



To: Richmond City Council
From: Councillor Linda Barnes, Chair
Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
Committee
Re: **RRDOG REFERRAL AND DOGS IN PARKS WORKING COMMITTEE
PROPOSAL**

Date: August 1, 2007
File: 06-2345-00/Vol 01

The Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee, at its meeting held on July 24, 2007, considered the attached report, and recommends as follows:

Committee Recommendation

- (1) *That the City continue to consult and collaborate with RRDOG as outlined in the report (dated July 18, 2007, from the Director of Parks, and Public Operations);*
- (2) *That the concept of a Dog Management Strategy be received for information and report back to Committee in early 2008.*
- (3) *That RRDOG's Three Pillar Approach to Dog Management Strategy For Richmond be referred to staff for review, including the financial implications;*
- (4) *That staff investigate the feasibility of designating a portion of Railway Avenue as a potential off-leash area; and*
- (5) *That staff investigate the feasibility of banning dogs on the West Dyke during nesting season.*

Linda Barnes, Chair
Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee

Attach.

VARIANCE

Please note that Committee added Parts (3), (4), and (5) above.

Staff Report

Origin

Staff have two Council referrals related to Dogs in Parks. They are:

1. "That staff report to the Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Committee on the provision of further dog off leash areas within the City."
2. "That the presentation made by the Richmond Responsible Dog Owners Group (RRDOG) be forwarded to staff to determine the financial costs to the City for the possible implementation and establishment of a relationship with RRDOG immediately and over the course of 3-5 years."

The purpose of this report is in response to the above two referrals, and to recommend a process of working with RRDOG, other agencies, and the public for the development of a Dogs in Parks working committee for Richmond and develop recommendations for further dog off-leash areas within the city.

Analysis

Background

The City's position with respect to responsible dog ownership, and particularly off-leash use of Richmond's parks and open spaces, has been that dog use in parks is a privilege and not a right, and that the good-will of responsible dog owners must be balanced with education, enforcement, design opportunities, and partnerships.

In August 1999 Council approved the City of Richmond Cat and Dog Companion Animal Task Force report. This report was endorsed and formed a long-term work plan. This task force was struck to deal with animal control issues, and included advocacy groups such as the Federation of Independent Dog Owners (FIDO), the SPCA, independent breeders, Veterinarians from Richmond, Dog Trainers, unaffiliated individuals, and others. Some of the outcomes of this task force report included:

- Establishment of Richmond's first dogs off-leash program
- Increased and targeted enforcement in Richmond's parks and open spaces
- Installation of a comprehensive signage system for dog etiquette in Richmond's parks
- Strengthening the relationship with Parks, Community Bylaws and interested dog owners
- Creation of the dog bag sponsorship program
- Construction and operation of a cat shelter
- Emergency planning for pet owners in the event of a disaster
- Bylaw amendments for mandatory spaying and neutering
- A door to door and educational campaign for increased dog licensing

Current Reality

There are currently 6 off-leash areas in the City (Attachment 1). As well, there are parks where dogs are not permitted (Nature Park West and East, Terra Nova Rural Park, and Richmond's artificial turf fields). In addition, the City has recently entered into a new relationship for animal control services at the City's shelter.

During the approval process of the Terra Nova Rural Park Plan, the development of a dog management strategy was recommended by Council as an approach to balance the many interests and concerns related to the issue of dogs in Richmond's parks and open space. Richmond has taken an approach that permits responsible dog ownership and positive uses of Richmond's parks and open spaces over the last 8 years, but as the City changes, and as the density and character of Richmond's neighbourhoods continues to change, strategies and actions are required for the future.

The Richmond Responsible Dog Owners Group (RRDOG)

In 2007, organizations such as RRDOG continue to lobby and advocate for additional civic resources and attention to be placed on the needs of dogs and their owners with respect to parks and open space. All parties agree that it is important for the City and dog owners to adopt an approach to dog management issues in a manner that respects the park environments and other park users.

The Richmond Responsible Dog Owners Group (RRDOG) is a local non-profit society committed to “a safer, friendlier, and cleaner community for everyone.” This organization currently consists of 20+ members representing a variety of dog-related interests, including a few members who are non-dog owners.

RRDOG have adopted a philosophy entitled “The 7 C’s” which includes consultation, compromise, co-operation, collaboration, culture of compliance, and cost effectiveness.

RRDOG currently operates through funds raised through membership fees and through fundraising at special events such as the Richmond Animal Wellness Expo. The grant of \$25,000 for operating funds was denied. RRDOG did receive a \$1,000 grant through the City Grants Program in February 2007.

