



Committee of the Whole Report

For the Meeting of August 3, 2017

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** July 24, 2017
From: Thomas Soulliere, Director, Parks, Recreation and Facilities
Subject: Dog Off-Leash Pilot Project for Barnard Park

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive this report for information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council has requested feedback from staff on impacts and advisability of allowing for a dog off-leash area in Barnard Park on a trial basis.

Staff have conducted an initial assessment to determine advisability of allowing for dogs off-leash in this park. Potential concerns have been identified relating to the park topography and size, as well as adjacent land uses. Should Council decide to proceed, the potential impacts to staff workload of carrying out the pilot project will not likely be significant.

As with the two other pilots recently approved by Council, the information gathered would help inform an overall strategy identified in the recently approved Parks and Open Space Master Plan. The future strategy will provide guidance to the approach for dog off-leash areas throughout the city.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information regarding the impacts and advisability of providing a dog off-leash pilot at Barnard Park in the Victoria West neighbourhood.

BACKGROUND

On July 13, 2017, Council directed staff to report back on impacts and advisability of allowing for dogs off-leash on a trial basis in Barnard Park.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

Staff have conducted an initial assessment to determine advisability of allowing for dogs off-leash on a trial basis for Barnard Park, and identified potential challenges, relating to the park size and topography, as well as adjacent land uses. The small park is home to tennis courts, a playground, and pathways that provide linkages between the neighbourhood to the west, Esquimalt Road and the popular Westsong Walkway. The park is surrounded by medium to high density housing that are physically located higher than the park, creating a bowl that has the potential effect of amplifying noise.

Other existing dog off-leash areas located within the adjacent neighbourhood include Songhees-Hillside Park, Victoria West Park, Banfield Park as well as Captain Jacobsen Park and Highrock Park, which are located within the municipality of Esquimalt (See map in Appendix A).

Should Council wish to proceed with a pilot project at Barnard Park, staff recommend applying similar hours to the other pilot off-leash areas (6:30am – 8:30am) for a one year term. Also similar to the other pilot projects, the necessary advance planning and communications prior to launch of the pilots is anticipated to require approximately three weeks from the date of Council approval of the initiative, meaning the effective start date could be September 1st. This period will ensure the specific location parameters in the park are identified, site signage is installed, pre-pilot assessments are completed, and a communications plan is developed and executed to ensure citizens and stakeholders are aware of the change.

During the pilot project staff may experience a slight increase in maintenance requests, which is common with other dog off-leash areas, and this would be accommodated through City calls-for-service procedures. Additional support from Animal Control may also be required, however this will be addressed and monitored on a "complaint" basis.

The highest potential impact to staff resources is anticipated to be in relation to correspondence with citizens and potentially the analysis of the results of pilot projects. Should Council approve this pilot project and require staff to develop an evaluation criteria, staff would ensure such work is factored into planning for 2018.

The total resource impact associated with the planning and implementation of this pilot is expected to be accommodated with the 2017 Financial Plan, although some workload impacts will be experienced by certain staff (ie Park Planning, Engagement, Park Infrastructure, Bylaw Enforcement) resulting in potential delays to the timing of other discrete activities planned to-date by these staff.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

That Council receive this report for information.

Should Council wish to proceed with the pilot dog off-leash area at Barnard park, staff are prepared to commence planning of pilot project immediately following Council approval. This work can be accommodated within current work plans and resource allocation.

Impacts to Financial Plan

No significant impacts are anticipated beyond the approved Financial Plan for 2017. Future work associated with the evaluation of the pilot projects will be factored into resource planning for 2018, if required by Council.

CONCLUSIONS

The dog off-leash pilot project at Barnard Park could commence September 1, 2017 pending Council approval. The project will provide experience and input into future strategic planning associated with an updated city-wide dog off-leash program.


Respectfully submitted,



Thomas Soulliere
Director
Parks, Recreation and Facilities

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:

Date:


July 27, 2017

List of Attachments

Appendix A: Map of Nearby Parks with Off-Leash Areas