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PO Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Halifax Regional Council
December 6, 2005

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:



Dan English, Acting Chief Administrative Officer



Wayne Anstey, Acting Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: November 8, 2005

SUBJECT: Point Pleasant Park Master Plan

ORIGIN

Council has been made aware of the efforts to develop a master plan for Point Pleasant Park after the devastating effects of the Brown Spruce Long Horn Beetle, the 2002 Ice Storm and Hurricane Juan. Through a donation by Jim Spatz of Southwest Properties, an international competition was held to develop a master plan for the park and to find a team of consultants to work with the municipality within that master plan framework.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Endorse the competition-winning submissions and recommended teams, NIP Paysage and Ekistics Planning and Design, as outlined in this report as the general framework for the restoration of Point Pleasant Park.
2. Authorize staff to enter into contracts with the two proponents for the first phase of park restoration as funds become available.

BACKGROUND

Point Pleasant Park is one of HRM's suite of regional parks serving a wide variety of citizens and visitors. Its unique combination of urban forest, seacoast, cultural resources (including First Nations, early Halifax settlement, military fortifications, park history and civic and naval memorialization) makes Point Pleasant Park one of the most significant urban parks in the country.

Point Pleasant Park has been without a comprehensive master plan since its inception more than one hundred and thirty-nine years ago. Over the past decade Point Pleasant Park has been significantly altered by insect infestation, ice storms, and Hurricane Juan.

These large, catastrophic events in rapid succession overwhelmed existing management strategies for the park. In the wake of the hurricane it was apparent that a long term vision and strategy were needed to direct the renewal of the park, as well as to support the management and operations plans that would be required as a result of park renewal work. Financial assistance from non-HRM funding sources for reforestation and renewal is also dependent on having a comprehensive strategy. It is for these reasons that an international design competition was undertaken for a master plan for Point Pleasant Park.

Process

The competition was administered by a steering committee of volunteers and HRM staff whose role was to design and conduct the competition, and to present a master plan recommendation and associated team of consultants to Council. (Steering committee membership can be found in Attachment D).

The competition was held in two stages with a website (www.pointpleasant.ca) used to convey instructions, background material, local expert opinion, and public feedback to teams all over the world. At both stages each design submission was evaluated by a Technical Review Team made up of local experts in areas pertinent to the park including: forest soils, forest ecology, archaeology, park maintenance and management, shorelines and park use. This review was forwarded to the Competition Jury whose members were selected for being eminent in the fields of forest restoration ecology, cultural resource management, urban design and park design and restoration. The Jury selected five finalists in the first stage of the competition who were asked to further refine their concepts, and in the second stage a final winner was to be chosen.

Public Consultation & Public Input

The competition steering committee created the Point Pleasant Park International Design Competition to be a highly open process with a significant amount of public input. Two public meetings were held and a detailed survey was circulated before the competition was opened in order to gauge park user needs.

Regular information updates to the general public and to the competitors were handled through the

competition website. An unprecedented level of park user interaction was achieved through the use of the website where public comments and feedback about the competition were posted for competitors, organizers, and park users to see. Public comments and feedback are still being solicited on the winning submissions in order to maintain a dialogue between HRM staff and park users.

DISCUSSION

The Winning Submissions

The Point Pleasant Park International Design Competition steering committee is recommending to Halifax Regional Council that the winning submissions received from NIP paysage of Montreal (in the area of design) and Ekistics Planning & Design from Dartmouth (in the area of implementation management) be used as the basis of a framework to advance the renewal, restoration, and regeneration of Point Pleasant Park. The two firms have agreed to meld their respective approaches to form a combined framework. A detailed transcript of the Jury's reasons for the selection can be found in Attachment A.

The winning plans firmly build on Point Pleasant Park as a naturalistic, forested park with a diverse network of trails, rich with cultural resources. They recognize that Point Pleasant Park acts as a contrast to programmed sport and recreation parks like the Halifax Commons and that it complements the HRM parks system by providing a high quality passive recreation experience in a landscape dominated by a sustainable coastal forest environment.

