

Date: January 14, 2010



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Fraser River Park Dog Off-leash Area

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT the Board approve changes to the designated off-leash area at Fraser River Park as outlined in this report.

POLICY

The “Parks Control By-Law” (section 9) identifies three designations with regard to dogs in parks: areas where dogs are prohibited; areas where dogs are allowed as long as they are leashed; and areas where dogs are allowed off-leash.

The “Parks Removal of Animal Manure, Dung, Refuse and Waste By-law” and the City’s “Animal Control By-Law” outline responsible dog ownership behaviour (including the licensing of dogs, leashing of dogs in public places, and picking up dog excrement in public places), and the enforcement of by-law provisions (including fines).

BACKGROUND

Fraser River Park is located on the Fraser River at West 75th Avenue and Angus Drive. The east side of the park has a large open grass field with a popular picnic area which is booked from May to September. The field, which is not irrigated or drained, was designed for informal use and is not suitable for organized sports. The west side of the park includes natural riparian areas with boardwalks, grass areas and a section of sandy beach. Currently, the entire park is designated as a dog off-leash area from 6am to 10am and 5pm to 10pm year round.

In May of 2009, staff received a petition from dog owners with over 420 signatures requesting the off-leash hours at Fraser River Park be extended to all day. To gauge public support, staff conducted a consultation process which included posting signs in the park and a notice on the Park Board’s website. A total of 112 responses were received, 88 in favour and 24 opposed.

A staff report was presented to the Park Board on November 2, 2009 with a recommendation to create seasonal hours that would expand the off-leash hours. After hearing the staff presentation and a number of delegations both for and against the changes, the Board referred the issue back to the Planning and Environment Committee for further study to look into alternatives to having the entire park off-leash during the suggested hours.

DISCUSSION

The Planning and Environment Committee met on January 7, 2010 to discuss the off-leash designation at Fraser River Park. At the meeting, staff reported that there had been meetings with Animal Control and the proponents of the original petition to extend the off-leash hours at the park. The result of those meetings was a revised recommendation for extended hours.

The park is naturally divided into two sections - east and west. The revised recommendation included year round off-leash hours in the western portion of the park, and reduced seasonal hours in the eastern section of the park. The Committee heard 14 delegations that spoke both in favour and not in favour of the revised recommendation.

After discussing the issue in depth, the Committee members unanimously supported an approach that would make the east side of the park on-leash all day year round, and the west side of the park off-leash all day year round. This approach removes any ambiguity regarding seasonal hours or different times of the day, and gives park users year round on-leash and off-leash opportunities. Signs explaining the new designation will be installed at both parking lots and other entry points.



SUMMARY

The new proposed off-leash designation at Fraser River Park recognizes the need for more functional year round off-leash hours and provides year round access to both on and off leash areas for park users.

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