of the Park infrastructure is a significant concern expressed by many stakeholders. Most park buildings are in poor condition. It is estimated that there has been an annual 'under funding' of facilities of $2.2 million. The underground infrastructure is old and the Zoo and Conservatory are not sustainable without significant capital infusion.

Citizens see a city park as important specifically for walking, cycling, holding gatherings and hosting recreational activities and events. They see the Park as enhancing the quality of life and as a valuable tourist attraction. Citizens are most likely to associate the Park with the Zoo, fitness activities and the outdoors/nature.

Only half of 'winter people' who participated in a recent survey think the Park is a good place for winter outdoor activities. The Zoo, Conservatory and green space drive public engagement and satisfaction with the Park as a whole so when these facilities are poor, public satisfaction declines. Approximately 25% of survey respondents see the Park as in major decline.

The English Gardens, Zoo and Leo Mol Garden are the most visited attractions. Recent survey results found that citizens are open to change and that there is significant support for an overhauled Zoo, a new Conservatory with butterfly house and the establishment of a 'Winnie the Pooh Children's Centre'. However, washrooms, in-park transportation, more concessions/restaurants and Kid's play area were the most frequently mentioned desired improvements.

The general goals of the Assiniboine Park Conservancy appear to align with the City of Winnipeg's 2020 vision plan. It is estimated that Park operations in 2005 were $11.1 million. Of that $8 million came from the City and $3 million from Park partner organizations.

The Province of Manitoba has expressed support of APC's objectives including seeking provincial/federal infrastructure funds. Federal infrastructure funds under the new Building Canada program are a possibility but there is a lot of competition within the province for these funds. Qualifying for funding will require evidence of strong incremental economic development. Creating a tourism draw, especially international, will be important.

The capital campaign feasibility study completed as part of the Business Case found that although individuals who were interviewed held the Park in high regard and were enthusiastic about renewal, not all felt the Park is a philanthropic priority. Most cited the need to see a firm financial commitment from the City of Winnipeg. There will be significant competition from other capital campaigns.

2.0 ACCOUNTABILITIES

Transformation of the magnitude envisioned by the Assiniboine Park Conservancy will require the commitment and passion of numerous organizations, groups and individuals. The Conservancy also recognizes that with dedication and authority comes responsibility and accountability. The Assiniboine Park Conservancy has established clear accountability statements that will guide its decisions and actions as it moves forward.



Public – We will protect, nurture and enhance Assiniboine Park to its greatest potential in the best interests of Winnipeggers.

Employees – We will create and sustain the culture and environment that will allow our employees to do their jobs well, grow and develop and contribute to the success of Assiniboine Park.

Volunteers – We will create and sustain the culture and environment that provides a fulfilling volunteer experience and recognizes their contribution to the success of Assiniboine Park.

Private Funders – We will pursue and fulfill the objectives for which the gift was intended and be responsible stewards of the gifts.

Government as Funders – We will pursue and fulfill the objectives for which the funding was intended and be responsible stewards of the funds.

Accreditation, Licensing and Regulatory Bodies – We will meet and exceed the standards set by professional, licensing and regulatory bodies.

3.0 THE PURPOSE OF ASSINIBOINE PARK

In determining the future for Assiniboine Park, the reason why it exists must be clear and 'top of mind' at all times. Considering the long history of Assiniboine Park and its role in the lives of Winnipeggers, Manitobans and visitors, APC articulated a concise purpose statement for the Park.

Assiniboine Park exists to connect people to nature and to create community through a variety of experiences.

4.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES / BELIEFS

As the Assiniboine Park Conservancy embarked on a process of defining the future of Assiniboine Park, the principles and beliefs that will guide all decisions moving forward were articulated:

- STATUS QUO IS NOT AN OPTION.
- A VIBRANT, BUSY PARK IS INTEGRAL TO A HEALTHY CITY.
- ASSINIBOINE PARK IS A PLACE FOR ALL.
- LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE IS PARAMOUNT.
- ASSINIBOINE PARK MUST BE A LEADER IN CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION.
- THE CHARACTER OF THE PARK WILL BE PRESERVED AND ENHANCED.
- DEVELOPMENT AND ENHANCEMENT WILL BE GUIDED BY THE COLLECTIVE VIEWS OF THE COMMUNITY.
- REVENUE GENERATION OPPORTUNITIES ARE A MEANS TO FUND THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THE PARK AND MUST INTEGRATE WITH ALL OTHER ELEMENTS OF A RENEWED PARK.

