



CITY OF RICHMOND

REPORT TO COMMITTEE

TO: General Purposes Committee

DATE: May 4, 2000

FROM: Dave Semple
Director Parks

FILE: 8080-07

RE: Designated Dog off Leash Areas in Richmond

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

1. That Bylaw No. 7099 which initiates changes to the Pound and Dog Licencing Bylaw No. 4323 with respect to "Designated Dog Off Leash Areas" be introduced and given first, second and third readings.
2. That staff be directed to continue the off leash program on a permanent basis monitoring the existing six off leash areas following the amendment of the Pound and Dog Bylaw No. 4323, and report to Council on an as needed basis to expand or reduce the number of Designated Dog Off Leash areas in Richmond.

Dave Semple
Director Parks

Att. 1

FOR ORIGINATING DIVISION USE ONLY

SIGNATURE OF DIVISION ADMINISTRATOR

STAFF REPORT

ORIGIN

On March 1, 1999, the report "Dogs off Leash Pilot Program" (File No.: 1011-20-DADVI) was approved. As a result of the Ad hoc citizen/staff/SPCA Dog Advisory Committee formed by the Parks Department and the "Designated Dog Off Leash Area" program was initiated. Six community parks were designated "pilot" areas for the off leash program and a signage and education program was initiated and monitored by City Staff working together with the Richmond SPCA.

After completing the research on Dog Off Leash Areas, the Ad Hoc Dog Advisory Committee became the Cat and Dog Companion Animal Task Force. Staff working with the SPCA, residents and animal advocacy groups examined in detail a multitude of issues concerning the good and welfare of cats and dogs in Richmond. As such, the recommendations of this report complement recommendations approved in the Cat and Dog Companion Animal Task Force Report.

This report summarises community and user group feedback with respect to the off leash initiative and recommends changes to the Animal Control Bylaw to modernize sections of the "Control of Animals" section for a process to include "Designated Dog Off Leash" areas in the City.

ANALYSIS

Prior to the pilot "dogs off leash" program, the issue of citizens letting their dogs off leash in Richmond Parks had not been examined for over sixteen years. The existing Pound and Dog Licensing Bylaw No. 4323 identified only the areas on and outside the dyke trail system east of No. 3 Road as areas where dogs off leash were permitted.

With the increased growth in Richmond' s population, there has been an accompanying increased demand on areas closer to the City Centre and residential areas west of No. 3 Road where residents can exercise their pets off leash responsibly in City parks or trail systems other than the dyke trail east of No. 3 Road.

The result has seen a polarisation of attitudes between pro-dog and anti-dog viewpoints and many dog owners allowed their pets to be off leash on the dyke trail system and in community and neighborhood parks in direct non-compliance with existing leash bylaws.

Education/Enforcement

While dog advocates stress the importance of compliance with responsible dog owner etiquette, an information sign and accompanying map and pamphlet was developed for the off leash program (Attachment 1). This pamphlet has been well received by the public, becoming one of the most popular pamphlets distributed by the Parks Department today. Used as an additional tool by the Richmond SPCA, the off leash area pamphlet can be used in place of ticketing by SPCA enforcement officers. When the SPCA identifies an individual letting their dog off leash for example on the west dyke (a leash only area) the officer explains that dogs must be on leash in this area and offers a pamphlet identifying locations where the resident can exercise their dog off leash.

By identifying areas throughout Richmond that residents can allow their dogs to be off leash, the SPCA can strategically target their enforcement to areas where dogs must be on leash. The SPCA under contract to enforce leash bylaws, have the discretion to issue Municipal Tickets when they deem necessary and have been doing so. Staff will evaluate the effectiveness of the SPCA's enforcement program in the fall after the spring/summer cycle of enforcement. Any change in the level of enforcement that may be required would be discussed with the SPCA and brought to Committee for further decisions relating to the level of service and associated costs.

Number of Dogs in Richmond

There were 3014 licensed dogs in Richmond in 1997 and 3020 in 1998 and 3508 in 1999. The SPCA is aware that there is a substantial number of unlicensed dogs in Richmond and undertook a door to door expanded dog license program in 1999, year 2000 statistics are not available at this time.

