



CITY OF RICHMOND

REPORT TO COMMITTEE

TO: Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Committee **DATE:** December 10, 2001
FROM: Mike Redpath **FILE:** 7200-20-DPAR1-02
 Manager, Parks Administration & Programs
RE: **Community Request For a Pilot Dogs off leash Area Program at Garry Point Park
February 2002 to March 31, 2002- Friends of Garry Point**

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

1. That staff be directed to undertake the *Proposed Designated Dog Off Leash Pilot Program for Garry Point Park February 2002 to March 31, 2002* as outlined and designated by map in Attachment 1.
2. That the permitted times for the off leash area be designated from 6:00 am to 10:00 am and from 4:00 pm to 9:00 pm on a daily basis and that the times and area be clearly posted via temporary signage at Garry Point for the duration of the pilot project.
3. That staff report back to the Parks Recreation and Cultural Services Committee in May, 2002 with results of the pilot project and to determine if the winter dogs off leash pilot project should be undertaken on an annual basis.

Mike Redpath
Manager Parks Administration & Programs

Att. 2

FOR ORIGINATING DIVISION USE ONLY		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Community Bylaws and Administration	Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	

STAFF REPORT

ORIGIN

At the November 27, 2001 Parks Recreation and Cultural Services Committee Meeting, in response to a delegation from the ad hoc group 'Friends of Garry Point,' Committee was presented with a petition from approximately 750 Richmond residents in support of piloting a seasonal dogs off leash program at Garry Point Park. As a result of the delegation's presentation, staff were given the following referral:

- (1) *"the matter be referred to staff for development of a pilot project which would designate a portion of Garry Point Park as an off leash area for dogs during the months of December, January and February. Contingent within the project would be a commitment by the Friends of Garry Point that the group would provide adequate supervision of the area which would include ensuring that owners clean up after their pets.*
- (2) *staff provide an analysis of what hours of off-leash use would best suit the pilot project."*

The purpose of this report is to respond to the above referral and outline opportunities and challenges to facilitate a pilot dogs off leash area program at Garry Point Park between the months of February 2002 to March 31, 2002.

ANALYSIS

Proposed Designated Dog Off Leash Pilot Program for Garry Point Park February 2002 to March 31, 2002.

A detailed process for implementing a proposed pilot designated dogs off leash area in a portion of Garry Point Park between the months of February 2002 and March 31, 2002 is included for consideration in Attachment One.

Garry Point Park is one of Richmond's most visited community parks. Located at the south west corner of Richmond, the site is a favourite spot for passive and organised recreational uses including: walking, kite flying, bench sitting, community special events, fishing, beach fires, picnicking, and visiting the concession.

Specific to Garry Point Park, concerns with designating a portion of the park as an off-leash area include: the need to protect wildflower areas, potential conflict with trail users, protecting the Japanese Kuno Gardens which are adopted by the BC Wakayama Kenjin Kai, and the added water obstacle caused in the interior of the park each fall which is used as an ice skating surface in the winter months.

In the process of selecting a 'portion' of Garry Point Park for an off leash pilot project, the variety of park uses was considered to minimize the impact on general park visitors from the off leash activities and to balance the request from the community for access to the water to exercise

their pets. Staff have had the opportunity to meet with the ad hoc group calling themselves the 'Friends of Garry Point' (see proposal - Attachment 2) and visited the site together.

Existing Dogs Off Leash Program in Richmond

Since the inception of the Dogs Off Leash Program in Richmond, the popularity of the designated off leash areas has grown. The following areas are currently designated as off leash areas for dogs in Richmond: Vacant lot East of Highway #91, Old Cambie School Field, Shell Road Trail, McDonald Beach, and South foot of No. 3 Road.

