

Appendix 1

Cover Letter

Background

Why did we have the October 30th meeting?

- Douglas Park Community Association requested that the Park Board review its designation of Heather Park as a venue for the Dog Off-Leash Program.
- Park Board has received mixed messages from the community regarding the success of the Heather Park Dog Off-Leash Program.

Who was invited to the meeting?

- People living within a two block radius of Heather Park (754 notices sent out using Canada Post see attached map for distribution area).

How many people attended the meeting?

- 48 people signed in as attending.

Park Location Map

Heather Park Dog-Off Leash Review Meeting : Monday, October 30, 2000

Meeting Agenda:

Opening Remarks - Bill Manning and John Talbot.

- Thank you for attending the meeting.
- Purpose of the meeting : To hear what the community would like the Park Board to do with the Dog Off-Leash Program at Heather Park.

Comments from the Douglas Park Community Association - Gord Plottel

- The Douglas Park Community Association has been working for the last four years to develop a plan for Heather Park that does not support a dog off-leash program.
- Concerned that the Park Board did not consult with the community prior to designating Heather Park as an off-leash site.
- Would like the Park Board to reconsider the Heather Park Dog Off-Leash designation.

Overview of Heather Park Dog Off-Leash Program - Bill Manning

- In 1997 the Park Board ran a pilot project that allowed dogs off-leash during specified hours at 4 locations.
- The Park Board compared the condition of the 4 pilot sites with 4 on leash sites and found no difference between them.
- In 1998 the Park Board added 25 sites to the list of off-leash locations using the following criteria as a guide :
 1. Try to provide off-leash sites within a 4 to 6 block radius of most Vancouver homes.
 2. Try to find sites large enough to accommodate the expected number of dogs.
 3. Try to find sites away from playing fields and children's playground equipment.
 4. Try to find sites away from environmentally sensitive areas.
- Prior to the Park Board agreeing to the pilot project and adding to the list of off-leash locations they notified 54 stakeholder groups to let them know that they would be discussing the issue.
- Why was Heather Park identified as an off-leash location?
 1. Because there was demand within the area.
 2. Because Douglas Park was not a good choice due to its heavily programmed sporting activities.
 3. There wasn't any other Park Board land within the area and if it was moved it would begin to overlap on the catchment area of other off-leash locations.
- The Park Board recognizes the need to make on-going improvements to the dog off-leash program and considers the program to be an on-going work in progress.
- Over the past summer the Park Board has monitored the activities at Heather Park and found that there are some problems but they are not much different than other off-leash sites.
- Solutions are needed to the following:
 1. Noise.
 2. Lack of respect for on-leash / off-leash hours.
 3. Dogs that don't stay 15 metres from children's playground equipment.
 4. At certain times some people think the parks are over used by people with dogs.

Options for consideration

Leave existing Heather Park Dog Off-Leash Program As Is - Ursula Robertson

- Park is/has been underused.
- There is a demand for a dog off-leash location within the area.
- People want an area where it is legal to allow their dog off-leash.

- The existing program provides an opportunity for people to meet and talk with their neighbours.
- There is no other location within the local area.
- Dog off-leash locations within a neighbourhood should not be optional - they should be a requirement.
- People wanting an off-leash location for dogs are not a special interest group. As the neighbourhood grows so do the number of dogs.

Withdraw the Dog Off-Leash Privilege at Heather Park - Shannon Postle

- No community input.
- The Park Board should not have chosen a Negative Option approach.
- The Park Board Dog Off-Leash Program was rammed in.
- Why did the Negative Option approach over rule positive planning process done by the Douglas Park Community Association?
- The Park Board Dog Off-Leash Program was contrary to the City Plan approach.
- There are daily conflicts at Heather Park.
- Parks and dogs don't share.
- The Park Board should back up and remove the off-leash designation at Heather Park.