The plans do not recommend radical changes to the park, but instead work to enhance its existing attributes and former character. The plans also recognize that Point Pleasant Park has always been subtly evolving, and that the natural forces of change will continue to be exerted through forest succession and changing shorelines. The winning approaches would work with these natural processes, but also recognize that intervention is necessary if Point Pleasant Park is to be returned to its desired state in a timely manner. The plans also advocate an adaptive management approach based on lessons learned from the Harvard Forest in New England, the most intensely studied forest in North America. Since 1938, when that forest lost 70% of its trees from hurricane damage, researchers from Harvard University and other institutions have studied the forest's hurricane damage patterns and long-term responses.

Use and Implementation of the Plans

One of the initial steps in implementing the plans will be to recommend realignment of the role, terms of reference, and membership of the Point Pleasant Park Advisory Committee (PPPAC). This realignment (supported by the PPPAC itself) recognizes the extraordinary circumstances facing Point Pleasant. Any realignment should serve to 1) provide a degree of continuity with the process which produced the master plan framework; 2) the need for the PPPAC to have representation from, or access to, specialists in relevant fields (ecology, soils, archaeology, among others); and 3) the need for strong and continuing public input in restoration and management of the park.

The second step in implementing the plans will see the two winning firms produce a combined framework. In most areas the two plans are complementary. Where they differ, decisions will be based on the principles and objectives set out in the Point Pleasant Park International Design Competition. Staff and the PPPAC will oversee the merging process.

The resulting master plan will provide the long-needed framework for guiding the renewal of the park. It is the first of three integrated plans (master plan, management plan, and operations plan) that will be developed to comprehensively address the mandate, look, feel, use, and operation of the park. The management plan and the operations plan will be prepared over the course of the next few years by the consultants and staff, assisted by the PPPAC.

The master plan and the supporting management and operations plans will formalize a long term, comprehensive, ecologically sustainable vision for the park over the next 50 years. The plans will provide a context for more effective governance of the park, and they will foster an ongoing cooperative dialogue between HRM and park users in order to achieve the objectives and maintain the guiding principles set out in the master plan competition documents.

The master plan will be used to attract, and ensure the effective use of financial assistance for plan-related projects.

The implementation of the master plan is to be carried out by HRM in conjunction with the consultants in a phased approach. Staff recommends that the most immediate priority and the first phase of work are forest restoration and protection, followed by attention to the cultural resources found within the park. An approach to memorialization within the park needs to be developed immediately following that. Improvements to entrances, parking lots, support buildings and other amenities will follow over the course of the restoration. Each of these elements will be subject to Council approval before expenditures will be made.

Public Input

The users of the park have always been clear that they want to stay informed and have appropriate input into restoration and management of Point Pleasant Park. There are three primary tools to enable this: 1) public communications including continuation and regular updating of the Point Pleasant Park Website; 2) public input into major changes or improvements in the park; and 3) advice to Council and staff from the Point Pleasant Park Advisory Committee, Regional Council's official public advisory group on matters pertaining to the park.

Staff believes that all three approaches are required for Point Pleasant Park and that the work done through the competition has served to advance these tools. They will have to be advanced further as part of the plan implementation. A redefinition of the Point Pleasant Park Advisory Committee terms of reference will be part of that effort to strengthen public input. That said, a strong network of expertise around Point Pleasant Park has also been developed within HRM staff and from the staff of other involved agencies. This expertise must be allowed to operate and be utilized to make decisions regarding implementation and care for the park. The principles and objectives established

through the competition process is a touchstone for the renewal of the park, and will act to check, balance, and monitor renewal progress.

Other Reviews and Endorsements

The two winning plans have been reviewed and endorsed by the current Point Pleasant Park Advisory Committee and HRM staff from relevant departments. Each of these reviews identified areas that will have to be refined further and divergent areas that will have to be resolved.

Areas requiring further refinement include amenities supporting natural education programming within the park, winter use, some conflicting park uses, details around trail markings, a sensitive approach to signage, enhancing the thinking around cultural resources, and sourcing appropriate native planting stock.