Authority

At the March 6, 2000 General Purposes committee meeting, staff brought forward amendments to the Animal, Bird and Beekeeping Bylaw No. 7137 to include the interpretation of a **designated dog off leash area: which means an area posted by sign, which defines the geographic area and/or time period that dogs can be off-leash.** The following passage from Bylaw 7137 outlines owner obligations with respect to leashing requirements:

“2.2.2 Owner Obligations - Leashing

- 2.2.2.1 Every **owner** of a **dog** must keep such **dog** that is on any street or in a public place, on a leash at all times, except in areas posted as **designated dog off-leash areas**, and when such dog is unleashed, the **owner** must at all times:
 - (a) carry a leash;
 - (b) keep the **dog** in view; and
 - (c) maintain effective control of the **dog** so that the **dog** immediately returns when signalled.
- 2.2.2.2 Every **owner** of a **dog** must immediately leash such **dog** when the **dog** exhibits **aggressive behaviour.**”

Relationship to Corporate Plan 2001

Richmond's existing successful off leash program continues to evolve on an annual basis. The success of the pilot off leash program can help to establish a model for time sensitive off leash areas in other community or neighbourhood parks in the future. An opportunity exists to establish neighbourhood 'dog watch' groups who can become the stewards of designated dog off leash areas in Richmond.

The City of Toronto's dog off leash policy/program for example requires that an off leash area only be designated once fifteen local area residents commit to 'adopting' an off leash park on an annual basis.

A great opportunity exists to use the off leash area program as an outlet for getting to know your neighbours and to increase stewardship of community/neighbourhood parks while promoting social interaction at the neighbourhood level throughout the community. Community vibrancy and especially neighbours getting to know neighbours can be direct benefits.

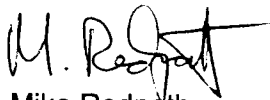
FINANCIAL IMPACT

The financial implications of the pilot dogs off leash area project at Garry Point Park are estimated to be \$2500.00. Staff recommend that these costs come from the Parks 2001 General Development Capital Program. This figure includes staff community consultation and project evaluation time, the installation of signage and the expense of moving logs at Garry Point to delineate the pilot area.

CONCLUSION

The matter of dogs in Richmond's public open spaces requires balancing the needs of both pro-dog and anti-dog viewpoints. If approved, the pilot dogs off leash program at a portion of Garry Point Park will be monitored to determine levels of usage, and adherence to the posted responsible dog owner guidelines posted at each site. Ultimately the actions of dogs in Richmond's public parks and open spaces are the responsibility of each individual owner.

The City of Richmond has been proactive in the last few years by designating five dedicated park sites as off leash areas. As a pilot project the Garry Point off leash program could serve as a model to encourage enhanced community participation in the monitoring and stewardship of Richmond's off leash areas for the future.



Mike Redpath
Manager, Parks Administration & Programs

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Proposed Designated Dog Off Leash Pilot Program for Garry Point Park February 2002 to March 31, 2002.

Timeframe

The November 27, 2001 General Purposes Committee referral directs staff to designate a portion of Garry Point Park as an off leash area for a pilot project time period between the months of December 2001, and February 2002. Given the tight timelines required for consultation with the 'Friends of Garry Point,' the need for determining project evaluation criteria, the requirement for some sign installation, development of a communication strategy, among other factors, staff are recommending that the pilot project commence in February 2002 and end March 31, 2002.

Analysis of Hours of Off Leash Use For Pilot Project

A time share arrangement can be used to provide free-running access to dogs at particular times of the day, for example in non-peak times such as the early morning and late afternoon. This arrangement can help to minimize potential conflict in areas such as Garry Point where park visitors undertake many different types of activities with or without their dogs.

The City of Vancouver utilizes a time sensitive scheme for dog off leash areas, as a general rule, Vancouver's off leash parks allow off leash in designated areas between 6 am to 10 am and 5 pm to 10 pm. The City of Vancouver also notifies the public that permitted times can vary with each park site and are subject to change, and encourages dog owners to consult the signs at each park for further information.

Currently the five off leash areas in Richmond have no restrictions on times for accessing the park sites, other than the Public Park and School-ground Bylaw general park closure clause of 11:00 pm.

