



HIGH PARK
COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

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**K9 Meeting Minutes
January 21st, 2009
Howard Park Tennis Club**

Present: Tammy Reid, John Cleary, Bernard Sanders, Roman Bijan, Sharon Lovett, Richard Jones, Rick Leswick, Vera Funtova, Michelle Arsenault, Kim L. Beemer, Amanda Osmond, Robert Glover

Regrets: Cynthia, April Hall, Deanna Powell

1. Adoption of minutes of previous meeting – Nov. 21st, 2008
Sharon Lovett suggested that the minutes should be altered to avoid confusion regarding statements about Urban Forestry, which might be considered factual as opposed to the opinion of some of the members present. The suggestion was discussed amongst the group, which generally felt the minutes were a reflection of the discussion that took place and wouldn't likely be confused with fact. The suggestion for alternation was withdrawn by Sharon.
Motion to pass: Tammy Reid, 2nd Bernard Sanders
2. Business arising from the minutes
Sharon asked about off-leash review group and policy of not wanting fencing for off-leash area. Co-chair John Cleary mentioned the review group will be meeting later on in the month so there will not be any extensive discussion until after that meeting and there is no policy from the K9 committee regarding not wanting fencing.
3. New Business
The co-chairs mentioned that they wanted to focus this meeting on upcoming events and improvements within the off-leash area rather than on rehashing the standard off-leash debate amongst the group. The off-leash review group doesn't seem to be heading for any radical changes to off-leash area so it would be good for the group to focus on ways to improve the existing area. The group proceeded with a discussion about a number of topics including:
 - a. Entrance Signs
There is a need for new entrances signs (main entrance and trail entrances) and City has indicated a willingness to produce new signs with more information. Suggested items that would be good to include on sign included:
 - Code of Conduct with fines
 - Map (will have to await finalized off-leash area debate)

- Size: smaller than current bulletin boards, similar to ones at Etobicoke creek
 - Contact Information for Animal Services, City Parks Emergency Number, Poison Control, Bylaw Enforcement, Toronto Wildlife Centre Emergency Hotline, Emergency Vet Services, Humane Society
 - Similar wording to large red and yellow signs on Spring road that warn about kids and dogs in play OR Children and unleashed dogs at play, please reduce your speed
 - How to deal with aggressive dogs
“You are responsible for your dog, if aggressive behavior, remove from situation”
 - Pictorial information for non English speaking park users, examples include Animal Services TREE, Scoop and Poop, Off-Leash)
 - Warnings for non-dog owners, such as “Please be aware you are entering an area with unleashed dogs”
 - Locations could include at allotment garden road (off-leash sign and yield), especially if City shifts off-leash area onto road.
- b. Plant signs
Include information for dog-owners about dangerous plants in off-leash area, including stinging nettle, poison ivy. Also signs about important invasive species (Himalayan Balsam) as well as important plants to protect (trillium). The group was encouraged to provide the committee with any examples of signs from other parks. Photos can be emailed to k9@highpark.org

c. Improvement to off-leash area

The group discussed a variety of solutions to improve conditions within the off-leash area. Items discussed included

- *Fencing*

Some felt the need for complete enclosure of off-leash area, although Spring road presents a difficulty for that approach. The need for fencing maintenance and patching holes should be a priority. Replace and remove all snow fencing and plastic fencing with metal fencing (more durable and less unsightly). Other priority should include replacing the snow fencing along Canstage/Allotment garden route as well as removal of “puppy play area” fencing.

There was a discussion about the lowering of fencing height, as groups like the TRCA doesn't recommend anything over 4 feet. 3.5 feet was suggested as a preferred height and it was mentioned that no matter the height, some dogs will still be able to get over.

There was a suggestion to hide the fencing with Native plants, especially creeping or vine plants. Shrubs could also be used but the issues related to wildlife and nesting in the shrubs was discussed. The group should contact Urban Forestry and Joice in the Green house for a listing of plants that would fit this

project.

Other locations that needed attention included zoo poo location. John mentioned that this area would be secured with the section 37 project, which would be a vehicle gate or pedestrian gate at the bottom of the service road. Group suggested if section 37 project didn't begin until later in the year park supervisor could fence off the zoo poo in the meantime.

