



Regional Board Report

TO: Regional Board

FROM: Parks Services

DATE: April 11, 2019

SUBJECT: Proposed RDCO/Clubhouse Child Care Centre Memorandum of Understanding and Lease Agreement – Woodhaven Nature Conservancy Regional Park

Voting Entitlement: *All Directors – Weighted Corporate Vote – Simple Majority – LGA 210.2*

Purpose: To request approval from the Regional Board to enter into a 3 year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Lease Agreement (Lease) with the Clubhouse Child Care Centre (Clubhouse).

Executive Summary:

Parks Services received a proposal in 2017 from the non-profit Clubhouse Child Care Centre to pilot an outdoor preschool. In June 2018 the Regional Board gave approval for staff to explore a pilot partnership agreement between the Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) and the Clubhouse for a 3-year term. The proponents seek to license an outdoor classroom space, named The Treehouse Forest Preschool, and operate Monday through Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. They are committed to the administration, programming, and hiring of preschool staff. It is anticipated that the Treehouse Forest Preschool will exceed early childhood development goals and provide learning through outdoor play and exploration.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Regional Board approve the Memorandum of Understanding and Lease Agreement with Clubhouse Child Care Centre and authorize its signing officers to enter into these agreements for the delivery of an outdoor nature preschool over a portion of Woodhaven Nature Conservancy Regional Park located at 4711 Raymer Road as identified on Schedule 'A' of the Lease Agreement.

Respectfully Submitted:

Murray Kopp
Director-Parks Services

Approved for Board's Consideration

Brian Reardon, CAO

Prepared by: Nicole Kittmer (Park Interpreter)
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Implications of Recommendation:

- Strategic Plan:** The partnership with the Clubhouse is consistent with the Regional District's Strategic Priorities of protecting and promoting our environment and lifestyle, retaining and improving quality of life, ensuring asset service and financial sustainability through the regular use of an underused asset, and championing of communications and engagement.
- General:** Provides an effective and efficient for providing increased opportunities for nature-based education in Regional Parks. Safety and security of the lands and infrastructure of Woodhaven Nature Conservancy Regional Park will be greatly enhanced through the Clubhouse's presence and operation on the leased portion of the lands. The program is also visionary and responsive to community interest in outdoor play and demand for education opportunities.
- Organizational:** The partnership with the Clubhouse is consistent with the Parks Services' Strategic Objectives of interpreting the environment, supporting self-directed Visitor Services experiences, natural history exploration, leisure skill development, and volunteerism, promoting park use, and enhancing park amenities.
- Financial:** There will be minor financial and personnel costs in terms of maintenance of land, seasonal parking lot maintenance, and staff time to assist with the partnership. It is anticipated the Regional District will see minor financial savings as a result of the Clubhouse being responsible for minor maintenance, property security/presence, lease hold improvements, and utilities.
- Policy:** In respect of lease holder privacy and rights the lease agreement waives portions of the Regional Parks Regulatory Bylaw #1105 that may infringe upon those lease holder rights.
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Background:

In 2017, the Regional Board adopted the Woodhaven Nature Conservancy Regional Park Management Plan after a yearlong public and stakeholder consultation process. Also in 2017, Parks Services received a proposal from the Clubhouse to pilot an outdoor, nature-based preschool in a regional park setting. As the Woodhaven Management Plan identifies the Raymer cabin in Woodhaven as a candidate for community program use and the Raymer cabin is also surrounded by a park setting ideal for a nature preschool, Parks staff identified Woodhaven Nature Conservancy Regional Park (Woodhaven) as a preferred location for this project.

On June 14th, 2018 the Regional Board supported "in principle" a pilot partnership program with the non-profit Clubhouse to implement a "Treehouse Forest Preschool" for a 3-year term at Woodhaven Nature Conservancy Regional Park:

THAT the Regional Board support in principle a pilot partnership program with the nonprofit Clubhouse Child Care Center to implement a "Treehouse Forest Preschool" for a 3-year term at Woodhaven Nature Conservancy Regional Park;

AND FURTHER THAT staff be directed to create a Memorandum of Understanding and lease agreement between the Regional Board and the Clubhouse.

(RDCO Board Resolution #108/18)

A steering committee with representatives from Regional Parks, the Clubhouse, Interior Health (licensing), Okanagan College, UBCO (teacher preparation), School District #23 (SD 23) and several Early Childhood Educators have since provided insight from their respective areas of expertise to support and guide this unique community program. With the help of this committee, the Clubhouse developed a detailed set of policies and procedures to pilot the Treehouse Forest Preschool, British Columbia's first licensed Forest Preschool program.