Divergent areas that require resolution will be addressed when the two firms come together to detail the master plan and embark on the first phases of implementation. Any remaining issues will be addressed during development of the management and operations plan.

The consensus is that the winning submissions provide improvements and an approach that staff and the PPPAC can work with and that can be implemented within the constraints facing the municipality.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The master plan, if adopted, will allow staff to negotiate funding from several sources available for restoration and renewal. These funding sources target specific issues in the park such as forestry and cultural resource management. They include compensation from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency Brown Spruce Long Horn Beetle Compensation Program, Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements from Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada, and other government and non-government organizations, foundations and donors. There will also be a requirement for municipal funding for certain elements of the plan over the next 20 years. The exact amount is not currently known.

Note: Other municipal parks and open spaces damaged by Hurricane Juan and the BSLB cutting programs are eligible for some of the same funding sources. Restoration plans are in the works to secure forest restoration funding for these sites as well.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital, and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ALTERNATIVES

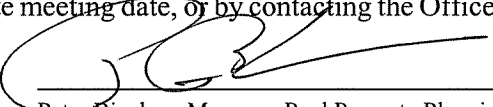
Council could choose to not accept the plan framework for Point Pleasant Park. In that case staff would proceed to develop another approach to the restoration of Point Pleasant Park.

ATTACHMENTS

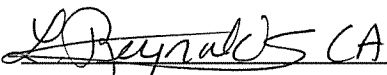
- A: Text of Jury Presentation
- B: Competition Principles and Objectives
- C: Point Pleasant Park Advisory Committee Endorsement
- D: Steering Committee Members
- E: Jury and Technical Advisory Team Members

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

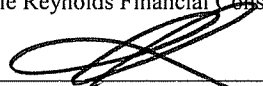
Report Prepared by:


Peter Bigelow, Manager, Real Property Planning - 490-6047

Financial Review:


Leslie Reynolds Financial Consultant 490-6902

Report Approved by:


Jim Spatz, Chair, Point Pleasant Park International Design Competition Steering Committee


Peter Strickings Acting Director, Real Property and Asset Management 490-7129

Attachment A

**Point Pleasant Park International Design Competition
Award Event, October 02, 2005
St. Mary's University, Halifax, NS**

Text of Public Address by Peter Jacobs Jury Chair, Point Pleasant Park International Design Competition

First and foremost I wanted to set the scene by explaining that the mandate of the jury is essentially to evaluate the projects that are submitted. That's the limit of our purview. We can only evaluate what we see in front of us and what we read.

The organizing committee (and I've been on a lot of juries) has been extraordinary. The jury members were given all sorts of documents. The website was a fabulous resource for us. We were probably one of the best informed juries that I know of in the history of my having been on juries.

On the one hand that's a great help, on the other hand it represents an enormous amount of work. But I think the organizing committee really is to be congratulated because this is truly an open information and communication system. It's extraordinarily well organized, and I think in the long run helped us very, very much in reaching decisions that we have reached. So, that's my first kudo.

My second kudo is to the members of the Jury. We actually didn't know each other at all. I have met on occasion one or two of the members of the jury, but it was five people selected for five different areas of expertise. And it's really quite amazing how compatible we were.

So, I would like to thank Bernard Bormann, who is a forest ecologist; John Zvonar who is an expert in Cultural Resource Management and landscape management; John Abel who works with the National Capital Commission in urban design and architecture; and Mark Laird who you may have heard of before, who worked on the Public Gardens and is really, truly an international expert in historic gardens and the restoration of these. It's quite an impressive team.

The mandate of the jury, as I said, was to evaluate those panels that you see before you. Frankly, all five entries were very impressive. The amount of work that these teams were asked to do in a period of a month was mind-boggling. You've got your money's worth times ten, in terms of the thinking that went into these projects; the sensitivity with which the projects were developed; and the ideas that were generated by these five teams; they are not mutually exclusive.

In some of the projects that we did not retain of the five, there was in one case, a really superb

idea focused on children and the need to bring the future generation into the process of appreciating what Point Pleasant Park is; being involved in its management over the long term, and learning about nature.