Monitoring

During the pilot project, the monitoring of the off leash areas included involvement from the SPCA. Since the inception of the off leash program, there have been approximately 40 dog related tickets issued, the majority were tickets issued for off leash and many referrals for individuals to use the off leash areas.

Pilot Sites

(Figure 1) Off Leash Area Site Selection Criteria/Locations

Criteria	McDonald Beach Park	Dyke Trail at South Foot of No. 3 Road	Vacant City Property adjacent to Highway #99 on Thompson road in Hamilton	Old Cambie School Field	McCallan Road Right of Way	Shell Road Trail
Map Reference	1	2	3	4	5	6
Is it a joint school/park site?	No	No	No	No	No	No
Buffer between area and residents?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Has potential for visibility/safety?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is the area used by dog owners now?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is there active programmed sport activity on the site?	No	No	No	No	No	No
Are there any trees/obstacles?	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Is there any contamination on the site?	No	No	No	No	No	No
City-owned property?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Parking?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Summary of Feedback

McDonald Beach/South foot of No. 3 Road

Frequency:

Each site designated as a dog off leash area for the purposes of the pilot project received the "Designated Dog Off Leash Area" signage. At two locations in particular, McDonald Beach and the South foot of No. 3 Road additionally corporately sponsored "dog bag dispensers" were installed at these sites. The frequency of bag usage at these sites is ~2000/month per location. Based on this high level of usage, these two locations in particular were extremely popular as off leash areas. Coincidentally both McDonald Beach and the south foot of No. 3 Road also are the only two designated off leash areas that allow for beach and or water access for the dogs.

Feedback:

- Many residents who visited these sites enjoyed the natural beauty each of these locations provides.
- At the McDonald Beach location, there was concern that dog owners were letting their pets run free in the parking area putting the animals at risk of being hit by moving vehicles. Additional signage was installed to ameliorate this problem.
- Environment Canada who manages the Sea Island Conservation Area (SECA), the lands and trail directly adjacent to McDonald Beach Park are working with the Parks Department to prepare a signage program that identifies: first when a person is entering the SECA and second that dogs must be kept on leash to prevent birds and waterfowl from being scared up into the runway flight-path.
- The proposed modernised Public Parks and School-grounds Bylaw will include a section for the protection of other animals from dogs.

Vacant lot East of Highway #91

- No feedback at this time, probably due to the remote location of this site.
- One concern of the amount of illegal dumping at this site which is being closely monitored.

Old Cambie School Field

- No Feedback at this time, this site has a relatively low-usage and is no longer programmed as a soccer playing field site. There were no complaints at this site in 1999.

Shell Road Trail

- No feedback at this time, the trail historically has been a popular site for off leash usage.

McCallan Road Right of Way

- This site is a favorite location for many dog walkers.
- This is a multi-use park where sports fields and playgrounds are located. In 1999 staff addressed the concern of a neighboring resident that on occasion, dog owners let their dogs roam off leash around a playground located at the north end of this site. Corrective action was taken by increasing the amount of SPCA patrols to this site and the installation of signage notifying dog owners to keep their dogs on leash and under control in the playground area.
- Due to the multi-use nature of this site, many dog owners were reported to release their dogs at the curbside before entering the off leash area. Again, signage was installed to prevent this and the SPCA was informed.

School/Park Sites

As an issue for discussion at the Council/ Board Liaison Committee, options for considering off leash sites in joint public parks and school grounds was discussed in December 1999 with reference to Rideau Park.

Several residents who live in the Rideau Park -8560 Demorest/8211 Saunders Road, have written to the Mayor requesting that Rideau Park be considered an off leash area. Staff attended the Rideau Parent Advisory Committee meeting in December to discuss the neighbourhood concerns and received a clear message from a majority of the parents attending the PAC meeting that they did not want dogs off leash to be an activity in "their" park.

The options described below may be possible solutions to allowing for dogs to be off leash at in neighbourhood school/park sites.

Options for Consideration/Expansion of Areas

1. Time Share arrangements

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 where organized sport, children going to or from school or areas where there are popular picnicking or beach areas. The City of Vancouver utilizes this scheme in the fall and winter months allowing dogs off leash at Spanish Banks, but requires leashing in the Summer months.

