
TO: GENERAL COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: DOG OFF LEASH RECREATION AREAS

WARD: ALL

PREPARED BY AND KEY CONTACT: W. LOEVENMARK
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURAL PLANNER (Ext. 4743) *SL*

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CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER APPROVAL: C. LADD
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER *C. Ladd*

RECOMMENDED MOTION

1. That Staff Report ENG019-13 concerning Dog Off Leash Recreation Areas, be received.

PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

2. The purpose of this Staff Report is to provide an assessment of the benefits of Dog Off Leash Recreation Area (DOLRA) locations in both central and south Barrie based on resident feedback and staff observations on the operation of both the Sunnidale Park and Barrie Molson Centre (BMC) DOLRAs.
3. On January 11, 2010, City Council adopted Motion 10-G-007 as follows:
 - a) "That a new DOLRA on the east side of the Barrie Molson Centre be considered for inclusion in the 2010 Business Plan for implementation in the Spring of 2010."
 - b) "That staff continue to assess the benefits of additional DOLRA locations in both central and south Barrie, and report back to General Committee within one year of the opening of the Barrie Molson Centre DOLRA." (ENG005-10) (File: R04-DO)
4. On June 27, 2011, City Council adopted Motion 11-G-211 as follows:
 1. That the Barrie Molson Centre valley lands, be approved for a new Dog Off Leash Recreation Area as per Appendix "C" of Staff Report ENG038-11 for implementation as soon as possible.
 2. That the additional \$5,000 required for the implementation of the DOLRA at this location, be funded from the Tax Capital Reserve (13-04-0440) (ENG038-11)."
5. As of March 2013, 3,509 dog tags have been sold. There were 4,104 dog tags sold in 2012, up from 3,933 dog tags sold in 2011. While dog tag sales do not provide a total of the number of dogs owned by Barrie residents, the sales provide minimum numbers as not all residents obtain licences. Licences are renewed every January.

6. Barrie currently has two large scale dog off leash areas; the Sunnidale Park DOLRA (7.15 acres) and the BMC DOLRA (20 acres). The BMC DOLRA is located in Ward 10 and was officially opened on July 26, 2012. The Sunnidale Park DOLRA is located in Ward 4 and opened in 2003.

ANALYSIS

Public Feedback

7. Staff initiated a survey to receive feedback from residents regarding Barrie's current DOLRAs in March 2013 (results are now posted on the DOLRA page of the City web site and a copy of the survey is available in the Councillor's Lounge for review). The results of the survey were consistent with 2009 survey results indicating the resident's desire for the City to consider new dog off leash locations. While many improvements were suggested, the following is a summary of the wishes expressed by residents that are not currently met through the existing DOLRA's:
- Ability to walk to dog off leash area from home
 - A DOLRA in every ward
 - Lighting for winter use
 - All owners stooping & scooping, more by-law enforcement
 - Provide a source of water or water fountain
 - Keep away from natural areas where the City must spray for poison ivy
 - Paved walk in area to avoid muddy spring conditions and potential for snow clearing
 - Shade Shelter
 - Dog bag dispensers
8. The survey demonstrates continued interest in dog off leash parks with a specific interest in lighting for winter evening use. Staff interpret the above deficiencies being met through the creation of smaller, urban facilities where site use can be visually monitored for late evening use.
9. Many of the comments received from the 2009 Public Information Centre were addressed in the design and implementation of the BMC DOLRA. Although water service was not part of the BMC DOLRA design, staff continued to investigate opportunities to include this service. Staff recommend that an outside water tap be installed at the east façade of the BMC to provide water service to dog owners. This project will be considered in Future Business Plans.
10. Staff noted the consistent request for a water access area for dogs. Many provincial parks, such as Wasaga Beach Provincial Park and Awenda Provincial Park, now offer an area where dogs may enter the water. A recommendation to explore and investigate options for a water access area for dogs will be included in the Waterfront and Marina Strategic Plan. Part of this investigation will include the development of specific site criteria for consideration in any design of a facility such as the size, its impact on shoreline access, erosion/slope stability, delineation of space (both on land and in the water), parking, access to public transit and potential popularity of a facility.
11. Staff explored the benefits of providing key elements in future dog off leash areas with a focus on smaller scale facilities. This type of dog off leash area could provide many benefits to local areas of the City such as:
- **Safety** – A small open site could be lit through street lighting, allowing for safer winter and evening use and a higher degree of "public" surveillance of a location.