It should be recognised that a benefit of the Friends of Garry Point proposal for designating an off leash area in a portion of Garry Point is for the winter months only, and not in the busy summer months when Garry Point is especially popular and frequented by hundreds of visitors on a daily basis.

For the purposes of the pilot project at Garry Point Park, staff are recommending that the area outlined in Map 1 be designated an off leash area for dogs from 6:00 am to 10:00 am and from 4:00 pm to 9:00 pm.

Adoption of Pilot Area By Friends of Garry Point

This "time sensitive" approach to allowing dogs to be off leash at Garry Point Park will only be effective if supplemented by regular enforcement outside of the permitted times by the SPCA, and also with the assistance of the Friends of Garry Point members who have committed to 'adopt the area,' clean up after dog owners who fail to stoop-and-scoop and to approach dog owners who stray from the designated off leash area.

If approved, staff will negotiate an agreement with the Friends of Garry Point who have volunteered to help monitor the pilot project, distribute responsible owner pamphlets developed by the City as well.

Improvements to Park Required to Facilitate the Pilot Project

Signage

Central to the implementation of the Richmond Designated Dog off Leash Program has been the responsibility of dog owners to respect the 'responsible dog owner guidelines which are posted at each designated off leash site.

- **Dogs must be kept under control by their owners at all times**
- **Stoop and Scoop, clean up after your dog**
- **Dog owners must carry a leash at all times**
- **All dogs must be currently and visibly licensed**
- **Dog owners must maintain effective verbal control of their dogs and always be able to see their dog when off the leash**
- **Any dog exhibiting aggressive behaviour must be leashed immediately**

Based on community complaints, staff monitoring of existing off leash areas, and experiences in other cities, the inclusion of added off leash area etiquette guidelines in addition to existing off leash area signage is recommended to include the following:

- Dogs must be on leash prior to entering and upon leaving this off leash area,
- Owners must respect other park visitors by keeping their dog from running up to and jumping on other people or their dogs
- Dog owners must fill in any holes dug by their dogs
- (Signs will also include a map of the site exactly showing the off leash area boundaries)

Delineation of a Portion of Garry Point Park as an Off Leash Area

Given the unique nature of designating a 'portion' of Garry Point park as an off leash area for dogs, staff have been presented with the challenge of either fencing off the designated 'portion', or creating an alternate form of boundary. A low cost opportunity is presented at Garry Point to delineate the area shown in Map 1 by using a combination of logs already found on the site, and supplemented by signage to keep the pilot area dogs off leash portion of separated from the park proper.

Proposed Evaluation Criteria for Off Leash Use

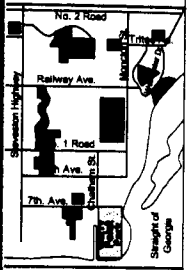
Staff are currently developing a detailed program to monitor and evaluate the success of the pilot program. Data collected in this program can include:

- the number of dogs/visitors to the park
- the frequency of use of the off-leash area
- the type and size of the dogs
- the physical damage caused by dog impact if any
- dogs and their owners' behaviour within and outside the off-leash area, such as unleashing of dogs prior to entering the off-leash area, and the ease or difficulty of owners in recalling them
- the number of incidents involving dogs

A combination of methods to collect these data are available, including:

- site monitoring by staff
- simple surveys of visitors to the park (both the general users and dog owners),
- a partnership with the Friends of Garry Point to collect these data, and
- a sign-in book for dog owners using the off-leash area (this will encourage dog owners to actively participate in the program, and provide a regular stream of data for the program).

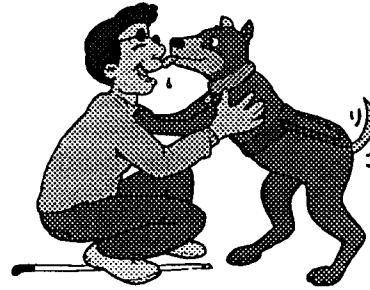
Map 1: Proposed Pilot Program - Designated Dogs Off-Leash Area at Garry Point Park
January 1st, 2002 - March 31st, 2002



Garry Point Park 1996 Photo Map Drawn Spring 2001 Block 3-7, Section 9 Address: 12011 7th Avenue

November 22, 2001

Mike Redpath
Manager of Administration
Parks & Recreation
City of Richmond



Dear Mike:

Here is a brief outline of the proposal we plan to present on Tuesday November 27th, 2001 at the Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting.