Community feedback specifically with reference to Garry Point Park includes requests for off leash times to be permitted at early morning times. This "time sensitive" approach to allowing dogs to be off leash at Garry Point Park may be effective if supplemented by regular enforcement outside of the permitted times. Unfortunately, with the current level of support provided by the SPCA, there are limited resources available at this time to make "time share" arrangements effective. This approach will be investigated by staff and the SPCA in the Fall of the year 2000.

2. Community Requests for Off Leash Sites

Where interest is expressed from the community, staff would facilitate a process for requests for off leash designation in neighbourhood and/or joint school park sites. Staff recommend undertaking a public consultation process with residents surrounding a given park and in consultation with a School District representative if necessary.

3. Dog Free-Zone Option

Many cities in the Lower Mainland have created areas where dogs are not allowed at all. Several residents have also expressed the desire for areas within Richmond where dogs are not allowed. This option may be viable especially in areas designated environmentally sensitive areas or bordering conservation areas.

Recommended Amendments to the Pound and Dog Bylaw No. 4323

Amendment Bylaw No. 7099 suggests the inclusion of options for the City to include off leash areas in Richmond. The proposed amendment to Bylaw No. 4323 would simplify and modernise the current Bylaw to require that:

1. *"Any owner of a dog must keep the dog on leash at all times except in areas posted as Designated Dogs Off Leash Areas"*

By amending the current Bylaw to require that any area dogs are permitted off leash is clearly identified through signage, there will be less ambiguity as to where dogs are currently permitted off leash. All other areas will be targeted by the SPCA for enforcement of leash bylaws. An additional suggested amendment is the inclusion of an interpretation of "Designated Dog Off Leash Area:"

2. *"Designated Dog Off Leash Area means an area posted by sign which defines the geographic area and/or time period that dogs can be off leash."*

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications at this time.

CONCLUSION

As responsible dog owners, Richmond dog owners must ultimately accept the responsibility for the actions of their pets. The issues of conflict that on occasion do arise in Richmond parks and trails with respect to dogs being on or off leash are ultimately due to issues of Dog Control. Off leash areas provide dog owners with safe areas to recreate with their pets and socialize with other dog owners. With the recommended amendment via Bylaw to make available Designated Dog Off Leash Areas in Richmond combined with close monitoring of the areas including continued enforcement/education provided by the SPCA, the City can provide areas where responsible owners may exercise their dogs off leash.

Michael Redpath,
Coordinator Partnership and Stewardship



Dogs Off-Leash Area

ATTACHMENT 1

Designated dogs off-leash areas is an initiative by the City of Richmond and the S.P.C.A., in consultation with the community to provide areas where responsible owners may exercise their dogs on or off-leash.

Responsible Owners:



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



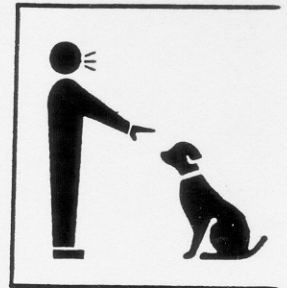
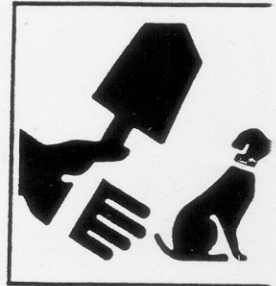
All dogs must be currently and visibly licensed



Dog owners must maintain effective verbal control of their dogs and always be able to see their dog when off the leash

