



HIGH PARK
COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

95 Lavinia Avenue, Box 108
Toronto, Ontario M6S 3H9
(416) 392-1748
www.highpark.org
k9@highpark.org

**K9 Meeting Minutes
June 17th, 2009**

Present: Tammy Reid, Robin Sorys, Amanda Osmond, Roman Bijan, Paul Wehrle, Bernard Sanders

1. Adoption of minutes of previous meeting – May 20th, 2009

Motion to pass: Bernard, 2nd Paul

2. Business arising from the minutes

None

3. New Business

a. *Presentation by Dog Watch*

See attached notes

Members of the K9 committee expressed their concern with the proposed lack of identification and the focus on taking notes and enforcement over education. Any proposed program needs to identify themselves to avoid issues related to spying and harassment. Park watch was given as an example of program that has training, identification and accountability. Members encourage any members of the “Dog Watch” group to try working with Park Watch.

b. *Signs for off-leash area*

The following signs (and location) were discussed as needed for the off-leash area.

- i. Code of conduct (entrance to dog hill, either end of spring road)
- ii. No biking signs (visibly at entrance to off-leash area)
- iii. Coyote (allotment garden, black oak café and west side of park)
- iv. Maps (all current locations)
- v. Don't litter sign (down near the allotment gardens, near canstage)

c. *K9 stewardship projects*

It was proposed that during the summer months, when the K9 committee will not be meeting, a group of volunteers will meet once a month, on either Saturday or Sunday to do stewardship work for the off-leash area. Work could include fixing holes, repairing fences, replacing signs and removal of invasive species, such as Himilyan balsam and Burdock.

“Improving the off-leash area for the betterment of the park”

The group suggested the time should be the last Saturday of the month and the event should be held every month not just summer. Other suggested activities included: planting trees on dog hill (check for donations of trees or shrubbery from nurseries, if non-native use for entrance), tree barriers for dog hill, creating logs for barriers and seats (check with Helen and Urban Forestry if they chop up trees and branches, leave in off-leash area), moving of deadfalls, lining of paths with logs and trees. Other work needed includes: issue related to water tap, sign suggestion to “not fill up to completion” & “do not let kids spray”; there is a need for more gravel around site; fencing around Canstage (needs to be better fences, perhaps shrubs or hedges and need fencing around side of Allotment garden).

Draft activities and times are:

June – signs/himylan balsam/hole filling/gravel

July – burdock/himiylan balsam/hole filling

August – Tree protection, filling holes (Robin)

The group indicated they should practice due diligence and ensure Urban Forestry is consulted about any tree work. If there are any concerns about proposed work and fit with natural environment, UF should outline their hesitation and provide reasonable alternatives. The group realized that staffing changes at Urban Forestry may affect these activities and any proposed work can't conflict with commitments between UF and VSP. The group discussed that the stewardship work should not proceed ahead with prior approval but also should not let unreasonable delays hamper efforts to improve off-leash area and make it more sustainable.

d. *City strike*

If the City goes on strike staff run facilities (washrooms, pools, zoo ...) will be closed and garbage pickup will be reduced. The Nature Centre will remain open.

e. *Planning for fundraising event*

The group discussed the upcoming fundraising event for later in the summer. The event will be delayed to coincide with High Park is my Park Day, reach better audience and needs more time to plan. Suggestions included; Freestyle tricks (needs fencing and a separate area) and Dog trainers giving out advice to dog problems in exchange for donations.

f. *Monetary arrangements*

The groups discussed the current arrangement regarding fundraising and monies held at the HPCAC. It has been K9 policy to fundraise money for the High Park Initiatives, so that people donating know that all money goes back into the park and is properly accounted. While earmarked for K9 projects, decisions regarding the money are subject to approval by the HPI board. The group discussed the limitations this arrangement put on projects (ie. must be related to natural environment) but felt overall the positives outweighed the negatives. It was reported that other groups at the council hold monies in the common HPCAC account (no tax receipt, subject to approval from council, accounting by HPCAC treasurer) and perhaps a portion of any fundraising done by K9 be kept at the HPCAC. K9 will await

outcome of financial committee report on HPCAC monies before discussing the issue further.

4. Reports/Updates

a. *NEC meetings*

Members reported that the NEC discussed the top of forest school meadow adjacent to off-leash area. Urban forestry's plan is to restore that area over objection of some NEC members as the planting at top of hill obscures the view of restoration below. The work may involve the removal of the southern trail. TRCA project building post and paddle fencing at the top of hill to limit access. Although adjacent to the off-leash area, this work will have negligible impact on the off-leash area, although K9 would still like to be apprised of any changes to the plans or work completed.

