

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 13, 2016

Item 2, Report No. 43, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on December 13, 2016.

Councillor Carella declared an interest with respect to this matter as he is an officer of a not-for-profit corporation that owns land immediately abutting the subject lands, and did not take part in the discussion or vote on the matter.

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OFF-LEASH DOG PARK SITE SELECTION WEST OF HWY 400 WARD 1, 2 AND 3

The Committee of the Whole recommends:

- 1) That the recommendation contained in the following report of the Deputy City Manager of Planning & Growth Management and the Director of Parks Development, dated December 6, 2016, be approved; and
- 2) That the presentation by Ms. Mary Kelly, Senior Consultant of Human Environment, Amec Foster Wheeler Environment & Infrastructure, North Service Road, Burlington, and Communication C9, presentation material titled “*Off Leash Dog Park West of Hwy 400 Site Selection*”, be received.

Recommendation

The Deputy City Manager of Planning & Growth Management and the Director of Parks Development in consultation with the Director of Transportation Services, Parks and Forestry Operations, Director of By-Law and Compliance, Licensing & Permit Services recommend:

1. That the report by Amec Foster Wheeler dated October 18, 2016 appended as Attachment 1 be received;
2. That the highest scoring site, Location B, at the future Block 59 District Park in Ward 2 be considered as the preferred location for the City's second primary Off-Leash Dog Area and that staff further review the feasibility of this location and report back on the proposed design, land requirements and funding impacts; and
3. That based on strong community support for smaller local Off-Leash Dog Areas that staff be authorized to undertake further community consultation for the planning and design of local Off-Leash Dog Areas and report back to a future Committee of a Whole meeting before the end of Q2 2017.

Contribution to Sustainability

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council in the Green Directions Vaughan, Community Sustainability Environmental Master Plan, Goal 2, Objective 2.2:

- To develop Vaughan as a City with maximum greenspace and an urban form that supports our expected population growth.

Economic Impact

Development of an Off-leash Dog Area at the future Block 59 District Park is estimated to cost in the order of \$200,000-\$250,000. Staff will review design, land requirements and funding impacts of the proposed Off-Leash Dog Area and report back. Capital Projects for the development of the

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future Block 59 District Park and an Off-Leash Dog Area are included in the 2017 Capital Budget and forecast. The economic impact of smaller local Off-Leash Dog Areas will need to be determined based on factors including context, size, location and operating costs.

Communications Plan

A notice will be sent to all stakeholders and residents that participated in the open house forum to provide an update on the recommendations of this report and the approved next-steps. The consultant's reports and a summary of the Off-Leash Dog Area site selection process will be posted on the City page.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the public consultation process for the selection of a second location for an Off-leash Dog Area west of Highway 400 and to seek Council approval to conduct additional study of smaller Off-Leash Dog Areas.

Background - Analysis and Options

The Active Together Master Plan identifies community support for developing additional Off-Leash Dog Parks

The 2013 Active Together Master Plan (ATMP) provides recommendations related to the provision of Off-Leash Dog Parks including the recommendation to develop a second Off-Leash Dog Park in an area west of Highway 400. Other recommendations include developing primary Off-Leash Dog Parks away from residential areas (i.e. Block 35 and 59), and exploring options for establishing small, more localized Off-Leash Dog Areas in closer proximity to residential communities especially in high density areas, which would be in addition to the larger primary off-leash parks recommended for each quadrant of the City.

The need for development and inclusion of Off-Leash Dog Parks within the City's park system is clearly identified. The 2013 update of the ATMP estimated that there are over 76,000 dog owners in the City with many dog owners seeking local recreation opportunities and requesting additional dedicated Off-Leash Dog Areas in neighbourhoods throughout the City. Off-Leash Dog Areas provide pet owners with the opportunity to exercise and socialize their dogs in a controlled area and they facilitate interaction between pet owners bringing social and physical activity benefits to residents. Off-Leash Dog Areas have proven to be quite successful in many municipalities, with larger urban areas often having several such facilities.

