



Date: June 24, 2004

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Proposal to Extend Dog Off Leash Hours

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. *THAT the Board confirm 6am to 10pm dog off-leash hours on a year round basis at 37th & Oak Park, Sunset Park, Locarno Park, Quilchena Park and Musqueam Park.*
- B. *THAT the Board retain the existing hours for dog off-leash use at Balaclava Park. (7 am - 10am and 5pm - 10pm)*
- C. *THAT the Board confirm existing off-leash hours from May 1 to September 30 and extended hours (6am to 10pm) for dog off -leash use from October 1st to April 30th at Vanier Park.*

BACKGROUND

At the February 9, 2004 Park Board meeting the Board directed staff to consult with adjacent residents to determine their support for extending dog off leash hours to "all day" at the following sites: Balaclava, Musqueam, Sunset, Vanier, 37th & Oak, Locarno and Quilchena Parks.

Public Consultation

From April 19th to April 30th the front page of the Park Board website featured information on the proposal to extend dog off leash hours. During the period April 19 to May 28, 2004 the Park Board website provided the public with an opportunity to provide feedback on the proposal.

Residents adjacent to the parks being considered for extended dog off leash hours received an information brochure notifying them of the proposed change and how they could provide feedback. These brochures were also available at near by community centres. Site signage was also used to encourage feedback on the proposal.

Local newspapers also picked up the story and provided the public with information on how they could voice their opinion.

DISCUSSION

Feedback Received

The following is a summary of feedback received from the 353 individuals concerning the proposal to extend dog off leash hours:

General		Balaclava		37 th & Oak		Sunset		Locarno		Quilchena		Musqueam		Vanier	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
92	46	33	31	5	5	0	0	8	6	8	3	6	5	40	52

13 people gave feedback but didn't give a yes or no....they simply wanted increased enforcement.

Where the extent of response was small or a majority indicated support, staff recommend moving ahead with extending dog off-leash hours at 37th and Oak, Sunset Park, Locarno Park, Quilchena Park and Musqueam Park. Where feedback indicated a negative response or significant concerns were identified, staff are recommending the following:

Balaclava Park

The people living in the area around Balaclava Park have a long history of off leash dogs in their park. Balaclava Park was one of the original 4 off-leash pilot sites in 1997. Over the past 8 years Balaclava Park has had its off leash designation removed and then reinstated.

Here are two statements that reflect some of the feedback received on the 2004 proposal to extend off leash hours to all day.

“...was the original reason for restricting hours not because some young children playing in the playgrounds had been intimidated by large dogs? If so why would that issue not be the same now?”

“..there will be the occasional (person) who does not have his/her dog under control and the occasional jogger/dog hater who complains, but let us not pander to the small minority. Well done for the change!”

Given the feedback received on Balaclava Park there is no clear support for changing the current dog off leash hours and significant community concerns about problem interactions have been recorded. Staff are recommending that the existing off-leash hours remain.

Vanier Park

In 1998 the Park Board designated the area west of the Maritime Museum parking lot as a dog off-leash area. At that time the people using the area for swimming & sunbathing expressed their displeasure with the Park Board decision. Since that time this dog off leash area has grown in popularity and many non dog owners have stopped using the area.

Although Kitsilano Beach Park is an on-leash area, many people allow their dogs off-leash and this results in many complaints to the Park Board. Finding a suitable off-leash location in the Kits Beach area is not an easy task. After looking at Park Board sites within the area, extending the dog off-leash hours at the Vanier site for a portion of the year was seen as an option that would help to increase compliance with the on-leash requirement at Kitsilano Beach and extend the available hours at a time when park use was lower, reducing sharing conflicts further.

Staff are therefore recommending extending dog off-leash hours on a seasonal basis at the Vanier site from October 1st to April 30th. By maintaining existing off-leash hours from May 1st to September 30th, the Park Board can provide people concerned about the noise and wanting to use the area for sun bathing and swimming with summer time hours when dogs must be leashed.

SUMMARY

Based on public feedback there is general support for increasing dog off leash opportunities within the city. Implementing these opportunities becomes more of a challenge when decisions are required for specific locations.

The recommendations in this report will help to balance the needs of various park users.

Prepared by:

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LM