

CITY OF NANAIMO

BUSINESS CASE – Parks Operations Section: Parks Maintenance Worker - Playgrounds

CURRENT OVERVIEW

Parks Operations oversees the operation and maintenance of over 1,160 hectares of parks and 180 kilometres of trails. This includes 76 neighborhood playgrounds, 20 that have been installed in the last 10 years, and five destination playgrounds.

Presently there are no dedicated playground maintenance staff in Parks Operations. The Turf and Parks Unit within Parks Operations supervises a grounds maintenance contract for grass cutting and litter removal at neighbourhood playgrounds and utilizes internal resources to carry out these services at most destination playgrounds. This Unit also carries out playground safety inspections and basic playground maintenance.

The Turf and Parks Unit currently consists of one Supervisor, one Equipment Operator, two Sports Field Maintenance Workers and one Carpentry Tradesperson. The Carpentry Tradesperson who exclusively carries out playground maintenance is also required to undertake other duties associated with the maintenance of amenities including benches, washrooms, fencing, signage and sports courts.

The Standards Council of Canada provides requirements (CSA-Z6414-14) for public-use playground equipment and play spaces for use by children aged 18 months to 12 years which includes inspection by certified playground inspectors of playground equipment. In addition to monthly inspection, playground maintenance duties include; repair and maintenance of playground equipment, fall protection, playground boarders and other amenities with respect to their cleanliness, safety, playability, usage, and the required maintenance standard.

BUSINESS ISSUE

The lack of a dedicated playground maintenance worker means that playgrounds are presently maintained, but not always at the regular intervals as they should due to the other tasks that the Carpentry Tradesperson is assigned to. Maintenance is mainly reactive (once a maintenance issue has presented its self). Staff have done their best to maintain a preventative schedule, but there are too many playgrounds for a single position to look after, especially with that same position responsible for the maintenance and repair of other park amenities. This puts parks assets at greater risk of failure, increases risk and results in playgrounds vulnerable to deterioration.

While participants of Reimagine Nanaimo Phase 1 Public Engagement process noted higher levels of satisfaction with playgrounds, they also voiced an interest in increased maintenance and updates to playground equipment in public parks with one participant commenting, *“Many playground facilities are old, run down and broken. When I first arrived in Nanaimo (2017-2018) and took my two young children to different playgrounds, I was deterred by broken equipment (Barney Moriez, Maffeo Sutton (resolved), Centennial, Departure Bay). Many playgrounds could use serious modernization and upgrading”*.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

The addition of a Parks Maintenance Worker-Playgrounds will allow Parks Operations to begin to enhance playground maintenance by becoming more preventative; grass cutting and litter removal services would remain the responsibility of a contractor.

OPTIONS

Option #1 – Add one Parks Maintenance Worker-Playgrounds to Park Operations Section

Creation of one permanent full-time Parks Maintenance Worker-Playgrounds position reporting to Supervisor, Turf and Parks.

Benefits:

- Provide a needed semi-skilled worker resource.
- Reduce risk and liability in playgrounds, resulting in safer outdoor play spaces for the community use.
- Improve asset management capacity of Parks Operations by increasing maintenance of playgrounds.
- Allow Carpentry Tradesperson role to focus on other parks amenities such as parks structures (kiosks, shelters, railings), signage, benches, courts, fencing and washrooms as required therefore increasing maintenance of those amenities.
- Residents will experience better maintained playgrounds which are cleaner and show few signs of wear and tear (signs of age will remain).
- Fall protection will be topped up more frequently leaving playground safer and looking fresh.
- Play features will be proactively maintained resulting in fewer breakages and increased periods of playability.
- Begin to work towards rectifying some of the issues and reaching some of the goals highlighted in phase 1 of Reimagine Nanaimo.

Weaknesses:

- Permanent increase to operating budget of Parks Operations

Financial Analysis:

- The position is anticipated to be a level 6, subject to JEC, with an annual salary of \$69,500 plus benefits. 2022 budget impact including benefits is estimated at \$67,700 based on an April 1st start, 2023 budget impact is estimated at \$94,100.
- Additional annual costs are estimated at \$32,600 in 2022 and \$42,200 in 2023 for fleet unit, training, telephone and materials and supplies.
- One-time costs upon the creation of the position are projected at \$86,400 for the purchase and equipping of a fleet unit and smart phone.

Option# 2 – Status Quo

Continue with no permanent full-time Parks Maintenance Worker-Playgrounds position in the Parks Operations Section.

Benefits:

- No increase to operating budget for Parks Operations

Weaknesses:

- Continuation of break-fix maintenance model with no dedicated resource for the high number of playgrounds.
- Inability to proactively work towards rectifying some of the issues and reaching some of the goals highlighted in phase 1 of Reimagine Nanaimo.

RECOMMENDATION

Option #1 – Add one Parks Maintenance Worker-Playgrounds to Park Operations Section.