



Committee of the Whole Report

For the Meeting of June 8, 2017

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** May 23, 2017
From: Thomas Soulliere, Director, Parks, Recreation and Facilities
Subject: Dog Off-Leash Pilot Projects for Three City Parks

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive this report for information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council has requested feedback from staff on the resource implications of proposed pilot projects for new dog off-leash areas during the early morning hours in three City parks. Staff have undertaken an initial assessment and recommend a slight amendment to one of the park locations initially identified by Council. David Spencer Park in the Oaklands neighbourhood is currently leased to School District 61 for use by students of Oaklands Elementary School during the day time hours, and therefore staff recommend Council consider nearby Oaklands Park for the one year dog off-leash pilot. Moreover, staff have evaluated the potential impacts to existing workload of carrying out the three pilot projects and believe these impacts will not likely be significant.

The information gathered during these pilots will be collected to inform an overall strategy identified as a priority action 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 resource implications of three dog off-leash pilot projects in City parks.

BACKGROUND

On May 25, 2017, Council referred the following resolution to the next Quarterly Strategic Plan Update and directed staff to report to Council at that update on the resource implications of the following action:

1. That Fisherman's Wharf Park allow dogs off leash from 6:30am-8:30am as a one year pilot project.
2. That Gonzales Beach allow dogs on the beach from 6:30am-8:30am during the summer months as a pilot project.
3. The feedback be gathered on both of these pilot projects through the regular channels that citizens communicate with Council, specifically mayorandcouncil@victoria.ca

4. That Council evaluate the Gonzales Beach pilot project in the fall of 2017 based on input received.
5. That Council evaluate the Fisherman's Wharf pilot project in the late spring of 2018 based on feedback received.
6. That dogs off leash be allowed in Spencer Park from 6:30am-8:30am as a pilot project.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

Staff have conducted an initial assessment of the anticipated impacts associated with the pilot projects for the three park locations. One location in particular, David Spencer Park, has been identified as potentially problematic due to an existing usage agreement with School District 61 and Oaklands Elementary School. As an alternative staff recommend nearby Oaklands Park, a larger open space located just one block from David Spencer Park, for the one year pilot.

Consideration of the above adjustments for three park locations to include dog off-leash areas will require coordination of staff from various departments as well as public communication. 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 July 1. This period will ensure the specific location parameters in each 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 changes.

During the pilot projects 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 these pilot projects 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 the three pilots is expected to be accommodated with the 2017 Financial Plan, although some workload impacts will be experienced by certain staff (ie Park Planning, Engagement, Parks Infrastructure, Bylaw Enforcement) resulting in potential delays to the timing of other discrete activities planned to-date by these staff.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Direct Staff to Proceed with Planning and Implementation of the Dog Off-Leash Pilot Projects for Gonzales Park (summer only), Fisherman's Wharf Park (one year) and Oaklands Park (one year) in 2017

Staff are prepared to commence planning of pilot projects for the three parks 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 three dog off-leash pilot projects could commence July 1, 2017, pending Council approval. The projects 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:



June 7, 2017