



February 18, 2005

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: DOG OFF LEASH PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. *THAT the Board establish a new dog off leash area on the east side of New Brighton Park with the following hours :
5am to 10am, May 1 to September 30 and
5am to 10pm, October 1 to April 30;***
- 2. *THAT the Board establish, on a 1 year trial basis, an off-leash area for small dogs in the Stanley Park shuffle board court area to be used between 7am and 9 pm;***
- 3. *THAT the Board extend dog off leash hours to all day (5am – 10pm) from June 15 to Labour Day at Killarney Park;***
- 4. *THAT staff consult with the public regarding a proposal to create a dog off leash area on the beach section of English Bay.***

BACKGROUND

Since establishing the Dog Off Leash Program in 1998 the Board has engaged the public in consultation to make improvements to the Program.

At its meeting of February 9, 2004, the Board approved a series of strategies to improve the Dog Off-Leash Program. These improvements included the proposals to add 3 new sites. During the past year, Angus, New Brighton and Stanley Park were identified as potential new dog off leash locations. Killarney Park was identified as a current dog off leash location that could be considered for extended hours.

The public was asked to provide feedback on these proposals. Site signage, the Park Board web site, neighbourhood brochure drops and/or neighbourhood newsletters were used to provide the public with the opportunity to offer feedback on this proposal. Based on the feedback received there was a general support for increasing dog off leash opportunities within the city.

In 2004 the Park Board also received a petition requesting an area of English Bay be designated as a dog off-leash area .

DISCUSSION

The recommendations in this report were discussed and given general support at the February 15, 2005 Planning and Environment Committee meeting. The Killarney Park recommendation recognizes the positions of both Killarney Secondary School and the Killarney Community Association.

Angus Park

From September 15 to October 15, 2004 the public was asked to provide feedback on a proposal to designate Angus Park as a dog off leash location. The results of the feedback were: 7 respondents in favour of the proposal and 20 respondents opposed. As part of the public consultation, staff met with the Shaughnessy Heights Property Owners Association. Based on the feedback received staff do not recommend that Angus Park become a dog off-leash area as we have learned that in order for a dog off leash location to be successful neighbourhood support is critical.

New Brighton Park

From November 15 to January 14 the public was asked to provide feedback on two different dog off leash location options for New Brighton Park. Details of the proposal were also forwarded to the Hastings Community Association and a neighbourhood group called “Dog Park Pals” with 20 – 25 members.

Map of proposed options for dog off leash areas at New Brighton Park:



Of the 33 responses, 31 were in favour of some off leash option in the park. Of those who specified a preference, 9 were in favour of option 2, 3 were in favour of option 1, while 12 chose both options. Option 2 is considered the best dog off-leash location because it has water access and it is the least active area of the park. Several respondents mentioned restricting off leash zones during the busy summer season, particularly in the picnic area, pool and playing field areas. There was also support for limiting off leash areas in the summer and having more areas accessible during the off season.

The Hastings Community Association expressed concern about conflicts in the area around the pool and is in favour of option 1. The Association recommends no off leash activity during the summer months. The Dog Park Pals are in favour of both areas being designated.

Another consideration affecting option 2 is the future development of a salt water marsh. This marsh is part of the New Brighton master plan and could be constructed some time in the future. If this occurs adjustments to the dog off leash area will be required.

Based on the feedback received, staff recommend the Option 2 location on the east side of the park for the dog off-leash area at New Brighton Park. It is also recommended that there be seasonal hours - 5am to 10am May 1 to September 30, and 5am to 10pm October 1 to April 30. This will provide morning hours during the summer for off leash dogs and eliminate potential conflicts with swimming pool users and people using the park for picnics.

Stanley Park

The Stanley Park shuffleboard courts have not been used for shuffleboard in four years. Settling at some courts have made play impossible. At present the area is mostly un-used and unattractive. There are a number of reasons why this site is well suited for a dog off leash area for small dogs. The area is fenced, park benches are in place, a water fountain is close by, there is ambient noise coming from the tennis courts and the area is not visible to other users.

In October 2004 signs were installed at the two entry gates to the shuffleboard court area asking the public for feedback on a proposal to convert the court into a dog off leash area for small dogs. From October 2004 to February 2005 staff received 13 responses in favour of the proposal and 5 opposed.

At the February 15, 2005 Planning and Environment Committee Meeting staff proposed a dog off-leash site at the Stanley Park shuffleboard court area on a one year trial basis. Staff explained that the site would help to satisfy the need for a dog off-leash area for small dogs in the west end, provide a fenced-in location and provide an opportunity to experiment with a sand based dog off-leash surface material.

Rather than defining 'small dog', staff recommend letting users establish appropriate use. A one year trial will allow users to establish an acceptable dog size or weight. It may be acceptable for dogs of any size who simply want to socialize off leash to use this site. In general the size of dog that would be appropriate for this area would range from the size of an average cat to a medium sized Labrador. A trial period of one year would allow monitoring of concerns with the potential noise that could be generated from the site and an evaluation of the success of the sand surface and the acceptance of a fenced enclosure. Since the proposed site is close to the park office, staff believe that they will be able to effectively monitor the site during the trial period and resolve any issues that may arise.

Staff have considered a proposal to move the off-leash area further into the park but are concerned that it would have a negative impact on the natural environment within the park as well as being less convenient for users.

Staff recommend that the Board establish a one year dog off-leash trial in the Stanley Park shuffleboard court area for small dogs. To avoid problems with early morning and late evening noise, staff recommend 7am to 9pm dog off-leash hours.

Killarney Park

Staff received a request from the Killarney Community Association to change the current off leash hours at Killarney Park from 5am – 10am and 5pm – 10 pm to 5am – 10pm. Signs with a description of the proposal and a map showing the proposed off leash zones were installed at the park from November 15 to January 4. A notice and map were distributed to houses adjacent to the off leash area and to Killarney Secondary School. Details of the proposal were also posted on the Park Board website.

Of the seven responses received, five were in favour of the change and two were opposed. The staff at Killarney Secondary School expressed concerns of conflicts when the 2091 students leave the school at lunch time and during physical education classes when the adjacent playing field is being used by students.

To address these concerns staff recommend extended dog off-leash hours at Killarney Park be limited to the school summer break period from June 15th to Labour Day. Staff will also explore ways of preventing dogs from running onto the adjacent road, parking lot and playing fields.

English Bay

The petition received from the public was general in defining where a new off-leash beach location should be provided at English Bay. At the February 15, 2005 Planning and Environment Committee meeting a location was identified closer to 2nd Beach that would be conducive for off-leash use and would not conflict with seawall users on wheels.

Map of proposed English Bay Dog Off Leash Location:



The Committee requested that staff consult with the public on creating a new dog off-leash area at the above site and provide a report to the Board on the English Bay dog proposal in the fall of 2005.

SUMMARY

Improving the Dog Off Leash Program continues to be a priority for the Park Board. Finding appropriate dog off leash locations that have local neighbourhood support continues to be a challenge. By expanding the Dog Off Leash Program the Park Board will be able to provide a balanced compromise for people wanting both restraint and freedom for dogs in public parks.

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