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Park board targets private contract

Vision commissioner poised to challenge controversial 2008 board ruling

Sandra Thomas, Vancouver Courier
 Published: Friday, February 27, 2009

The park board could face a lawsuit if it reverses a decision made last November to award a contract to a private wedding company for the operation of the Celebration Pavilion in Queen Elizabeth Park.

At next week's park board meeting, Vision Vancouver commissioner Aaron Jasper will ask the board to rescind the decision made by the former NPA-dominated board. In its last meeting Nov. 24, the former board awarded a five-year contract to Betty Anne and Allan Burnett in exchange for a percentage of the chapel's revenue and more than \$100,000 worth of improvements to the pavilion, including the addition of a bride's room. The Burnetts own The Chapel at Stanley Park and Richmond-based The Chapel at Minoru Park. Betty Anne Burnett said if Jasper's motion is approved the couple will have no choice but to seek compensation. "We've spent a lot of time and money on this already," said Burnett, who notes several couples have booked weddings. "If the park board goes ahead with this we'll have to file a lawsuit and that will be more money wasted."



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 NPA park commissioner Ian Robertson accuses his board colleagues of "coddling" CUPE Local 15, which opposes a private wedding company operating the Celebration Pavilion in Queen Elizabeth Park.

Photo Dan Toulgoet

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their own flowers, music and wedding officiator. But under the contract, those services must be provided through the Burnetts, who provide packages that include flowers and music for prices between \$1,800 and \$2,000.

"Basically the park board gets a cut of the commission from their packages," said Jasper. "But we think we can get a better return from increased usage. If people can afford to use it, it will get rented out more often."

NPA commissioner Ian Robertson said he's "embarrassed" by the way the Vision commissioners are treating the Burnetts.

"It's ironic [Vision] Mayor Gregor Robertson says he's an advocate of small business in Vancouver," he said.

Robertson said the board can rescind past decisions but only if new information is brought forward. He said that's not the case with the Burnetts.

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