Acknowledge Concerns and Work on Solutions - Jacqueline Faubert

- Surveys - 53 surveys completed.
- 55% Dog Owners, 45% Non Dog Owners
- Majority of people live within 1 to 4 blocks of the Park.
- 84% of users come to the park daily.
- Non off-leash user issues:
 1. Field condition / abuse 71%
 2. Too small a space 40%
 3. More landscaping needed 40%
- Off-Leash user issues:
 1. Space too small 50%
 2. Neighbourhood conflict 40%
 3. Need for expanded hours 37%
- What can be done to address the issues?
 1. Install physical barrier between playground and open field.
 2. Expand off-leash times to reduce concentration and noise during peak hours.
 3. Set up a plan to address field maintenance.
 4. Remove Heather Park Dog Off-Leash designation after another off-leash area is established.
 5. Alternate times and days between Heather Park and other parks.

Feedback from General Public

Feelings	Solutions
Dog owners won' t go away/they are part of the community.	Work together on a solution (i.e. summer - Heather, winter - Douglas)
The Community Association Consultation Process is difficult without hard facts. Survey information needs to be objective.	Park Board should have done a detailed survey in advance of designating off-leash locations.
Resident across from Park no longer uses the park because they feel unsafe.	No suggested solution.
Park is now a happy place for people to meet, this makes her happy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barrier around playground. • expanded off-leash hours.
Enjoys seeing dogs in the park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue discussion to find solutions. • Make other off-leash locations more appealing (i.e. Nat Bailey or Queen Elizabeth Park, improve 37th and Oak).
Decision by the Park Board was an error and should be reversed.	
Dog owner but not more important than kids.	<p>Favours a compromise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • barrier around playground • landscape around perimeter • establish a dog code <p>(i.e. if there are more than "x" number of off-leash dogs go to another site or come back later).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Douglas Park used in the past for dog use but it caused dog fights and kids were afraid. • Park Board has violated the public process of the DPCA process. 	Remove the off-leash designation at Heather Park and then work on a solution.
Be careful with interpretation of the survey	
<p>Facts re: Downside of Dog Use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No consultation 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unilateral decision • Heather Park Improvements now on hold • Park cannot co-exist with other uses (i.e. playground and dogs don' t mix) • Park Board can control size and location of off-leash area. • Dog waste is a problem. 	
<p>Altercations between dog owners and non dog owners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other locations are within a reasonable distance. • Seek out larger and more appropriate locations with less conflict and more extended hours.
<p>Many people come to the park by car - why not go to other locations?</p> <p>Heather Park also has other users that drive and park on park perimeter.</p> <p>Playground at Douglas Park</p> <p>Park is for other people than those on perimeter.</p>	<p>Agree to a compromise solution.</p>
<p>Park Board needs to rectify the situation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no buffer, no landscape • too close to houses • at certain times dog use is a violation of space. 	<p>Money should be used to make people happy with the Park.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small group of people have taken over the area especially early A.M. and 5 to 7 P.M. • Dogs run aimlessly without owners control to playground. • Damage to park / health concerns re: dog faeces and urine. 	
<p>Children love Heather Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sense of freedom • feels safe • intimidated by dogs 	

Concern with barrier between dogs and playground.. Barrier will conflict with the open / free feeling of the park.	
Park Board moved Hillcrest dog users to behind Nat Bailey .. This location is poor and has forced people to use Heather Park	The Heather Park solution needs to tie into the city wide dog off-leash solution.
Socialization between animals / dogs is very important.	
Comfortable, friendly, social feeling results from dogs using Heather Park. Tennis players make more noise than dogs. Feels safe in local neighbourhood with dogs.	
	Need to respect each other, Wants a positive solution.
The Douglas Park area is a community that has many dogs and ' they" need to find a solution.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lot of money has been spent to improve Heather Park and it should not be damaged by the dogs. • Dogs in the City should be on a leash and controlled. • Irresponsible owners are the problem. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park is too small • Need to involve people in the process 	<p>Agreement to survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • park too small • dog owners want a larger space • highest level of agreement on compromise to move dog use to Douglas Park.
Heather Park too small but against having off-leash transferred to Douglas Park due to irresponsible owners.	
Heather Park is not big enough for shared use.	

Summary

- Consultation was lacking.
- Tension around the issue is very real.

What Happens Next?

Compromise solutions will be developed and taken to the Park Board for a decision.