There was in another scheme a very interesting understanding of how you experience the forest, and that scheme emphasized the need to focus on not changing the trails, but the experience that one has moving along the trails.

The third group had a proposal with respect to medicinal gardens as a way of sharing the experience of the Mi'kmaq and of the early Colonial groups that settled in Halifax.

All of these programmatic ideas can be incorporated in any one of the schemes. It is not yet clear, and it is not the Jury's job to decide, whether or not they will move ahead as program components. I'm simply telling you that there was a really vast array of ideas that were extremely interesting.

The Jury saw Hurricane Juan as a wake-up call: these kinds of events, and in this morning's newspaper there is an editorial that focuses on the melting of the Arctic ice cap, the fact that sea levels will change, the shoreline of Point Pleasant Park will change. It is unlikely that we can build a wall against that change, so that there is an understanding, certainly, that informed the jury that Point Pleasant Park will be subject to accidents, natural disasters and unforeseen events. And we have to manage that process as much as we can.

The schemes that we felt should be retained, had some interesting ideas which I'm going to quote. From one the project that was submitted implies "a conscious shift from passively admiring nature to actively working with nature."

The other one: "the current state of the park provides and opportunity to correct some inappropriate vegetation patterns through active intervention. Careful adaptive management will allow a natural forest to succeed and will improve the park's ability to survive future disturbances."

Of the five finalists, two submissions, we believe, offered the best solutions. One solution was far and away the best master plan: a framework for the future of Point Pleasant Park. One other solution was far and away the best informed in terms of managing the change. And we as a Jury unanimously are recommending a partnership between those two firms.

The one that is, frankly, the best structured and best thought out framework. The other the best management team, the most informed about the Acadian forest, the ecology of the region, and the culture of the region.

So, it is the Jury's decision to recommend to you that the master plan framework of the NIP project be retained, and the management expertise of the Ekistics team be retained as

well.

It is an unusual, but not unprecedented way of proceeding. There are other examples in the past where a joint amalgam of expertise has been suggested by a jury, and that is definitely what we are doing this morning.

We think the two teams are entirely complementary. That the framework expertise of the NIP project in terms of the entrances to the park; the path framework which has been retained in its entirety (there have been no changes whatsoever to the path system); their strategy is fairly straightforward.

The remnant forests, which they call Witness Forests, are to be retained untouched; around those forests in a number of different locations, will be planted a protective zone to protect the remnant forests. They call these Ribbon Forests. This is a team that stresses metaphor, but I'm trying to take the metaphor and make it as simple as is possible.

You have the remnant forest; the next strategy is to protect that forest by planting around it-- protect it from wind. And then you have the larger, what they call, the Moving Forest, which is basically seventy five per cent of the existing forest which will grow over time as it chooses to do so.

Now this is not a non-interventionist strategy. These forests do have to be managed; and the work that you see on the last two boards [Ekistics boards 03 and 04] is of an enormous detail. The understanding of forest ecology is really impressive. And basically this team [Ekistics Planning & Design], if allowed to operate in this framework [NIP paysage's master plan framework], will be particularly capable in terms of managing the process over time.

The fact that the team is also not from away, means that they can assure an ongoing presence without stress either through budgets, or [air travel], or anything else. It happens to be a fortuitous, but very happy marriage in that sense.

I want to stress as well that you look at this plan and read basically the other two, that the sensitivity with which the key entry points to this park, some of the other aspects of the strategy for planting and for use are really very much a twenty-first century layer on top of the other layers in the park that go back for hundreds of years. But one that is particularly sensitive to the existing context.

The Jury was very impressed with the fact that this team generated the harshest reaction in the press. You guys really didn't like it. And they paid attention to those comments, took them extraordinarily seriously, and in fact evolved their scheme while remaining consistent to the principles to a point now where I think it is the least intrusive of all of the five schemes. It's the one which you are least likely to be aware of over time, except at these entry points and other particular places in the park which clearly either need to be brought forward and emphasized, or

need to be repaired. But we are unanimously of the belief that this one [NIP paysage scheme] is the least intrusive.