DELEGATION:

The Friends of Garry Point- an ad-hoc committee assembled for the purpose of finding a compromise solution that enables dogs to be exercised off-leash at Garry Point. We plan to suggest both short-term and long-term options. We also plan to be an ongoing monitoring, self-policing body of responsible dog owners. This will be modeled on the City of Vancouver's successful Dog Watch Program.

Note: The Friends of Garry Point is founded by Sally Chow, a non-dog owner who seeks to find an equitable, peaceful solution that allows all stakeholders to enjoy Garry Point.

RATIONALE:

- West Richmond residents desperately need an off-leash area
- Conflicts and tensions are mounting, particularly at Garry Point. SPCA officers are being treated disrespectfully, cyclists are purposely running down dogs and kicking them in an attempt to provoke an attack, "dog people" are upset and stressed that they cannot exercise their dogs even when very few people are in the park (during early morning hours or on rainy days when no one else is there), "non-dog people" want to be free of worry about dogs not under control.
- The closest off-leash area is the No. 3 Road site. Since there is no public transit available to this site, most people require a car to access it. This discriminates against: elderly people who do not drive anymore, people living in poverty or at lower income levels who cannot afford a car, and general population that do not have access to a vehicle.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Friends of Garry Point are suggesting we consider solutions on both a short-term and long-term basis.

SHORT TERM:

Option #1

We are asking the Department of Parks and Recreation to implement a pilot project that would designate Garry Point as an off-leash area during the generally miserable weather period of Dec, Jan, & Feb. Park usage by non-dog owners, cyclists, joggers, etc. is at an

absolute minimum. We will provide daily patrols of the area to ensure waste is picked up. We will post Responsible Dog Owner Guidelines and direct people to our web site at <http://members.shaw.ca/FriendsOfGarryPoint> for more information. This web site will also enable all people to provide ongoing feedback, both positive and negative, throughout the pilot project. We will also recruit many "park regulars" who will wear visible Friends of Garry Point identification. They will diplomatically speak to any dog owner who is not acting responsibly. "The Friends" will meet once every three weeks to discuss any problems. We will stay in close contact with the SPCA to monitor any concerns.

Option #2

Should our request for option #1 be unsuccessful, we ask that off-leash times be established at Garry Point for the winter months. Due to limited daylight hours and resulting safety issues, we suggest 6:00 – 10:00 am and 3:00 – 9:00 pm daily. This allows on-leash protection for other park users during the busier times of day (ie: 10:00 am-3:00 pm).

LONG TERM:

We are asking that an Advisory Committee regarding the issue of dogs off-leash be formed. This committee could consist of some of the members from the well respected Cat and Dog Companion Animal Task Force previously facilitated by the City. This committee would review the issue for Richmond as a whole. Specifically for the Friends of Garry Point, we would ask the committee to consider fencing off an area of the park – perhaps the 3rd beach area. Capital funding to build a rustic wood type fence to match the existing environmental aesthetic could come from a joint private/public venture. We would raise the private funding. Providing similar enclosures has successfully worked at other GVRD parks and beaches (eg. Ambleside and Buntzen Lake).

PUBLIC SUPPORT:

We will be presenting petitions at the November 22nd meeting. As of today, we have gathered approximately 250 signatures, and this has been with the most minimal of resources available over the last week. Unfortunately petitions containing an additional 200 signatures were stolen from the Garry Point and #3 Road sites. We hope to have at least 500 signatures by November 27, 2001.

Mike, if there is anything that I have missed please call me at 604-241-9889. Thanks for all your guidance; I look forward to meeting you soon.

Sincerely yours,



Sally Chow for *The Friends of Garry Point*