In response to a petition received for establishing an Off-Leash Dog Park in Woodbridge, Council, at its September 9, 2014 Committee of the Whole Meeting, adopted the following resolution (Item 50, Report No. 36, Recommendation 1 and 2):

That the petition be received and referred to the Finance, Administration and Audit Committee, for consideration as part of the 2015 budget discussions; and

That in anticipation of such consideration, appropriate staff prepare a report on potential locations for an off leash park west of Highway 400, estimated costs, etc.

Following direction from Council and receipt of public support through the petition bearing over 250 signatures, a Capital Project was approved as part of the 2015 Budget for preparing the required study for site selection.

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An RFP process was undertaken to select a consultant to lead the site selection evaluation process and obtain feedback from the public and project stakeholders

In November 2015 a Request for Proposal (RFP) was prepared and released (RFP15-524). Five (5) companies downloaded the RFP documents, no proposals were received and the RFP was cancelled. A second RFP (RFP16-035) was prepared and released in February 2016. Five (5) companies downloaded the RFP documents and two (2) proposals were received. Based on the results of the RFP evaluation, consulting firm Amec Foster Wheeler Environment & Infrastructure (Amec Foster Wheeler) was the highest scoring Proponent and a contract for their services was awarded.

Understanding the City's goal to identify potential Off-Leash Dog Park sites located west of Highway 400, Amec Forster Wheeler developed and undertook a study process that:

1. Considers available information from the City;
2. Provides recommendations on site selection criteria, evaluation conditions and assessment scoring;
3. Identifies priority areas and list of potential sites;
4. Identifies a short-list of three to four potential sites with high-level conceptual facility fits;
5. Includes consultation with City staff and community stakeholders in an equitable and transparent manner; and
6. Reports on the findings to City Council

A variety of site selection criteria and evaluation factors were used to help determine a list of suitable sites for Off-Leash Dog Areas

Based on the review of the previous assessment criteria for the site selection of additional Off-Leash Dog Park Areas along with information from other locations in Southern Ontario and off-leash best practices, the study team considered the following criteria to move forward for further refinement and determination of potential sites:

- Proximity to areas where children play
- Proximity to areas that are environmentally sensitive or designated
- Proximity to residential areas
- Proximity to major intersections and busy streets
- Availability and ownership of properties
- Size and accessibility by car or for pedestrians
- Safety, security and traffic considerations
- Site characteristics (such as drainage, vegetation)
- Cost (purchase, construction, maintenance)
- Opportunities for innovation
- Results of community input

The consolidated Site Selection Criteria for Off-leash Dog Areas was used to determine a short list of preferred sites using a two-step process:

Step 1 – Site Section Criteria – Tier 1: general criteria that *must be met* for a site to be considered as a potential Primary Off-Leash Dog Area to move on to Tier 2 process, refer to Attachment 1, Table 3-1.

Step 2 – Site Selection Criteria - Tier 2: criteria to evaluate the relative quality of suitable sites and provide ranking. Develop preliminary layout plans and cost estimates for the potential Off-Leash Dog Areas, refer to Attachment 1, Table 3-2. This step includes public consultation and feedback from the community.

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A total of thirteen (13) potential sites were reviewed and considered as potential sites for Primary Off-Leash Dog Areas

A summary of the thirteen (13) potential sites is presented on Table 3-3 and Figure 3.2 in Attachment 1. Following an initial screening, a total of seven (7) sites were evaluated using Tier 1 criteria as potential locations for a Primary Off-Leash Dog Area:

- Location A: Kirby Road and Weston Road (Identified future Park, Block 35, Ward 1)
- Location B: Rutherford Road and Highway 27 (Identified future Block 59 District Park, Ward 2)
- Location C: Major Mackenzie Drive and Highway 27 (City-owned property, open space, Ward 2)
- Location D: Foster Woods – Major Mackenzie Drive and Islington Avenue (City- owned property, open space, Ward 1)
- Location E: Rutherford Road and Islington Avenue (TRCA Lands, behind new Hospice location, Ward 2)
- Location F: Islington Avenue and Highway 27 (TRCA Lands, open space, Ward 1)
- Location G: Aviva Park Drive and Weston Road (City- owned property, open space, Ward 3)

Following the Tier 1 review a short list of four (4) sites advanced to Tier 2 review process for a Primary Off-Leash Dog Area, including Location B, C, E and G with location A, D and F determined to be not suitable due to availability/ownership, proximity to designated areas, and proximity to residential areas.

