



Date: November 22, 2001

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Heather Park - Dog Off-leash Program

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board receive the report for information.

BACKGROUND

At the Park Board meeting of June 11, 2001 the Board decided that Heather Park would remain a designated dog off-leash park. However, over the next several weeks a number of residents of the Douglas Park community voiced their concerns about this decision. A meeting with the Chair of the Park Board, Commissioners Ledingham, Richardson, DeGenova and senior staff was held to listen to the residents' concerns and, as an outcome, staff were directed to monitor and evaluate Heather Park dog off-leash use during the summer months and to further review the City-wide Dog off-leash Program. Staff were also directed to initiate the process to implement the Heather Park landscape improvements.

A small group of residents, reflecting many perspectives in the community, came together in September and began consideration and discussion about the current issues at Heather Park and how to rebuild their community through potential solutions to the problems.

DISCUSSION

This ad-hoc group has met four times in the last two months, developing values and goals for the park, considering preliminary design and scheduling options and discussing various interests, benefits and frustrations that have come with the introduction of the Dogs Off-leash Program at Heather Park. Several members of the group are concerned that the impacts of dog off-leash including the continuing damage to turf particularly during wet weather, has brought out heightened frustrations and emotions in the community, exacerbating the problem between neighbours. Staff believe that damage to the Park is increasing and repair for safety reasons should be done.

At the last meeting of the resident's group, it was suggested that with the level of emotion in the community, a time of "pause" for off-leash use at Heather Park would be beneficial. This short term withdrawal of off-leash use would allow maintenance activities to improve the condition of the area. However, the discussions and further community involvement in the development of potential solutions to dog off-leash opportunities in Heather Park or elsewhere in the community would continue. A time frame of March 1, 2002 was set for completion of this work. It is anticipated that final design, working drawings and the implementation of the landscape improvements to Heather Park will begin in April of 2002.

Notification of the closure will be posted on signs installed in the Park together with information about the other dogs off-leash sites and messages noting the continuation of work on developing solutions to the impacts of dogs off-leash use in Heather Park.

SUMMARY

A short term withdrawal of dogs off-leash use at Heather Park for maintenance activities, will facilitate and assist the community to resolve the current issues and develop a sustainable plan for the future.

Prepared by:

Queen Elizabeth District
Board of Parks & Recreation
Vancouver, BC
Lmc/jc