This nature-based early learning program is designed to provide safe, affordable, and reliable pre-kindergarten curriculum in an optimum learning environment using inquiry-based, emergent, and experiential learning opportunities. The RDCO will receive in-kind benefit from the Treehouse Forest Preschool such as daily maintenance and upkeep of the outdoor classroom space, basic flora and fauna inventories, citizen science project data, and other services deemed appropriate by RDCO staff and Clubhouse representatives. Examples of Treehouse Forest Preschool curriculum include: constructing temporary shelters, ephemeral woodland art, and other nature trail activities. Weather such as light to moderate rain, snow, and moderate cold are viewed as components of an outdoor classroom. During classroom time at the Treehouse Forest Preschool, the Raymer cabin will only be used for periods when shelter is urgently needed and when bathrooms are required. Regardless, having a licensed childcare facility is essential for insurance eligibility and is critical to opening up child care spaces for the most vulnerable children and families in our community. Caregivers then have access to child care subsidies to support their children to attend the program.

The Clubhouse proposes that up to two 2.5-hour programs be held in the nature classroom Monday to Friday on school days, between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. In addition to the children registered in the Treehouse Forest Preschool, other preschool, daycare and kindergarten groups can book the outdoor classroom for sessions guided by trained program educators. The Clubhouse proposes the Treehouse Forest Preschool program be led by two certified Early Childhood Educators (ECEs), one certified Early Childhood Assistant (ECA), and one bus driver, providing a ratio of 1 adult to 5 children. Note this is a lower ratio than the 8 children: 1 adult required by Interior Health and offers increased staff numbers to accommodate the needs of an outdoor classroom environment. The other preschool, daycare and kindergarten groups who book the outdoor classroom space provide their own ECEs; however, the Clubhouse will dedicate one Treehouse Forest Preschool ECE to the outdoor classroom at all times. Treehouse ECEs will also undertake daily custodial duties of the building and play spaces.

Parks staff brought forward this conceptual project to the Okanagan Mission Resident's Association in November 2018. The proposal was well received by the members of the community in attendance. Further, Parks staff hosted an open house at Woodhaven in March 2019; approximately 60 people attended. In addition to these in-person sessions, a total of seven submissions were received online and by telephone, at least two of which identified themselves as neighbours of the park. All of the discussions through all of these channels were positive and in favour of the pilot program. Most respondents are interested in registering their children or grandchildren in the program and a couple individuals are interested in helping whenever and however they can.

In conclusion, the MoU provides guidance to the RDCO and the Clubhouse on the purpose, objectives, and activities related to the Treehouse Forest Preschool partnership. The lease agreement provides the legal mechanism and identifies the responsibilities for both parties over the lease area.

Financial Considerations:

The RDCO remains the property owner and will lease the space to the Clubhouse for \$1.00 per calendar year. The lease agreement would grant the Clubhouse use of the Woodhaven and/or Mission Creek properties for the operation of the nature-based program. The Clubhouse would be responsible for paying the utilities for the building including gas, electricity, and water, and providing daily custodial clean-up of the building and play areas by ECEs. The RDCO would provide snow and garbage removal, fencing around the backside of the cabin and the front yard as well as an access ramp (for which there are budgeted funds in 2019), and hazard tree mitigation and removal when necessary.

It would be the mandate of these two parties to work together to acquire funding for renovations to the existing buildings as needed, design and implement a nature-based educational program, and continue to explore modifications or new opportunities for the program. Budgeted RDCO renovations for 2019 include: accessible washroom improvements (\$15K), accessible access ramp (\$5K), accessible door improvements (\$2K), fencing (\$8K), electrical improvements (\$2K), structure repairs (\$8K), and design and permitting (\$5K), for a total capital project investment of \$45,000.

In order to raise funds to perform additional renovations and additions to the classroom space and indoor facilities, grant funding provided through government authorities and other funding streams can be applied for. In the past, the BC government has provided funding for similar projects through the 'Child Care Major Capital Funding: Creation of New Licensed Child Care Spaces' program and the 'Child Care Minor Capital Funding for Emergency Repair, Replacement and Relocation' program. These and other funding sources can be applied for jointly to ensure the application is thorough and accurate. It is the expectation of RDCO Parks staff that funding will be secured by Clubhouse for building renovations and upgrades to be completed within the first year of the three-year pilot project term, in addition to those budgeted by RDCO.

Considerations not applicable to this report:

- Policy Considerations
- Legal/Statutory Authority
- Organizational Considerations
- External Considerations
- Alternative Recommendations

Attachment(s):

1. Proposed RDCO / Clubhouse Lease Agreement
2. Proposed Woodhaven - Memorandum of Understanding
3. Schedule A Clubhouse Lease Area
4. Schedule B Bylaw 1427