Collaborative Work to Date with RRDOG

Since receiving the referral, a staff liaison has attended the past four monthly RRDOG General Membership meetings to provide members an opportunity to voice their concerns and communicate openly with the City. Staff and RRDOG are working together to see what can be accomplished in the interim.

RRDOG has expressed desire for the implementation of a wide range of programs and activities, ranging from environmental, social and educational programs (Attachment 2). Through discussion with RRDOG, the following initiatives are being pursued:

- **Biodegradable Dog Bags.** Parks staff are working with Purchasing to make the switch to biodegradable dog bags in all City dispensers. This initiative will be in place for 2008.
- **Community Outreach and Education.** Staff are in discussion with community centres to determine if and how outreach and education on dog-related issues can take place at their facilities or in adjacent parks.
- **Professional Dog Walking.** Staff are working with Bylaws to determine if any considerations can be made to accommodate the Richmond professional dog walking community and the number of dogs this group is allowed to have on leash under the Animal Control Bylaw #7932.
- **Evaluation of Dog Parks and Off-Leash Areas.** Staff are reviewing and evaluating the existing dog parks and off-leash areas and will be collecting data from the community and from other municipalities before proceeding with any recommendations for a course of action.

In addition to these four initiatives, staff have extended an offer for RRDOG to play a greater role in the annual Richmond Animal Wellness Expo (which will take place on Saturday, July 21st 2007). As well, staff have facilitated an opportunity with the East Richmond Community Association for free meeting space at Cambie Community Centre in return for an equivalent level of service back to the community.

In regards to the next 3-5 years, it is recommended that the City continue to communicate and consult with RRDOG on dog-related issues and collaborate whenever possible. It is not recommended, however, that the City provide operating funds for RRDOG. A staff liaison has been appointed to receive minutes from RRDOG meetings and act as a point of contact for the City as we liaison with other community

groups. A representative from RRDOG will be invited to sit on a Dogs in Parks Working Committee as outlined in the next section.

Dog Management Strategy Proposed Next Steps

To address the diversity of interests with regard to the broader issues of dogs in parks, staff propose to convene a 6-person working committee with participation from areas that have been selected based on best practises and other models used in the Lower Mainland. Membership on the working committee will include representation from RRDOG, the Richmond Animal Protection Society (RAPS), the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), and may include professional dog trainers, veterinarians, non dog-owners, or members from the community at-large.

The Dogs in Parks Working Committee will consult with staff on dog-related issues and will provide input on the development of a Dog Management Strategy. This Dog Management Strategy will look closely at the following areas:

- Dog ownership and dog licensing
- Education of dog owners
- Enforcement of dog-related rules and regulations
- Infrastructure required for accommodating dogs, including signage, dog bag dispensers, and design features
- Proposed enhancements to Richmond's current off-leash program
- Other issues that the working committee may address

Costs

RRDOG has requested \$25,000 to operate their programs. Staff are not recommending operating funding but RRDOG could come forward and apply for funding through the Grant process.

Staff have projected that the costs associated for developing the Dog Management Strategy will be approximately \$25,000. Cost breakdown: Staffing \$5000 (overtime and minutes); \$5000 (facilitating public process); \$5000 (production work); \$5000 (communication plan).

Financial Impact

Aside from staff time, there are no financial implications as a result of the proposed initiatives detailed in this report at this time. Any costs associated with the establishment of the working committee will come from the Parks Advanced Planning and Design 2007 account, which will cost no more than \$25,000. Any costs associated with programs or infrastructure in dealing with RRDOG will be taken from appropriate existing operating budgets.

Conclusion

This report recommends that the City continue its relationship with RRDOG through the appointment of a staff liaison to communicate regularly with this group and that staff proceed with the Dog Management Strategy as outlined in the report.



Paul Brar
Coordinator, Parks Programs
(1250)

Richmond Responsible Dog Owners Group



RICHMOND RESPONSIBLE DOG OWNERS GROUP

March 16, 2007

Dave Semple
 Director, Parks & Public Works Operations
 Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services
 Engineering & Public Works
 City of Richmond
 5599 Lynas Lane
 Richmond, BC V7C 5B2

Dear Dave:

The RRDOG pack is a very enthusiastic about meeting with you and your staff to begin the consultation process. You and I have talked about an initial, informal coffee meeting, a stakeholders roundtable, and having you as guests at our General Membership Meeting on Wednesday, March 28th from 7-9pm.