The combination of the two [NIP paysage and Ekisitics], I think is really the best possible result that we could have imagined. I can tell you that the culture of the Jury is to look for a winner. And the fact that we came to the conclusion that there really is a winning brew, a combination of the two is, I think, may be a fairly innovative way of a jury coming to a decision, but one which I think is perfectly consistent with the phasing that will have to occur. You have to have a strategy, and then you have to manage that strategy over time. And the expertise that's required in one relative to the other is different.

The fact that the instructions that were given to the competitors were enormous, complex, sometimes contradictory, and that within a month you asked these people to work from their initial proposals through to the proposals that you see around you, and that they managed to do so, I think it's a tribute to their excellence.

So, as a Jury we can only say this is our decision. We are very comfortable with it; we think it is the best possible outcome. We're surprised at how good the outcome is, and we can only wish you the best and good luck in the future on implementing what this framework and these management principles recommend.

Thank you very much.

Attachment B

**Point Pleasant Park International Design Competition
Objectives and Principles**

PPPIDC Objectives

- a) define a comprehensive, ecologically sustainable vision for Point Pleasant Park, its urban forest and its coastal landscape;
- b) choreograph the Park to enhance it as a place of interest, enjoyment, and discovery for citizens and visitors;
- c) explore recreation, education, and programming opportunities that enhance the casual, enjoyable and friendly atmosphere of the Park;
- d) restore and enhance the landscape character of the park that existed before Hurricane Juan;
- e) interpret the importance of Point Pleasant Park to its urban context on the Halifax peninsula and within HRM;
- f) suggest a phased approach to master plan implementation that incorporates specific renewal projects beginning within the following time frames: 1 year, 2 to 5 years, 6 to 20 years, and 21 to 50 years;
- g) set the direction for future management and operations plans for the Park.
- h) provide creative solutions to screening and/or interpreting the neighbouring container pier and helipad in the lower parking lot;
- i) ensure that the main entrances to the park reflect the park's sense of place, are welcoming, and effectively orient park users;
- j) ensure that the parking lots place safe pedestrian movement first, are environmentally and user friendly, and support multiple uses;
- k) provide an amenity building/bathing pavilion in anticipation of harbour cleanup and reinstatement of swimming at Black Rock Beach;
- l) define cultural programming spaces for that do not adversely impact on the forest or fortifications;
- m) provide a strategy for shoreline protection.

PPPIDC Design Principles

1. Balance

The design should balance all aspects of the park in order to maintain its ecological health, its usage, its natural beauty and its sense of place in Halifax. Point Pleasant Park needs to be balanced in many ways: for example, between use and ecological protection; between forested and open areas; between community activities and solitary activities; and between the natural and the cultivated.

2. Ecological Sustainability

A primary objective of the park's renewal is to achieve a healthy forest environment. Therefore, the design must result in a sustainable environment for all aspects of the park's ecosystem. The master plan must lead to work that will eventually create harmony between the flora, fauna, soils and hydrology of the park.

3. Park Use

The design should describe park activities that can exist with minimum conflict between uses. The design must reflect the park's primary character as a casual, enjoyable, friendly place that provides opportunities for solitary and social enjoyment. The design should integrate the various uses in such a manner that the park's carrying capacity is not exceeded.

4. Context and Connectedness

The design must recognize and reflect the various contexts within which the park exists, for example, the HRM urban landscape, the HRM park system, local and regional geography and its historical social context.

The design must demonstrate connections on many levels. Ecological connections must exist vertically from treetop to bedrock, as well as horizontally from the city through the forest and to the ocean. Nature-to-nature connections must support the long-term ecological health and natural beauty of the park.

The people who use the park are connected with its ecosystem. Public feedback indicates that park users love the park's environment for its intrinsic natural beauty, its educational value, and its contrast with the urban environment.

Point Pleasant Park has long been a place where people meet in a beautiful natural setting. Whether through casual recreation or at formal ceremonies, the park is seen as a very special place of social connection and community. It is also valued as a place where people connect with personal, local, provincial, and national history.