5. Other Business

6. Adjournment

Notes from Dog Watch presentation

Roman outlined some of the objectives, rules and criteria for “Dog Watch”, including:

- Everybody should be able to use the off-leash area regardless of nationality, race, religion or ability
- Dog watch wouldn't be involved in resolving disputes amongst off-leash users
- Dog watch wouldn't assume all dog-walkers are irresponsible because of the action of a few
- Dog watch is not looking for problems, if they see a problem then they will report to authorities
- Hamilton was used as an example of a community that requires dog watch programs for all their off-leash areas. They are apparently mandatory and separate from the group that establishes the off-leash area. *(See attached page)*
- Dog watch does not get involved in leash disputes, they simply watch, take notes including car licenses. They would bring issues to attention of authorities rather than taking action themselves
- Dog watch supports the rights of all park users to enjoy every aspect of the park, There would be a code of conduct (no carrying weapons or anything that could be used as a weapon)
- Proposed criteria for dog watch members would include:
 - Can't be under the influence of alcohol or drugs,
 - can't be user of drugs; no criminal record or serious offense;
 - they refrain from making any unfounded threats;
 - they refrain from obstructing other park users but take a firm attitude toward violations;
 - they refrain from spreading malicious gossip or speak poorly about dog-owners or park users;
 - they never goad anybody into violence; they
 - Never detain or interrogate park users
 - Always obey park code of conduct
- Proposed issues handled by dog watch:
 - animal cruelty (neglect and intentional cruelty),
 - failure to provide water and necessary care (dogs in car in summer)
 - dogs on short chain
 - dog abandonment
- Proposed partners of dog watch
 - Toronto Humane Society
 - Animal Services
 - Bylaw Enforcement officers

Questions and Answers

Q: How would dog-watch be different from K9

A: Could be the same, similar to park watch but walk around off-leash area, it would be an extension of the K9 committee

Q: Does it exist?

A: There are other people interested, they meet informally and it is just in planning stages

Q: How does it differ from park watch

A: Park watch doesn't do enforcement

John indicates they should join park watch, everything fits within park watch mandate, good to have groups for everybody rather than just focus on one particular issue (dog-watch, plant-watch, kids-watch ...)

Q: Separate organization or part of everybody

A: Must be accountable to somebody, doesn't want to be a part of park watch

Q: What is the reason for it? Do you see a lot of animal abuses?

A: People kicking dogs, people leaving dogs in cars

Group felt that this level of abuse is not typical of activities within off-leash area.

Q: What training would these people have?

A: Would need to have proper procedural training, orientation session (possible by K9)

Q: What to do if two dog fighting?

A: Do nothing, this question is ridiculous as the people would know difference between dog fight and animal abuse

Q: Time frame for dog-watch?

A: During the week and it would depend upon part-time volunteers

Q: Are the other people involved in park watch, aware of K9 committee?

A: Doesn't know

Members of the K9 committee expressed their concern with the proposed lack of identification and the focus on taking notes and enforcement over education. Any proposed program needs to identify themselves to avoid issues related to spying and harassment. Park watch was given as an example of program that has training, identification and accountability. Members encourage the "Dog Watch" group to try working with Park Watch.

This following information was not provided by Roman during the meeting but relates to the matter of the Hamilton Leash Free policy referenced above.

Taken from Hamilton Leash Free Program Policy

www.myhamilton.ca/myhamilton/CityandGovernment/CityDepartments/PublicWorks/Parks/Programs/LeashFreeDogParks.htm

II. Application

Before considering an application for the development of a dog park, a volunteer committee consisting of a minimum of ten (10) members must be co-ordinated. The volunteer members must agree to:

(i) Organize, co-ordinate, and implement a schedule for site clean-ups and maintenance. Clean-ups are required at least twice per calendar week, and maintenance/repairs must be performed on an as-required basis.

(ii) Organize, co-ordinate, and implement a schedule for fence inspections to occur at least once per calendar week. Inspection Reports must be submitted to the Parks Section once per calendar week and must be signed by the volunteer performing the inspection.

(iii) Provide "Dog-Watch" eyes and ears on the park to identify and help educate irresponsible pet owners and to advise the City of any problems or issues that arise.

(iv) Monitor user activities and guidelines for code of conduct of owners and dogs.

(v) Become involved in fund-raising ventures to finance development initiatives relative to dog parks for the City of Hamilton.

(vi) Become involved in fund-raising ventures to finance the purchase of desired amenities, equipment and apparatus for dog parks

The volunteer committee members will be required to sign the agreement prior to staff considering the request.