



City of
Peterborough

TO: Members of the Arenas Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

FROM: Rob Anderson, Recreation Division Coordinator

MEETING DATE: September 20, 2011

SUBJECT: Report APRAC11-031
Off-Leash Dog Park Presentation and Petition

PURPOSE

A report to inform the Arenas Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee that the City has received a petition supporting the creation of an off-leash public dog park in the City of Peterborough; to introduce a presentation from the Peterborough Dog Owners Association in support of an off-leash dog park development; and to provide a history of efforts previously made to create such a park.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Arenas Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (APRAC) approve the recommendations outlined in Report APRAC11-031 dated September 20, 2011, of the Recreation Division Coordinator, as follows:

- a) That the presentation from the Peterborough Dog Owners Association be received for information;
- b) That the level of support by APRAC for the development of an off-leash dog park on City owned property be identified;
- c) That the Suitable Off-Leash Dog Park Criteria identified in Schedule "A" of this report be endorsed;
- d) That Staff be directed to report to Council to:

- i) Identify the level of support APRAC is providing for an off-leash dog park;
 - ii) Request that Council provide direction to Staff based on its willingness/ability to introduce an off-leash dog park as a new public service, at this time; and
 - iii) Seek Council approval of specific criteria to be used in determining an appropriate location for an off-leash dog park, as identified in Schedule “A” of this report.
- e) That pending direction from Council, Staff prepares a list of potential dog park locations to be presented to APRAC, at a future meeting.

BUDGET AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no budget or financial implication resulting from the approval of the recommendations of Report APRAC11-031. However, if this new service is supported and approved by Council, there will be start-up and ongoing maintenance expenses. The extent of these expenses would be influenced by the selected site.

BACKGROUND

On July 18, 2011, the Clerks Office received a petition directed to the Chair of the Arenas Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (APRAC), requesting that the City provide a public dog park for Residents’ use. The petition included 253 signatures requesting that the City commence the process to identify appropriate public land, and to design and build such a park, for year-round use by City residents and dog owners.

The petition was presented to Council at its meeting of August 2, 2011. Council adopted the following resolution:

That the petition in respect to a Dog Park be referred to Councillor Parnell and the Arenas Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee for consideration at a future meeting.

Councillor Parnell has also been contacted by representatives of the Peterborough Dog Owners Association (PDOA), with a request to make a presentation to APRAC about the development of an off-leash public dog park. The PDOA has been invited to make such a presentation to APRAC at their September 20, 2011 meeting.

Staff wishes to recognize that there have been previous requests received about the development of off-leash dog parks, and considerable investigation and efforts have taken place, as identified later in this report.

In response to the petition, Staff would be pleased to revisit the possibility of creating a public off-leash dog park. However, prior to proceeding with further investigation into an off-leash dog park, Staff would like to receive input from APRAC regarding its level of support for the development of such a facility. Staff can then prepare a report to Council that identifies the level of support from the Community and APRAC. That report will recommend that Council clarify its willingness and/or ability to support the introduction of this new service at this time. For clarification, the City is experiencing a financial climate in which Council has directed that no new or enhanced services are to be introduced. The creation of a dog park would be considered a new service.

Opportunities to introduce this new service with minimal impact to the tax payers will be considered. For example, the operation of a dog park could be treated in a manner similar to the use of City lands for Community Gardens. In those situations, the City enters into a land use agreement with an established non-profit organization, upon identification of a suitable piece of land. Under the terms and conditions of the land use agreement, the organization assumes the responsibility for the ongoing daily operations, maintenance, etc. A corporate policy for Dog Parks would need to be developed as part of this process, as was done for the use of City lands for community gardens.

Suitable Off-Leash Dog Park Criteria

Staff is seeking APRAC endorsement and Council approval of the proposed specific criteria to be used in determining a suitable location, as identified in Schedule “A” of this report.

Privately Owned Local Off-Leash Dog Parks

Staff is aware of two privately owned local dog parks, known as Gone to the Dogs South and Gone to the Dogs North. The South location is at 2500 Browne Line Peterborough and the North location is at 1042 County Road 19, Peterborough. Staff has spoken with the owner of the North location. She does not see the creation of a public off-leash dog park impacting her off-leash business. The majority of her off-leash customers also use her canine day care services. She stated that she would be willing to assist the City in establishing appropriate park rules. She has assisted the Town of Lindsay in a similar manner.

The only privately owned off-leash Dog Park within the City boundaries that Staff is aware of is the Kingsway Dog Park, which ceased operation on June 30, 2011.