In the meantime, Here are several RRDOG initiatives in progress awaiting funding:

- **City Dog (CDOG)** - proposed, city sanctioned, advisory process; regular liaison with City Staff, RAPS, SPCA and the RCMP to consult, collaborate, and cooperate on issues related to bylaws, criminal activity, enforcement, facilities (MOPS, off-leash parks, dog romps, bag dispensers, etc.), publicity, cruelty, public education, affordable/community centred obedience/etiquette training, community consultation/support, development of a culture of compliance, motivational strategies, revenue generation and conservation.
- **Dogwatch** - in progress, a volunteer citizen force (not a vigilante group) like Blockwatch, Neighborhood Watch, Harbour Watch, training by your/RCMP liaison officers to be politely instructive and respectfully persuasive in convincing dog handlers to comply with established obedience/etiquette protocols. Dogwatch volunteers will also be trained to observe, record, report, and witness in support of targeted enforcement by your, RAPS, or RCMP officers when persuasion fails. Targeted enforcement will not only be more effective, it will reduce costs and ultimately work itself out of a full-time job. We recognize that at \$70—100K per annum per officer (Wayne Mercer estimates \$150K per annum currently apportioned to Animal Control Bylaw #7932 enforcement, including RAPS' share) the level of enforcement demanded by the public is a budgetary fantasy. Yet, as Councillor Sue Halsey-Brandt stated in Council, she receives more complaints about dogs than anything else.



Con't...

Fine revenue last year, obtained through David Weber, City Clerk's office, totaled \$5,200 for 35 offences, and did not include one single charge for failing to pick up dog poop, the most common complaint. Add prosecution costs (my lawyers and Jim Lees, Crown Counsel, estimated \$50K or more to prosecute the much publicized, single charge against me last year) and the consequent cost/revenue deficit is obviously absurd, and it doesn't solve the problem, it compounds it. Ironically, in a sense RRDOG has already saved the City twice what we are looking for in funding by not entering a formal objection to the Crown's stay of proceedings and forcing prosecution. To paraphrase Jim's words of wisdom to me at the time, people end up in a lose/lose legal wrangle when win/win communications fail. We are increasingly enthusiastic about our new course direction.

Poop Patrols - in progress, RRDOG volunteers, including our commercial dog walker members Shelley Smith and Deborah Koyanagi, conduct both daily and group event clean-ups in City Parks, schools and MOPS. With increased membership, our effectiveness will increase too, directly and indirectly. Nothing breeds success like success.

Envirodog - Richmond produces at least 700 tons/653 tonnes of dog feces per annum (Richmond News, Feb. 3/06). It could easily be multiples of that amount. Much of this biohazardous waste goes into garbage cans, in violation of City policy, and is trucked to interior landfills. Not only is this an environmental embarrassment to Richmond, it is extremely costly. Our Envirodog Director, Deborah Packer, has already:

- Researched/outsourced biodegradable bags to replace the non-biodegradable plastic bags currently used in Parks' MOP dispensers; these bags alone represent an immediate cost saving in that they are apparently cheaper;
- Persuaded the City to conduct trials, currently in progress, at select locations;
- Researched long-term solutions in other jurisdictions where, with an economy of scale, profits are generated from dog waste methane production and composting;
- Researched and tested backyard composting. It is cheap, effective and easy. I consulted with the operator at SPEC (Society for Promoting Environmental Conservation) last year and saw their working model. Again, given the financing and partnership we seek, RRDOG could assist your staff at the Lynas Lane recycling centre in developing a City wide program as an adjunct to the existing composting program. This won't help in the proposed, densified City core. Alternative solutions will have to be found. The City of Vancouver was recently embarrassed by the Vancouver Sun's front page headlines about its doo doo debacle. One of their City Councillors is making it his business to initiate a remedial project. I know you are monitoring the Vancouver Dog Strategy Task Force Public Forum process, Dave, from talking to your Vancouver colleagues. I bet it would be possible to achieve the necessary economy of scale for a profitable, long-term solution through partnership with the GVRD. RRDOG would be delighted to assist you in achieving that worthwhile objective.

Good Canine Citizen Certification - GCC is an extant program for certifying truly obedience-trained and urban-socialized dogs and handlers. Shelley Smith, our RRDOG Master Trainer, will provide details when we meet but the idea here is to promote excellence and pride in obedience/etiquette protocols by rewarding certificate holders with off-leash privileges. Just like dogs, most conscientious people respond better to a combination of rewards than the threat of punishment or punishment alone. Heavy handed punishment by itself produces surly, disobedient, non-compliant dogs and people, especially when combined with inconsistent implementation (12,000 dogs, 35 charges per annum...). Utilizing rewards like licensing discounts, off-leash privileges, and awards that recognize good behavior, both canine and human, can produce a far better outcome. RRDOG, being non-governmental, can do some things better, faster, and cheaper than a government agency which is compelled to adhere to strict regulations and procedures. I have had personal experience with coordinating such initiatives in the past and had the satisfaction of amazing our Provincial and Federal Governmental liaison counterparts with results which far exceeded their achievement targets and came in on time and **under** budget. That is the people power potential I visualize here for a City/RRDOG partnership.

