

Date: October 18, 2005



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Improvements to the Dog Off Leash Program

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. *THAT the Board direct staff to seek public input into changing the Dog off leash hours at Coopers and Portside Parks to all day 6:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m.***
- B. *THAT the Board direct staff to seek public input into creating proposed new dog off leash areas in Stanley Park, Devonian Harbour Park and Creekside Park.***

BACKGROUND

The Dog Off Leash Program commenced in 1998 and now covers 31 park locations around the City. The Park Board has responded to neighbourhood needs by adding new off leash sites, extending hours and improving signage and communication on responsible dog ownership. However the downtown peninsula, with higher densities of people and dogs but with a smaller number of suitable park locations, remains a concern.

Requests from several downtown resident groups resulted in staff proposals for enhancements to the Dog Off Leash Program. These were presented to the Culture and Recreation Committee on September 14, 2005.

This report describes these proposals and requests that the Board authorize public input from neighbouring communities into these expanded service areas.

DISCUSSION

Over the past year there has been a growing interest in expanding the Park Board Dog Off Leash Program, particularly in the downtown peninsula. In response to this, staff have assessed the following sites for their potential to be part of this expanded program.

This assessment has been done using the criteria adopted when the Dog Off Leash Program was first initiated. These are attached as Appendix A.

Coopers & Portside Park

At present there are two existing downtown locations with all day dog off leash hours (the area behind the Aquatic Centre and the shuffleboard court area of Stanley Park) and morning and evening hours at three other locations – Nelson, Coopers and Portside Parks. Given the demand, the staff proposal is to change the hours at Coopers & Portside Park to 6 am - 10 pm expanding to four the number of locations with all day hours. The existing dog off leash boundaries at these sites will not change.

A community design process for Nelson Park includes discussion of future improvements for dog off leash use. This will be the subject of a separate report.

Stanley Park

Finding an appropriate dog off leash location in this park has been a priority to serve needs in the West End. The site identified in the photo is proposed as an all day dog off leash area with hours from 6 am – 10 pm.



This site just to the southwest of the A-frame building at Ceperly Meadows is conveniently located next to a parking lot and is close to public washrooms. It combines a grass area with an area of trees. The proposed site is on the upland away from any environmentally sensitive area.

Devonian Harbour Park

The following site will help satisfy the need that people living in the Coal Harbour area have for a dog off leash area. The proposal is to provide a new all day dog off leash site with hours from 6 am – 10 pm. The proposed off leash site is a large, flat, grassed area on the east side of Georgia Street, northwest of the existing parking lot off Denman Street. There is a buffer approximately 30 meters between the pond and the suggested location.



Although this site is being proposed, there is concern about dogs entering the pond to the north and causing damage to the pond liner. If site signage is unsuccessful at keeping the dogs out of the pond the Board may, in future, consider withdrawing this off leash designation to avoid the cost of repairing the pond liner or invest further in the site to avoid damage.

Creekside Park

The following site is being proposed as an all day dog off leash site with hours from 6 am – 10 pm.



This site is conveniently located next to a parking lot and has the potential for improvement as the surrounding land is developed.

At the September 14, 2005 Culture and Recreation Committee meeting, the creation of a dog off leash area on the grass area north of the Science Centre building was suggested. Staff are concerned that an off leash location here would conflict with the different festivals that use the site.

The site originally designed specifically for festivals and special events is presently used for grass volleyball during the summer and also accommodates three Dragon Boat related events. In 2004 the site also hosted a Wake Board event which will likely be requesting use of the site in future years.

Staff are recommending the area originally proposed for a dog off leash use southwest of the Science Centre, which would avoid this conflict with other uses on the site.

George Wainborn Park

Although some members of the public have expressed interest in a dog off leash area in this park staff, having considered the criteria, do not believe it to be a suitable dog off leash location. There are only two large flat non-programmed public green spaces in the area immediately north of False Creek. One is the dog off leash area in Coopers Park, the other is in George Wainborn Park. Designating both of these areas as off leash would be unfair to the non-dog owning public who need an area for informal human play.

A proposed new site in Stanley Park along with Coopers Park and the area behind the Aquatic Centre will provide the people living in the George Wainborn Park area with access to three different dog off leash areas within a reasonable distance of their homes.

SUMMARY

The Park Board is committed to consultation with the neighbouring community when changes to the Dog Off Leash Program are being proposed.

Staff are proposing three new locations and the increase in available hours for off leash use at two of the present locations, all within the Downtown peninsula.

Opportunities for input should be provided permitting the public with the opportunity to give feedback on how public green spaces are used, and to help the Board understand the local neighbourhood's level of support for expansion of the Dog Off Leash Program.

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