Previous Efforts to Develop a Public Off-Leash Dog Park

In 2003, a presentation was made to the Board of Parks and Recreation (now known as APRAC) at their April 15th meeting. The presenter suggested that the City create an off-leash dog park, at Bears Creek Common Park. A petition signed by several citizens supporting this initiative was also presented to the Board. The Board directed Staff to conduct research into the matter and obtain a legal opinion from the City Solicitor.

Staff conducted a survey of five other Ontario communities who had developed off-leash dog parks, to identify issues that need to be considered in the creation of such a park, as follows:

- Municipal By-Laws
- Insurance and Liability
- Park Creation (design, size, fencing, etc)
- Signage
- Maintenance
- Other considerations, such as noise levels, dog fights, overcrowding, and in-park safety.

The findings were reported back to the Board of Parks and Recreation on May 27, 2003. The Board referred the matter to the Park Development Sub-Committee, who held a meeting on June 23, 2003. The Sub-Committee raised a number of concerns that they believed could not be addressed at the Bears Creek Common Park location or on any other municipal property, at that time: The concerns included the following:

- Adequate parking
- Appropriate fencing and fencing costs
- Reasonable distances from residential properties
- Clean-up responsibilities
- Noise from barking dogs
- A site would require a minimum of 3 acres

The Board of Parks and Recreation recommended taking no further action until an appropriate piece of property can be secured.

In 2005, a presentation was made by the Peterborough Dog Park Association (PDPA) to the Board of Parks and Recreation, at their November 22nd meeting. The presentation requested that the City consider the installation of a fenced off-leash dog park in Peterborough. The PDPA stated the estimated \$15,000 cost for fencing could be paid for by their group through planned fund raising activities, advertising on a sponsorship board, a \$10 annual membership fee to park users. They also suggested that the City charge an additional \$1 on top of the municipal license fee, which could be directed to help cover the expenses of the park operation. They also presented a petition containing 850 signatures in favour of the dog park.

The Board members identified concerns with the proposal, such as policing, waste disposal and removal, rogue dogs and insurance, noise levels, and location relative to residential property. The Board referred the matter to Staff to follow up with references from other municipalities, investigate insurance concerns through the municipality, determine possible locations, and to address other concerns raised. Staff was to report back to the Board in 2006.

On February 21, 2006, Staff provided a verbal update to the Board of Parks and Recreation, identifying that Staff had met with the PDPA group and they are moving

ahead with some ideas. Staff had spoken with the City's Legal department and other municipalities to secure answers to some of the concerns. Staff also identified an area for consideration in the Ashburnham and Lansdowne St (John Boddy/Willow Creek) area.

At the Board meeting of March 21, 2006, the PDPA appeared in delegation. They were interested in moving ahead as quickly as possible to develop the dog park in the John Boddy/Willow Creek area. However, the Board members expressed concerns with the lack of parking, additional costs to the dog license (most dog owners won't use the park), the suitability of the site, and legal agreements between the City and the PDPA. The Board referred the matter back to Staff to meet with the PDPA to find a more suitable site and return to the Board with a recommendation to proceed to City Council.

On May 16, 2006, Staff reported to the Board of Parks and Recreation that a proposed 4 acres in the John Boddy/Willow Creek area are suitable for a dog park. Staff had informed the PDPA to speak with their solicitor about forming a formal association. Once the association is formed, they can come back to the Board with a budget. The proposed area can be adequately fenced and would be membership based.

At the September 19, 2006 Board meeting, Staff identified that a further review of the proposed site in the John Boddy/Willow Creek area determined that the site is not suitable.

At the November 21, 2006 Board of parks and Recreation meeting, Staff informed the Board that the PDPA will be forming as a legal entity. The PDPA was looking at property located north of Parkhill Road, opposite the driveway to St Peters High School. However, there were a number of concerns with this property including its location on the Parkway, proximity to a residential area, and the cost with constructing the park trail to access it. Parking for this site would be accommodated at Jackson Park, which only has space for 30 cars. A Board member suggested Johnson Drive as a potential site. Staff also identified that there may be opportunity by the Costco property, dependent on the final development of the store.

At the November 27, 2007 meeting of the Arenas Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (Formerly the Board of Parks and Recreation), the Manager of Public Works advised that he had been working with the PDPA to find a suitable piece of land but was having difficulty doing so. The City was still hopeful about acquiring approximately two acres of land through the Costco development and that another piece of land may become available in the North West end of the City, when it is annexed in 2008. It was also identified that a functional review of Beavermead Park would take place and consideration of a dog park at that location, could be considered at that time.