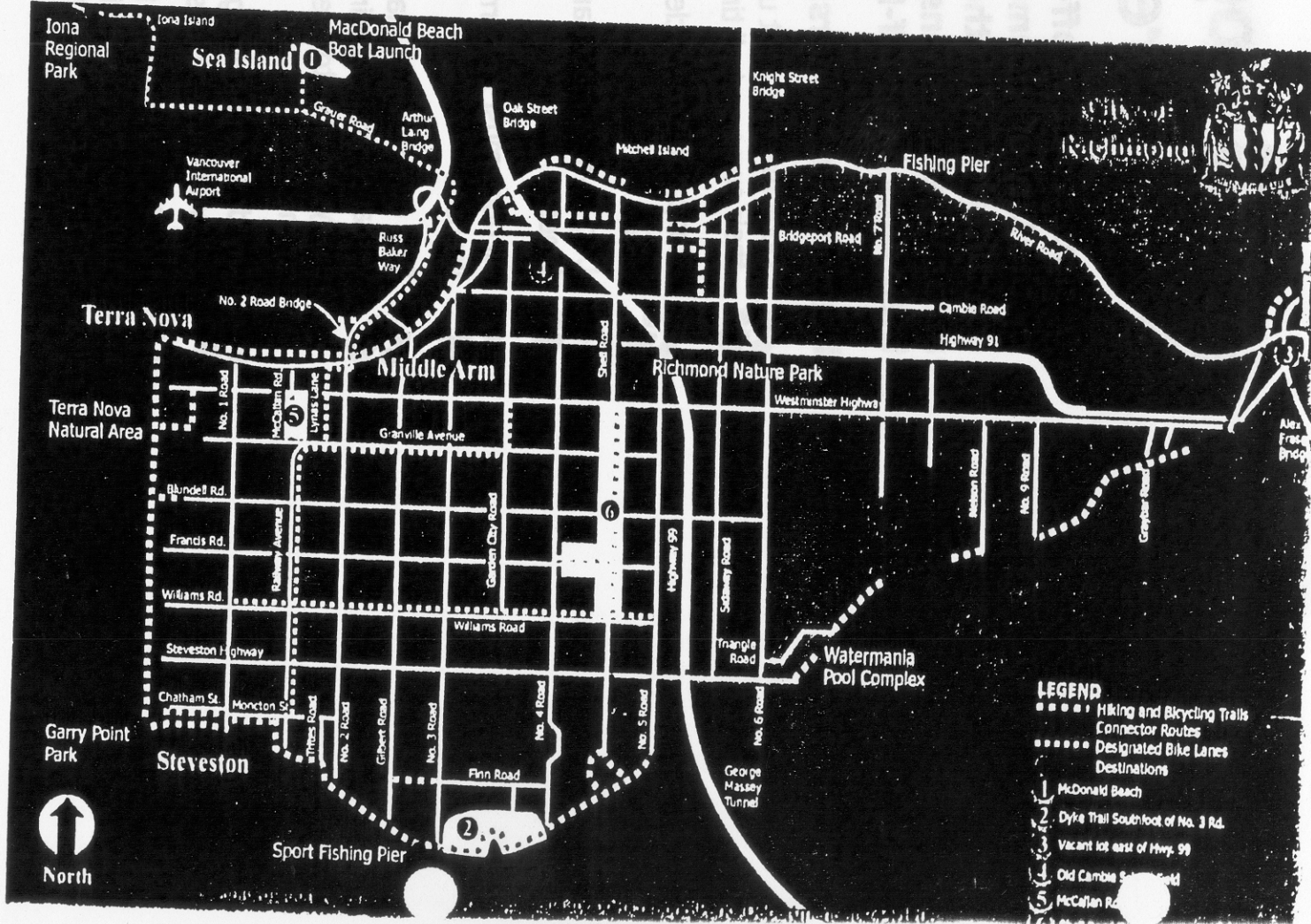


Any dog exhibiting aggressive behavior must be leashed immediately



By-law No. 4323. Maximum fine for not complying with this by-law is \$1000.00. To report violations or for more information please call the S.P.C.A. at 277-6212

Please turn over for area map



CITY OF RICHMOND

**POUND & DOG LICENCING BYLAW NO. 4323, AMENDMENT
BYLAW NO. 7099**

The Council of the City of Richmond, in open meeting, enacts as follows:

1. Bylaw No. 4323 is amended by:

(a) deleting Section 11A, and by substituting the following as Section 11A:

“Any owner of a dog must keep such dog on leash at all times except, in areas posted as Designated Dogs Off Leash areas.”

(b) deleting Section 11B,

(c) delete Section 11C (1),

(d) adding the following interpretation to Section 1: **Designated Dog Off Leash Area** means an area posted by sign which defines the geographic area and/or time period that dogs can be off leash.

2. This Bylaw is cited as “**Pound and Dog Licencing Bylaw No. 4323, Amendment Bylaw No. 7099**”.

FIRST READING

SECOND READING

THIRD READING

ADOPTED

CITY OF RICHMOND
APPROVED for content by originating dept.
APPROVED for legality by Solicitor

MAYOR

CITY CLERK