5.0 OUR VISION

Assiniboine Park will be a place of pride for all members of our community and a magnet for visitors; an exciting year round destination for enjoyment, adventure, discoveries and unique experiences in an environment of exceptional natural beauty.

6.0 OUR MISSION

In fulfilling the purpose of the park and in our journey toward our vision:

Assiniboine Park Conservancy is a team of dedicated staff and volunteers who employ visionary leadership and best practices that protect, nurture and enhance Assiniboine Park to provide extraordinary visitor experiences for present and future generations.

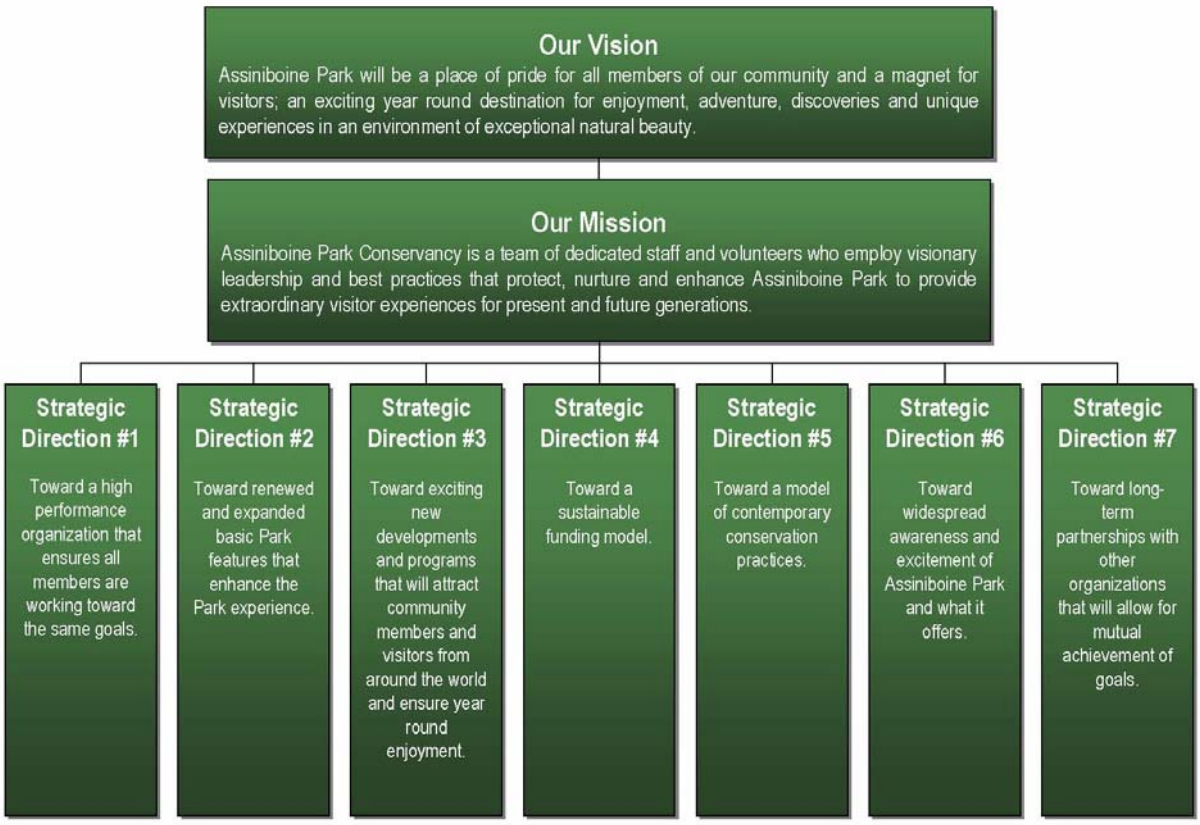
7.0 ISSUES / BARRIERS / EXISTING CONDITIONS

In order to determine where you are going, you must first critically assess the current state and identify issues, barriers or existing conditions that must be addressed to ensure realization of your vision. The following were identified:

- Lack of unique or differentiating element of the Park
- Outdated, worn-out facilities and lack of preventative and restorative maintenance as well as plantings of trees
- Year round activities not obvious or inadequate year round programming
- Limited understanding of park maintenance and management
- Lack of integrated planning and marketing
- Lack of integrated systems for customer profiling and data collection
- Advertising inefficiencies and lack of integrated 'branding' and advertising
- Lack of profile of some aspects of the Park
- Lack of park visitor services (food, washrooms etc.)
- Lack of park-wide, co-ordinated, knowledgeable volunteer body
- Inadequate volunteer opportunities in certain areas
- Lack of integrated programming
- Insufficient operational funding to maintain/restore facilities and green space
- Insufficient capital funding
- Segmented management
- Lack of opportunities for staff to work together
- Lack of donor awareness of all entities – competition between needs and donor interests
- Fear of and reluctance to change
- Sub standard performance measurement
- Lack of unifying vision for all interests
- Lack of organized public engagement in its future
- Barriers to accessibility
- Lack of unified approach to the customer/guest experience
- Lack of transportation to Park from further areas of the City and lack of good transportation within the Park
- Lack of staff resources to effectively get the job done and create new opportunities as well as after hour events
- Duplication of staff efforts

8.0 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The Assiniboine Park Conservancy believes that it must establish and maintain the most effective structure, environment, policies and practices to ensure it realizes its long-term vision. For the next three to five years, the Conservancy will focus its efforts and resources and will continue to move in the following directions:



9.0 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. Toward a high performance organization that ensures all members are working toward the same goals

- To develop the structure and organization of the Assiniboine Park Conservancy as the single delivery unit to achieve the vision and mission.
- To identify and implement a means of identifying the needs and wants of community members related to Assiniboine Park.
- To identify and implement the most effective and efficient organizational systems, processes and practices. (Planning, performance measurement, human resource management, financial management, operations, client service, public relations etc.)
- To develop a rigorous performance measurement framework including key performance indicators and methods of evaluating and reporting.
- To develop and implement a coordinated and robust volunteer development and management program.

2. Toward renewed and expanded basic Park features that enhance the Park experience

- To develop and implement an integrated vision and process for customer service.
- To develop and implement an integrated, prioritized facilities, grey (physical) infrastructure and green infrastructure renewal plan.
- To continuously improve universal accessibility.
- To develop an effective transportation system within and to the Park that will enhance access.
- To expand upon the existing food and beverage choices throughout the Park.
- To increase and enhance the public restrooms throughout the Park.
- To develop a rigorous and ongoing facilities and green infrastructure management plan that will protect our investment.

3. Toward exciting new developments and programs that will attract community members and visitors from around the world and ensure year round enjoyment

- To define the key criteria against which all new development within the Park will be measured.
- To develop a comprehensive inventory and updated projections of all park development and programming opportunities including elements of the Assiniboine Park Framework Plan, priorities of the existing Park entities and ideas to address current gaps.
- To develop a long term capital development plan including related operational funding requirements of new development.

4. Toward a sustainable funding model

- To identify the existing and long term operational funding requirements for the Conservancy.
- To negotiate an agreement with the City for transfer of responsibilities and long-term funding commitment.
- To design and implement an integrated and comprehensive fundraising framework including a capital campaign.
- To identify and enhance revenue generation opportunities for the Park.
- To secure funding from the provincial and federal governments.

5. Toward a model of contemporary conservation practices

- To develop and implement the overarching framework including the philosophy, criteria and standards against which all practices will be measured.
- To contribute to and demonstrate excellence in live collections management.
- To implement a public education program in conservation using Park practices as the foundation.

6. Toward widespread awareness and excitement of Assiniboine Park and what it offers.

- To develop and implement a branding strategy for Assiniboine Park.
- To implement comprehensive and integrated communication, marketing and advertising strategies for the Park.

7. Toward long-term partnerships with other organizations that will allow for mutual achievement of goals

- To identify organizations, events etc. that provide opportunities for collaboration and/or coordination.
- To develop partnerships with academic, government, non government and like institutions for the purposes of advancing research, learning and innovation.