



Staff Report to Community Advisory Committee

DATE: Tuesday, August 26, 2025

DEPARTMENT: Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT: Park Amenity Sponsorship and Donation Policy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

As directed by Council, Staff have been reviewing City policies in order to identify those which need updating to provide clarity and update processes where necessary.

Staff have reviewed the City's park bench sponsorship and donation program and are recommending a Park Amenity Sponsorship and Donation Policy to highlight the opportunities available for individuals and groups to sponsor or donate benches and other park amenities, and to provide guidelines for administering these programs.

Attached is the proposed Park Amenity Sponsorship and Donation Policy (POL-0182-PARK), for Committee's consideration and recommendation to Council.

BACKGROUND:

Currently, the City operates an informal memorial bench program as there are no written guidelines available to the public and it is not widely advertised.

Staff have researched similar programs administered by other municipalities and have found that most municipalities in British Columbia have a program for residents to sponsor or donate park benches and other amenities.

A program of this kind provides a meaningful way for individuals to commemorate someone's life or celebrate a special occasion, and may provide furnishings for the City's public spaces, lower costs related to acquiring and maintaining benches and amenities and offer tax benefits to donors through issuance of donation receipts.

COMMENTARY:

Local governments across the province have a variety of programs to encourage residents to sponsor or donate amenities. For example, Coquitlam publishes a catalogue of amenities that can be donated or gifted, including benches, picnic tables, trees, playgrounds, picnic shelters, and youth sport courts, together with the associated donation amounts. Colwood has a policy which addresses gifts, memorials, beautification, and natural area restoration, and provides for a 5-year maintenance period. The City of Vancouver and City of Victoria have donation programs listed on their website with no associated policy in place.

The proposed policy highlights the following programs administered by the City's Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department:

- (1) Park Bench Sponsorship: Individuals or groups may sponsor an existing park bench with a customized plaque, with wording approved by the Director of Parks, Recreation, and Facilities, for a 10-year term. A charitable tax receipt is not issued to the sponsor of an existing bench.
- (2) Park Bench Donation: Individuals or groups may donate a new park bench with a customized plaque, including maintenance, for a 10-year term. A charitable tax receipt is issued to the donor of a new park bench.
- (3) Specialized Park Amenity Donation: Individuals or groups may donate specialized amenities such as playground equipment, water fountains, or picnic shelters, including maintenance, for a 10-year term. A charitable tax receipt is issued to the donor of a specialized park amenity.

Potential Challenges

During their review of potential policy criteria, staff also examined challenges reported by other local governments within the province.

In a July 2024 report to Council, the City of Burnaby cited the following reasons for halting their parks donation program:

- (1) Capital and administrative costs: Since the mid-1990's, the capital costs of acquiring amenities and the administrative costs of the programs have increased significantly. The result is that the program used to cover about 80% of the capital cost of a bench but now it covers about 60% of the capital cost, and no administrative costs are recovered.
- (2) Over-subscription: A surge in demand made it challenging to find suitable locations for new

benches in popular parks, causing frustration among potential donors who face long waiting times to sponsor a bench.

(3) A need to re-focus on amenity donations beyond memorial benches.

The issues identified by the City of Burnaby, as described above, were considered in creating the proposed policy, which addresses these matters in the following ways:

- (1) Costs: Under the proposed policy, the Parks Department will determine donation amounts by considering the capital cost of acquiring the item, the projected maintenance expenses over a 10-year period, and the estimated installation costs. This provides the flexibility to adjust donation amounts as costs increase year-over-year, making the program sustainable over time.
- (2) Location: The City will provide location options for benches and other amenities to interested parties as determined by City staff. This allows the City to strategically develop park amenities according to the Parks Master Plan and prevents overcrowding of benches and amenities. Sponsorship of benches in Veterans Memorial Park will be limited to veterans and the immediate families of veterans.
- (3) Amenities beyond memorial benches: The Parks Department will offer amenities beyond park benches, as new opportunities to furnish developing parks or replace aging amenities arise. These options will be developed by staff once the policy is approved and presented to Council for approval.

Staff believe that if this policy is approved and the program is advertised, the City will receive an increased number of requests for park bench sponsorship and amenity donations.

The City's Parks Department can create and publish program application forms which will be made available online, or for pick up at City Hall. A catalogue of available products with associated donation amounts can also be developed.

Staff recommend that the proposed Park Amenity Sponsorship and Donation Policy be adopted as presented.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

At this time, the proposed policy can be managed within existing resources. If the program is advertised and there is a significant increase in interest, additional staff resources may be required.

Staff will report back to Council with an update on the policy and public interest prior to additional resources being considered.

There may be costs associated with maintaining donated amenities beyond the 10-year sponsorship period. Amenity replacement costs will also be the responsibility of the City.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no noted legal implications in respect to the proposed policy.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

5g – Maintain the City’s Long-Standing Corporate Efficiencies

6 – Quality of Life

OPTIONS:

Option 1

THAT the Community Advisory Committee recommend that Council adopt the City of Langford “Park Amenity Sponsorship and Donation Policy” (POL-0182-PARK) as presented.

OR Option 2

THAT the Community Advisory Committee recommend that Council adopt the City of Langford “Park Amenity Sponsorship and Donation Policy” (POL-0182-PARK) with the following amendments:

- a. _____;
- b. _____;
- c. _____.

OR Option 3

THAT the Community Advisory Committee recommend that Council take no action with respect to the City of Langford “Park Amenity Sponsorship and Donation Policy” (POL-0182-PARK) at this time.

SUBMITTED BY: Richard Wagner, Policy Analyst and Legislative Drafter

Concurrence: Melisa Miles, Manager of Legislative Services

Concurrence: Donna Petrie, Senior Manager of Communications & Economic Development

Concurrence: Yari Nielsen, Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities

Concurrence: Matthew Baldwin, RPP, MCIP, Director of Development Services

Concurrence: Leah Stohmann, RPP, MCIP, Director of Community Planning and Climate Change

Concurrence: Katelyn Balzer, P.Eng., Director of Engineering and Public Works

Concurrence: Michael Dillabaugh, CPA, CA, Director of Finance

Concurrence: Marie Watmough, Director of Legislative & Protective Services

Concurrence: Braden Hutchins, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

Concurrence: Darren Kiedyk, Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments:

Appendix A – Proposed “Park Amenity Sponsorship and Donation Policy” (POL-0182-PARK)