Group raised the question of whether altering of fencing is against bylaws and the need for signs to indicate the fine.
Check with City

- *Trees and ground cover*

Question arose regarding what did the City do with deadfall behind? Does the City not have a policy to leave deadfall in place? The group suggested that large tree sections could be used in lieu of benches (dog hill or especially along the trail) or to provide natural agility course. Course obstacles could include large tree trunks (for jumping up and down), teeter totter (two logs roughly balanced) and weaving sticks. It was also suggested that the trees that are cut along the path be done in a more organic way, leaving more material on the path for dogs and park users to interact with.

The group discussed the need to improve ground cover growth on Dog Hill. Strong growing year pushed dog-owners out of areas overgrown with weeds. Is there a need to shorten the growth during very fertile years or will increased traffic keep the weeds down.

- *Interpretative signs/maps for plants*

Suggestions from the group included the possibility of arranging a tour of the off-leash area and its perimeter for dog-owners to highlight natural environment surrounding the off-leash area. Diana Teal and Mark Elwood already run walking tours from the Nature Centre and the possibility exist of coordinating with them. It was suggested that the tours be targeted at the dog-owner on a personal level and be positive rather than negatively worded. Information could also be gathered through the Toronto Wildlife Centre.

- *Business cards for park watch and volunteers during events*

Expand upon the business card previously used during K9 events. The cards provide a friendly positive way to approach dog-owners. In the past, it has been used with a pair of volunteers approaching dog-owners outside the off-leash either to say "Thank you for having your dog on-leash" or "Here is some information about our off-leash area, please remember to leash your dog". The strategy is to have a less "us versus them" approach and get a more community driven involvement.

- *Reduced Bylaw Fines*

The group explored the possibility of having the City offer an donation alternative to fines within the off-leash area or within High Park. Also possibility of portion of existing fines going straight to the HPI rather than into City general funds. Can the City have a reduced fine that is directly deposited to High Park?

d. Memorial event or items

The city has "In memorial" donation program for trees and benches although High Park doesn't offer the memorial trees anymore. The K9 committee has already setup the possibility of a dog-bone plaque memorial donation project, where in exchange for donation, dog-owners would get a bone shaped plaque which could be affixed to dog hill bulletin board or perhaps concrete slab surrounding fire hydrant. The group discussed the possibility of donations in exchange for slates in fencing for a new dog hill entrance. A similar approach was used by the council for the Adventure Playground and proved to be extremely successful.

e. Upcoming events/fundraiser

- *Spring Cleanup*

To be held at the end of May on the weekend after the long weekend. It may be possible to tie in with environment days but that would place the event earlier in the spring, which has proven to be too cold. The tentative date is May 23rd. Areas to focus on for the Spring cleanup could include removal of Burdock. Group members suggested it is possible to pull these plants out early as long as something is replanted in their place. K9 will need to consult with VSP and Urban Forestry. Committee members will approach Starbucks and Tim Hortons to provide coffee and hot chocolate for the event.

- *High Park is my Park day*

The group felt this event needed a better involvement of vendors and more activities. Suggestions included: Animal services, dog adoptions, Dog tattoo's, donation of dog poo bags from local vendor, off-leash walk for new dog-owners, tours of off-leash area and the natural environment (tie in with walking tours), recall seminars and agility training.

- *Woofstock*

Possibility of involvement at Woofstock, City off-leash areas and dog-owner associations could have a common booth.

- *Bark in the Park*

Move this event back to the 1st week in September or 2nd weekend. Needs to be better organized and should be organized by local volunteers with City providing booths for animal services and possibly funding. Excellent opportunity for a BBQ, would be a great fundraiser. The event needs more vendors that would draw in dog-owners and help spread message of responsible dog-ownership. Event could include table of educational material or presentation on natural environment. Recall seminar would be a great event for this venue. Self guided walk of the off-leash area would be good, mark locations and provide temporary signs outlining the

cultural, environmental and natural aspects of High park that co-exists with the off-leash area.

- *Fall Cleanup/Howl-oween*

Focus on the costume contest and social aspect given the possibility for bad weather. Provide locally grown foods for dogs and dog-owners to sample. Good to reach out to local food vendors.

4. Reports/Updates

a. Off-leash review group

John reported that the group is expected to meet later on in the month and might be discussing issues related to Spring road

b. High Park Initiatives

Tammy reported that the High Park Initiatives has approximately \$400 in the K9 funds that the committee could use for a environmental project within the off-leash area.

5. Other Business

No additional business was brought up at this point.

6. Adjournment

Motion Robert Glover, 2nd Kim Beemer

Meeting adjourned 8:45pm