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Park Board eyes cherry blossom groves

By Patrick Colvin

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Cherry blossoms in Vancouver. Richard Greenwood photo

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Those 40,000 trees just aren't enough.

The Vancouver Park Board will vote Dec. 14 on planting five new cherry blossom groves in local parks.

Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival's Linda Poole is optimistic that the recommendation to plant groves in Balaclava Park, Beaconsfield Park, Callister Park, Earles Park, Queen Elizabeth Park and Slocan Park will pass.

"It's not only good for the citizens, but it's also great for tourism and it will attract more people to our city in the springtime," said Poole. "All the winter provinces have cherry blossom envy all spring, the rest of Canada is so envious, so more cherry trees are a good thing.

"They're like a magnet bringing us out of our winter doldrums, bringing us all together."

While Park Board Commissioner Michael Wiebe says he's usually supportive of tree planting initiatives, he's waiting to hear more details.

"The concern I know is that we are trying to re-wild Vancouver and plant a lot more species that are native to Vancouver that don't need as much water and can survive on their own," said Wiebe. "And local wildlife and the rest of it can utilize these re-wilded areas so I know that's kind of the balance right now."

Wiebe also had concerns that cherry trees might not be suited to surviving the type of drought Vancouver experienced this past summer.

Vancouver manager of urban forestry Howard Normann agrees with Wiebe that the recent weather patterns could pose a problem for newly planted cherry trees, but noted that many of Vancouver's older cherries were able to withstand the summer heat because their roots ran deep enough into the ground.