- **Accessibility** - A small location means greater access for local neighbourhoods while making a site more accessible to people with mobility issues.
 - **Cleanliness** - Neighbourhood regular users have a greater vested interest in maintaining the dog off leash area which increases cleanliness. People are more likely to clean up dog waste around people they know or when people are watching.
 - **Active transportation** - Enables residents to easily walk to the site, increasing community connectivity and sense of place (or belonging). Smaller parks would be more frequently used as people include them in their daily schedule, being easily accessible in terms of travel time and distance (without the use of a vehicle).
 - **By-law Enforcement** - Enforcement is facilitated in neighbourhood settings where an enforcement officer can quickly assess the site from the street and is more likely to pass by while patrolling or enroute to or from another call. Visual scans are possible where no dense forest exists.
 - **More DOLRA Options** - Smaller parks could be provided in greater number since the space requirement is smaller. These sites could range in size from 1 acre to 5 acres (0.4 to 2 hectares). Dog owners experience different levels of needs, ranging from a quick visit to more exercise opportunities with their dogs. By offering both large scale and small scale DOLRAs in urban and natural locations, more public demand can be met.
 - **Water Supply** - Municipal water mains are typically adjacent to neighbourhood parks and some parks have existing water connections, creating the potential for drinking fountains for park users and their dogs.
12. Both existing dog off leash areas are fenced, creating an expectation that future dog off leash areas will be fenced with controlled access. This decreases potential impacts on adjacent park use in urban settings. Future DOLRA consideration will continue to include fencing as the method of boundary security. The selection of any future DOLRA sites would include public consultation with surrounding residents.

Future DOLRA criteria

13. Based on the above benefits and the recent 2013 Survey, staff developed the following criteria for consideration of the future small scale dog off leash areas: less than 5 acre size (2 hectares), ambient lighting, available parking, site accessibility, perimeter fencing with boundary setbacks, a water supply, potential for shade structure and location. The costs will range from approximately \$15,000 to \$60,000 depending on the site specific conditions. These costs would be developed and detailed as specific sites are evaluated.
14. The Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan addresses recreational amenities but does not address dog off leash areas as a required recreational opportunity. Currently, the Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan states, under Section 6-42;

“The provision of additional dog off leash areas should be considered through business planning should sufficient demand for such a facility be expressed in the future. While the City will ultimately decide its ongoing role in operations of these parks when they are developed, it would be prudent to investigate partnership opportunities if an interested community organization is willing to become involved with the ongoing operation and/or capital investment associated with a future off leash park.”

15. Staff will continue to explore opportunities for future large scale dog off leash areas, similar to the Sunnidale Park and Barrie Molson Centre DOLRAs, both in the previous City boundaries and the annexed lands as development opportunities become available.
16. While additional small scale dog off leash areas would meet demand for a specific local neighbourhood user, the 2013 DOLRA survey shows continued interest in large scale dog off leash parks.

ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

17. The following environmental matters have been considered in the development of the recommendation:
 - Increasing the number of dog off leash parks would reduce environmental impacts in existing DOLRA's from overuse. Both Sunnidale and the Barrie Molson Centre DOLRAs have trails on slopes which are vulnerable to erosion. Sunnidale has sustained heavy wearing on all its trails over the years when it was the only dog off leash area and will require future upgrades to restore affected areas. The BMC DOLRA now creates the option to close portions of the Sunnidale DOLRA for regeneration and repair purposes. These upgrades will be considered in future business plans.

ALTERNATIVES

18. As this report is being presented for information purposes only, no alternatives are presented.

FINANCIAL

19. There are no financial implications for the Corporation resulting from the recommendation to receive the report.

LINKAGE TO 2010 – 2014 COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

20. The recommendation(s) included in this Staff Report are not specifically related to the goals identified in the 2010-2014 City Council Strategic Plan.