5. Accessibility

Point Pleasant Park must be accessible to all and should embrace universal design principles. Universal design seeks to create products and environments that are useful to and useable by everyone, and that do not segregate or stigmatize any group of users. Preferably the same means of use is provided for all; identical wherever possible and equivalent when not. While the park must be accessible to all, conflicting uses may necessitate that not all of it be accessible to all users at all times.

6. Implementation Process

The design for Point Pleasant Park must be capable of being translated into a master plan that can be implemented in phases. Projects within the master plan must have the ability to be phased in a way that is economically achievable in both the short term and long term. Phased projects should not have to rely on future phases in order to demonstrate a sense of completion and to be useable.

Phased projects must be environmentally friendly in form and function, minimizing conflicts with adjacent uses and concurrent activities.

Attachment C

Point Pleasant Park Advisory Committee Endorsement

Moved by Phillip Read and seconded by Joe O'Brien;

“That the Point Pleasant Park Advisory Committee adopt the winning submissions by NIP Paysage and Ekistics Planning and Design, as put forth by the Point Pleasant Park International Design Competition Steering Committee, as the framework for the restoration of Point Pleasant Park and that the PPPAC work with HRM staff to implement the plan”

Attachment D

**Point Pleasant Park International Design Competition
Steering Committee Members**

Peter Bigelow, Manager, HRM, Real Property Planning

Kim Borgal, Marketing and Communications Assistant, HRM, Corporate Communications

Ruth Goldbloom, O.C., Chair, Pier 21 Foundation

Stewart MacMillan, Parkland Planner, HRM, Real Property Planning

Doreen Malone, General Manager, Neptune Theatre

LaJune Naud, Chair, Point Pleasant Park Advisory Committee

Frank Palermo, Professor of Architecture, Dalhousie University

Allan Robertson, retired management consultant; member of Friends of Point Pleasant Park

Michael Santilli, student of architecture, Dalhousie University

Gordon Smith, Landscape Architect / Planner, CBCL Limited

Michael Smith, artist

Jim Spatz, Chairman and CEO, Southwest Properties Limited

John Stuart, General Manager, Bishop's Cellar

Iain Taylor, retired geographer; President, Friends of Point Pleasant Park

Richard Wassersug, Professor Dalhousie University

Anne West, retired public relations consultant and park user

Attachment E

**Point Pleasant Park International Design Competition
Jury**

John Abel, MA, DipArch, MArch, MCP, MRAIC, OAA
Director, Design and Land Use
National Capital Commission
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Bernard Bormann, Ph.D.
Principal Forest Ecologist
USDA Forest Service
Corvallis, Oregon, U.S.A.

Peter Jacobs, FCSLA, FASLA, RAIC
Professor of Landscape Architecture
Universite de Montreal
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Mark Laird, M. A. Conservation Studies, M. Phil.,
Landscape Architecture
Senior Lecturer, Landscape Architecture
Harvard Design School
Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

John E. Zvonar, OALA, CSLA
Conservation Landscape Architect
Heritage Conservation Directorate, PWGSC
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

**Point Pleasant Park International Design Competition
Technical Review Team**

Don Awalt, Mi'kmaq Friendship Centre, First Nations

Gareth Harding, Point Pleasant Park User/Naturalist, Park Use

Glen Harrison, Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), Pest Management

Kevin Keys, NS Department of Natural Resources (NSDNR), Forestry Soils

Karen Lowery, Halifax Regional Municipality, Recreation

Ron MacDonald, Parks Canada, Heritage Management

Blair Pardy, Parks Canada, Forest Ecology

Gus Reed, Point Pleasant Park Advisory Committee/Park User, Park Use

Art Sampson, Halifax Regional Municipality, Park Management

Fred Schwarz, Black Spruce Heritage Services, Archeology

John Simmons, Halifax Regional Municipality, Arboriculture

Bob Taylor, Bedford Institute of Oceanography (BIO), Saltwater Shorelines