

13 October 2009

POLO IN ROYAL PARK

Division Design and Urban Environment

Presenter Rob Adams, Director Design and Urban Environment

Purpose

1. To seek Committee's consideration of an application Polo Enterprises Australia (PEA) has requested Council's approval to hold Paspaley Polo in the City in an area of Royal Park south of the State Netball Hockey Centre (SNHC) on 22 November 2009.

Recommendation from Management

2. That the Finance and Governance Committee:
 - 2.1. determines its position on the staging of the Paspaley Polo in the City in Royal Park on 22 November 2009 on the old hockey field adjacent to the State Hockey Centre;
 - 2.2. notes that any approval would be subject to approval by Government to rescind clause 13 of the *Regulations for the Care, Protection and Management of Royal Park in the City of Melbourne 1934*; and
 - 2.3. proposes to charge the event organisers a standard event fee of \$9,500 plus reinstatement costs of up to \$30,000 if approved.

Background

3. Polo Enterprises Australia (PEA) has requested Council's approval to hold Paspaley Polo in the City in an area of Royal Park south of the State Netball Hockey Centre (SNHC) on 22 November 2009. They require a rectangular area as the polo field, with horse yards at both ends and a fenced marquee area along one side.
4. PAE made an application in May 2009 to hold the Polo event in Fawkner Park on 5 December. The application was declined because under the City's Sustainability Guidelines, Fawkner Park has been deemed suitable for only low and medium impact events. Furthermore, the area of Fawkner Park will be used by cricket teams at that time and there are no alternative grounds to relocate the cricket.
5. Polo Enterprises, and one of their sponsors, Park Hyatt Melbourne, appealed in August against the refusal. In discussions with Council officers, the possibility of using the area in Royal Park was discussed. It is an informal sports ground and used one day a week in summer for touch rugby.
6. A major event (Hockey Champions Trophy) will be held at the SNHC from 28 November to 6 December 2009. This event will place a heavy demand on the area in terms of traffic and car parking and as a result, the application was denied.
7. The latest request to the Council from Polo Enterprises is for the use of Royal Park on the earlier date of 22 November 2009 which would be before the Hockey event.

Key Issues

8. The benefits associated with holding the event include:
 - 8.1. activation of a little used area of Royal Park that contained hockey grounds prior to the development of the SNHC; and
 - 8.2. introduction of a polo event into the City which will be open free of charge to the public (although the marquees will be ticketed and within fenced areas).
9. The risks associated with holding the polo event on 22 November include:
 - 9.1. the polo event requires temporary infrastructure to be set up and the movement of the horses on grassed areas. Under the City of Melbourne's Sustainability Guidelines for Holding Events in Parks, polo would be classed as high impact;
 - 9.2. community concerns that hosting major events in Royal Park may negatively impact the native landscape qualities of the park;
 - 9.3. 6-10 young trees would have to be removed or relocated;
 - 9.4. the timelines are tight. Polo Enterprises only lodged a formal event application last week. Events Melbourne would normally need to carry out consultation with residents and stakeholders, address liquor licensing requirements and assess parking and traffic issues. These have not been done;
 - 9.5. Polo Enterprises has asked for permission to begin advertising the event which has been declined given that Council has not made a decision. They have however, at their own risk, constructed a billboard and booked a one page advertisement in a magazine; and
 - 9.6. Council has established a Parks & Gardens Advisory Committee which it may be appropriate to engage in discussions.
10. Parks staff have estimated that it could cost up to \$30,000 to reinstate the park after the event. This depends on the damage caused which in turn depends on the weather in the lead up to and including the day of the event. Of this, up to \$16,000 is for bringing in water by tanker to re-establish the turf.
11. Polo Enterprises has made some changes to the proposed footprint of the event space during the last week. They now state that they only require an area of about 9,500 square metres which equates to an event fee of \$9,500.

Finance

12. Fees for the use of the Park would be \$9,500 plus a reinstatement costs of up to \$30,000.

Conflict of Interest

13. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a direct or indirect interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Legal

14. *Regulations for the Care, Protection and Management of Royal Park in the City of Melbourne 1934* prohibits any sport to be played or practiced in the Park on Sunday.