At the March 18, 2008 APRAC meeting, staff from the City's Planning Division identified the property at Trent Rapids Power Corp. and although it has good access and room for public parking, it would not be a suitable location for the dog park, as it is located upstream from the City's drinking water source. Planning Staff suggested that a

possible interim solution could be the property along the west side of the Otonabee River, at Johnson Drive. However, it is only about one and half acres in size and the property is located immediately beside a private residence. An APRAC member suggested the PDPA should speak with the County to see if there is any suitable property on the out skirts of the City.

On June 17, 2008, Staff presented a presentation to the APRAC regarding a review that was conducted to identify a suitable site using the following criteria:

- City owned (in City)
- Accessibility (parking, trail network, etc)
- Size (minimum of 2 acres, preferably 4+)
- Natural Area with a variety of vegetation
- Water feature (but well drained, not swampy)
- Fencing (able to be fenced)
- Proximity to residences

The following 14 sites were identified and considered for suitability:

- Harper Park
- Costco
- John Boddy (Willow Creek)
- James Stephenson Park
- Wentworth Park
- Glenforest (KPR School Board)
- Curtis Pond
- Fisher Drive
- Kawartha Heights
- Plastics Road
- Pidac at the Airport
- Burnham Woods
- Old Orchard (Towns)
- Trent

City Staff initially proposed the John Boddy/Willow Creek site. However, the site was later determined to be unsuitable, as it is identified for Storm Water containment. Subsequently, a formal paved multi-use trail has been created through this section of City owned land. The presence of the trail would need to be considered, if this site was to be reviewed for suitability again.

Harper Park was also proposed. However, that opportunity would be several years out, as the location is being used by Waste Management as a compost site. Use of this site would be dependant on the compost site being relocated.

Staff then began consultation with a spin-off group from the original PDPA group, and explored the open space (3 acres) south of Costco. Costco was approached as they are

an adjoining neighbour. There were no serious concerns expressed. However, the spin-off PDPA group unfortunately lost interest and the project lost all momentum.

SUMMARY

The City has received a petition in support of the development of an off-leash dog park, and a request by the PDOA to make a presentation to APRAC in support of such development. Although significant time and effort has been invested between 2003 and 2008 into the possibility of creating such a park, Staff is willing to revisit the possibility. Staff is seeking input from APRAC that identifies its level of support for the off-leash dog park development and for specific criteria to be used to identify an appropriate location. Staff will then report to Council on the level of support identified by the Public and APRAC. Staff will request that Council identifies its willingness to introduce this new service, at this time. If supported, Staff will also request Council's approval of the proposed suitable off-leash dog park criteria.

Submitted by,

Rob Anderson
Recreation Division Coordinator

Contact Name:
Rob Anderson
Phone: 705-742-7777 Ext. 1833
Fax: 705- 748-8824
E-Mail: randerson@peterborough.ca

Attachment: Schedule "A" - Proposed Suitable Off-Leash Dog Park Criteria

Schedule “A”
Proposed Suitable Off-Leash Dog Park Criteria

- City owned property
- Neighbourhood Characteristics (adjacent land uses, population density, housing types, licensed dog population, proximity of existing and other potential off-leash areas located within a 15 minute walk or 1 kilometer)
- Proximity to residences and other off-leash area exclusions (as identified below)
- If established in an existing park: compatibility with the park’s design, impacts on the park’s functionality, established uses, features and components, and potential impact on the park’s condition and natural environment
- Accessibility (parking, trail network, etc)
- Size (minimum of 2 acres, preferably 4+ of green space, with additional area for parking)
- Fenced or able to be fenced
- Natural Area with a variety of vegetation
- Water feature (but well drained, not swampy)

Off-Leash Area Exclusions - Dog Parks shall not be established within the following areas:

- Playgrounds, splash pads and wading pools
- Immediately adjacent to private residences
- Non-rehabilitated Brown Fields
- Horticultural display areas or ornamental gardens
- Skateboard bowls, tennis courts and other sport pads
- Sports fields and stadiums
- Artificial or natural ice rinks, toboggan hills
- Animal display areas
- Campgrounds
- Designated heritage, memorial, commemorative and ceremonial areas
- Burial grounds
- Areas posted prohibiting dogs
- Swimming beaches
- Natural Environment Areas
 - Areas that have undergone tree/shrub/wildflower planting or where plans exist for such planting to occur
 - Natural shorelines with natural vegetation that would be disturbed by compaction and foot/paw traffic
 - Areas containing species of concern, including local or regionally uncommon, rare, threatened or endangered species
 - Any areas protected under the Municipal Code or by the Otonabee Region Conservation Authority (ORCA)