Four (4) shortlisted locations were presented for public consultation and feedback

A public consultation open house forum was held on September 20, 2016 and attended by over 76 residents, with over 100 comment sheets submitted. From the feedback received, Location E (Rutherford Road and Islington Avenue TRCA Lands, behind new Hospice location) scored the highest for reasons such as close proximity to residential area and natural character. When the consultant reviewed Location E in more detail, the consultant found that Location E requires additional costs associated with site grading, servicing, is situated adjacent to a wetland feature and would require the City to enter into a lease or license agreement with the Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) for the use of these lands. During the Tier 2 process and following initial discussion with TRCA staff, there was general support for an Off-Leash Dog area within Location E. However, during subsequent discussions with TRCA staff, there is a reluctance to proceed with the development of these lands for an Off-Leash Dog Area at this time due to ongoing discussions with the Region of York to use these lands for a Forestry/tree planting project.

In addition, the facility fit and cost estimate review process identified Location B (Rutherford Road and Highway 27, future Block 59 District Park) and Location G (Aviva Park Drive and Weston Road City-owned property, open space) as the two best candidates for a Primary Off-Leash Dog Area (refer to Attachment 1, Table 4-1). Both are publicly owned or planned future parkland properties, meet proximity and space requirements of the Tier 1 Selection Criteria, are not impacted by environmentally sensitive or designated features, and are accessible from a main road. Both sites are located within 10-15 minute drive from local residents.

Location B (Rutherford Road and Highway 27, future Block 59 District Park) was identified as the highest scoring location

Based on the results of the final evaluation Location B is recommended as the next Primary Off-Leash Dog Area having scored higher than both Location G and Location E. The Consultant also noted that Location B is the least expensive to develop and the most economically feasible

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location as construction costs can be shared with the development of the Block 59 District Park. As per the preliminary facility fit layout (refer to Figure 4.1), the setbacks and layout of the Off-Leash Dog Area within the park may require future acquisition and/or parkland conveyance of lands towards the northern limits of the District Park. These additional lands should be considered by the City in order to allow for expansion of the Off-Leash Dog Area or sports facilities, and the development of off-road trail systems.

Additional Findings by the Consultant

A review of the existing Off-Leash Dog Area at Concord Thornhill Regional Park (CTRP) was undertaken to help understand operational considerations in the context of the planning for a second primary site.

Through workshops held with Parks and Forestry Operations, By-law & Compliance, Licensing & Permits Services, Animal Control staff and external stakeholders during the month of June, 2016 and the online survey conducted from July 1, 2016 through to September 11, 2016, the following has been summarized in relation to comments received for the existing Off-Leash Dog Area within CTRP. The purpose of the workshops and the survey questions was to understand lessons learned from the current Off-Leash Dog Area; to gain an understanding of the opportunities and challenges in the selection of a second site within the municipality, and to discuss other issues or concerns. The following summarizes the key points from the workshops (refer to Attachment 1, Section 5.3).

1. Increased by-law enforcement (aggressive dogs, inappropriate use, poop & scoop waste collection)
2. Improved maintenance (frequency)
3. Improved surface material (improve grass, add woodchip surfacing)
4. Improved lighting
5. Improved accessibility (upgrade existing granular pathway and drainage)
6. Add Amenities :
 - a. Shade/wind coverage (trees, shelter)
 - b. Drinking water
 - c. Agility / training area
 - d. Benches
 - e. Separate entrances for small and large dogs
 - f. Provide varied terrain

Based on comments received from user groups and a general review of the CTRP Off-Leash Dog Area, the following levels of service are recommended for all future Primary Off-Leash Dog Areas:

Standard Level of Service: It is recommended that standards for Primary Off-Leash Dog Areas include materials and facilities that have an overall low capital and maintenance costs, are therefore feasible for implementation at all Off-Leash Dog Areas:

1. Parking area,
2. 1.5m high perimeter fencing and entry gates,
3. Woodchip and/or natural turf surfacing,
4. Lighting,
5. Notice Board or Kiosk,
6. Separate enclosures and entrances for small dogs and large dogs,
7. Site Furnishing (Seating, Trash, Recycling and Dog Waste Bins);
8. Waste bag dispensers,
9. Code of conduct and educational signage,
10. Entry and leaving area signs, and
11. Shade tree planting/Shade Structure

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Enhanced Level of Service: It is recommended that items associated with higher capital and maintenance costs may be considered through sponsorship or donations from an affiliated organization and off-leash dog group or through special funding or grants:

1. Water Fountain
2. Agility course (play equipment)

Although agility equipment was identified through the community consultation process and expressed desirability from Off-Leash Dog Area users, this equipment should only be used in a proper training environment, and not by amateurs. Staff have concerns that unsupervised use can lead to risk of injury when this equipment is improperly used.

Parks Development staff will work with Parks and Forestry Operations, By-law & Compliance, Licensing & Permits Services, Animal Control staff on the recommended improvements and determine what works should be considered in future capital and operating budgets.

Public consultation and survey results identified an overwhelming desire for the City to establish smaller Off-Leash Dog Areas

In addition to comments received for the timely development of a second Primary Off-Leash Dog Area west of highway 400, staff also received request for Local Off-Leash Areas within a 500m (5-10 minute) walking distance from residential homes. Survey results indicate that a majority of dog owners take their dogs for exercise locally and prefer to walk a short distance to a local Off-Leash Dog Area instead of driving a car to a larger Primary Off-Leash Area on a regular basis.

In addition, many communities throughout the City are experiencing an increase of residential infill projects and development intensification, mainly in the form of medium density and high-rise towers. In order to support both the current residents and planned population growth within existing communities, it is becoming very important for the City to provide park and open space amenities that appeal to a variety of lifestyles and age groups. In most growing municipalities, local neighbourhood and urban Off-Leash Dog Areas are a standard level of service and serve the community by providing both a recreation and social function.

To further explore ways the City can accommodate the interests and lifestyle of these current and future residents, further review and public consultation is proposed regarding the development of Local Off-Leash Dog Areas that permit dogs to run off-leash in designated areas within a local neighbourhood or district park. Through additional public consultation City staff will review the possibility of identifying smaller Local Off-Leash Dog Areas throughout the City, with specific criteria, where there is a demonstrated demand from the community and report back to Council with the findings and a proposed approach.

Relationship to Term of Council Service Excellence Strategy Map (2016-2018)

This report is consistent with the priorities established in the updated Term of Council Service Excellence Strategy Map, specifically:

- Invest, renew and manage infrastructure and assets
- Continue to cultivate an environmental sustainable City
- Support and promote arts, culture, heritage and sports in the community

Regional Implications

Not Applicable.

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Conclusion

A thorough public consultation process was undertaken to assess potential locations to establish a second Primary Off-Leash Dog Area in the City located west of Highway 400. Through the evaluation process, the proposed site selection criteria identified four suitable sites for a future Primary Off-Leash Dog Area with Location B, located at Rutherford Road and Hwy 27, within the future Block 59 District Park, as the recommended site for the next Primary Off-Leash Dog Area. Staff will conduct a feasibility assessment of this site and report back. Additional consideration and public consultation is also recommended regarding the development of Local Off-Leash Dog Areas within existing Neighbourhood and District Parks. Staff propose completing further review and analysis and report back to a future Committee meeting with findings and a proposed approach.

Attachments

1. Planning and Site Selection Report, prepared by Amec Foster Wheeler, dated October 18, 2016

Report prepared by:

Martin Tavares, Manager of Parks & Open Space Planning, ext. 8882
Michael Habib, Senior Planner, ext. 8092
Jamie Bronsema, Director of Parks Development, ext. 8058

(A copy of the attachments referred to in the foregoing have been forwarded to each Member of Council and a copy thereof is also on file in the office of the City Clerk.)

Councillor Carella declared an interest with respect to this matter as he is an officer of a not-for-profit corporation that owns land immediately abutting the subject lands, and did not take part in the discussion or vote on the matter.