Disability Dog - disabled persons with obedience certified (GCC) companion, assistance and guide dogs, should have discretionary off-leash privileges. Bylaw #7932 already provides for an exemption for poop scooping for the owner of an assistance dog (2.3.3.3). However, the City lacks the legislative authority to make such an exemption concerning leashes, with the consequent headache for enforcement which evolved last year. The City can request the necessary authority by asking the Lieutenant Governor for an Order in Council, as you will see in the accompanying RRDOG Redbook Backgrounder prepared for the City in October 2005 (ref. white section, letter to Mayor and Council, Apr. 18/01). Not only would such an initiative enforce Richmond's reputation as a leader in disability issues, it would also be far cheaper in time, money and staff involvement than a Charter Challenge. Joan Dufor, RRDOG disability advocate, can provide you with more useful information.

Fringe Benefits -a City/RRDOG relationship will probably produce unexpected benefits to you. For example, here is a gift: the current MOPS Park's brochure has an unattended, unleashed, unmuzzled (and since #7932, probably unlicensed, judging by average license revenue in 2006) Pit Bull on the cover. I infer this is because the brochure was printed, in quantity, prior to #7932 being promulgated. When I cross reference the graphic evidence with the pertinent provisions of #7932, schedules, and amendments, and assume the bitch is unsprayed, the total of fines, fees, compulsory quarantine, impound, and licensing is \$2,813! Given you are currently developing a new MOP strategy which hopefully will result in more MOPS, some dedicated off-leash parks, and dog romps, this may be an opportune time to utilize new graphics in your literature to avoid public embarrassment. Consulting with RRDOG/CDOG could save the cost and fallout from similar oversights in the future. Once again, I bet the cost of reprinting that one brochure equals or exceeds the funding RRDOG needs.

Another and potentially very expensive aspect exists in the area of civil liability. As you will see in the April 18, 2001 letter in the RRDOG Redbook, the City could be held liable for failing to enforce its own bylaws in the event of a loss, injury, or death related to Bylaw #7932. I have personally witnessed so many potentially catastrophic incidents I feel confident calling them commonplace. We all have; it is one of the reasons RRDOG formed. As you will know from being copied on other correspondence between RRDOG and the RCMP a chronic situation of this nature exists at the No. 3 Road MOP. Again, the potential costs in legal proceedings, insurance, staff time, and adverse publicity for Richmond, if redirected into prevention, would finance RRDOG decades into the future.

Given the funding and partnership we seek with the City, RRDOG membership and revenue will increase. Using that, RRDOG will leverage more corporate support. With more corporate support, RRDOG will be able to advertise, publicize, and increase membership. Ten per cent of registered dog owners is a modest target. Think what we could do to support you with 600 members! Five years out we visualize RRDOG financially self-sufficient and able to contribute significantly to RAPS and the SPCA, without ongoing municipal subsidies, bearing in mind RRDOG is a registered non-profit society, not a business-for-profit. Consider, licensing the 6,000 currently unlicensed dogs in Richmond would yield additional revenue of \$138K (based on average license fees for 2006), more than five times what RRDOG is seeking. RRDOG Treasurer, Jill Seymour, can provide you with more precise accounting but I can say with confidence, RRDOG can more than pay for its keep.

This is not intended to be a comprehensive list, Dave. Please regard these proposals as a starting point. We don't pretend to have all the answers but if we follow the 7C's in our Powerpoint presentation to City Council, we are confident Richmond can become a template other municipalities will copy. As I said to your Vancouver colleagues, I bet RRDOG can lick D.O.G.! Everyone at RRDOG is excited about getting going on constructive initiatives which will start with our next meeting. We look forward to hearing from you. I promise I'll wear my muzzle and buy the coffee!

Earnestly yours,


Ryan Lake
Director

Attach: RRDOG Redbook, Powerpoint Presentation

cc: Mayor and Council
Wayne Mercer, Manager, Community Bylaws
David Weber, City Clerk
Mike Redpath, Manager Parks, Programs, Planning & Design
Sean Davies, Coordinator, Special Needs
Michel Desroschers, Parks Planner, City of Vancouver
Const. G. Reimer, Station Constable, Richmond Detachment, RCMP
Carol Reichert, Shelter Manager, RAPS
Jim Lees, Crown Counsel
RRDOG Members

