

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – DECEMBER 3, 2007

OFF LEASH WORKING COMMITTEE: FINAL REPORT

Recommendation

Councillor Tony Carella, on behalf of the Off Leash Working Committee, recommends

(1) that this report be received for information, and

(2) that the Director of Parks Development and other staff as appropriate be directed to pursue the establishment of an off-leash park at one of the top seven sites identified by the committee, such sites to be considered in rank order, subject to negotiation with and / or approval by any public or private entity or entities other than the City of Vaughan having ownership of or jurisdiction over such sites, namely

1. William Foster Woods, NE corner Major Mackenzie Drive and Islington Ave
2. hydro corridor abutting the Glen Shields neighbourhood, access off Centre St
3. portion of Concord-Thornhill Regional Park, either within the hydro corridor or at the eastern end of the site
4. the area north of Patricia Kemp Community Centre, south of Operations Yard
5. vacant lands NW of the intersection of Jane St and Major Mackenzie Dr
6. hydro corridor abutting Patricia Kemp Community Centre
7. vacant lands immediately north of Harry Putter driving range at Islington Avenue and Rutherford Road

(3) that the members of the Off Leash Working Committee be asked to continue to provide to appropriate staff suggestions and advice with respect to the operation of the off-leash park, once created.

Economic Impact

Capital funds for this project in the amount of \$82,400 were already been approved in the 2007 Capital Budget. Annually, \$5,000 will be required to operate and maintain the area.

Purpose

To establish the first leash-free park in the City of Vaughan

Communication Plan

The Corporate Communications Department will issue a media release, in consultation with the Director of Parks Development and the Off-Leash Working Committee

Background – Analysis and Options

The City of Vaughan is the only municipality within the Greater Toronto Area without a leash free park. In light of that fact, Council approved the creation of the Off Leash Working Committee with the aim that citizen members, with the assistance of city staff,

would identify and rank a number of sites appropriate as locations for a park of benefit to dog-owners and their pets. As well, the committee was charged with providing advice in respect of specific activities related to the future management and administration of such park(s).

The committee has met on five (5) occasions since February of this year, and has devoted itself first to identifying objective criteria for assessing the appropriateness of any suggested site, and secondly to identifying in rank order the most appropriate sites based on such criteria.

The committee started by compiling a list of thirty-two (32) potential sites, and through a two phased process these sites were evaluated. During the primary evaluation phase the criteria included distance from children's play areas, school yards and seasonally active play fields, environmentally sensitive areas such as ESA's and ANSI's, residential areas, and proximity to the centre of Vaughan. Availability was also evaluated as well as access to parking, ease of access and egress, traffic implications, and proximity to major streets. The final criteria were potential size and the ownership of the property as well as site safety and security. This evaluation was completed on paper by a working group of citizen members of the Off Leash Committee. The top ten (10) sites were then scrutinized using the secondary criteria listed below.

The secondary evaluation was a more in-depth review of the potential sites and included extensive site visits by the working group to the top ten sites that were identified by the primary evaluation process. The criteria for the secondary evaluation again included distance of the site in relation to children's play areas, school yards, sports fields and tracks, and seasonally active areas such as skating or tobogganing areas. Additional criteria included the status of each site (proposed or existing park site), site microclimate ---including sun, shade, wind and noise, site drainage and cost implications. Three sites were subsequently eliminated due to current-use constraints. The scores from the primary and secondary evaluation were then added together for the final result: the top seven sites identified above.

The identified sites include city-owned property, private property, lands controlled by the Toronto Region Conservation Authority, and in the case of the first-named site, lands subject to a tri-partite agreement among the City of Vaughan, the Kleinburg and Area Ratepayers Association and the TRCA.

Regional Implications

Nil

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have been allocated and approved.

Conclusion

By means of an objective process, potential sites for an off leash park have been identified. It is now appropriate that Council authorize staff to continue the process by finalizing a location based on the rank-ordered sites identified by the committee, and that the members of the committee be asked to continue to work towards finalizing a management plan to be implemented once the park location is decided and also to provide further advice and liaison with the City and the park management group on the development and management of off-leash parks.

Attachments

Attachment #1: Final Terms of Reference
Attachment #2: Evaluation Criteria
Attachment #3: City of Vaughan Rules
Attachment #4: Secondary Rules of Use
Attachment #5: Council Extract, January 29, 2007

Report prepared by:

Councillor Tony Carella

Respectfully submitted,

Tony Carella
Councillor – Ward 2

ATTACHMENT #1: TERMS OF REFERENCE- FINAL

OFF LEASH AREA WORKING COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Leash Free Working Committee "LFWC" was formed with authorization from City of Vaughan council to provide assistance in the development of an off leash area. It is a forum for obtaining advice, and a sounding board for issues related to leash-free dog parks in the City of Vaughan. The LFWC will liaise with the City of Vaughan, local ratepayer Associations and land owners to identify, and assess potential sites, as well as to fundraise. Licensing and by-law issues will be discussed as they relate to the development of an off leash areas within the City of Vaughan. Decision making will be by committee majority. The City of Vaughan however, will not be bound by any decisions or recommendations that are made by the committee, as the City of Vaughan Council is the final decision maker.

1. MANDATE

To provide the City of Vaughan municipal staff with informed feedback, recommendations, and advice regarding issues and initiatives from citizens and other interested stakeholders served by the City of Vaughan. Specifically:

- To provide feedback and input respecting the selection and creation of a leash-free park(s) in the City of Vaughan
- To review and provide advice on specific activities related to the management and administration of the park
- To review and provide advice on by-law and licensing issues for the City

2. MEMBERSHIP

The members of the Committee are drawn from interested stakeholder groups, such as pet supply stores, advocacy groups and citizens of the City of Vaughan. Councillor Carella will act as chair for the off leash area working committee. Members names where put forward to the Director of Park Development, City of Vaughan. The committee will be comprised of representatives of the following:

- Vaughan Dog Owners Group (3)
 - Members of City of Vaughan Council(2)
 - Citizens of Vaughan
-

- Member from each of the five wards
- Representatives City of Vaughan By-law and licensing
- City of Vaughan Staff (Parks Development)

3. REPORTING STRUCTURE

The committee reports to the City of Vaughan Council.

4. OPERATIONS

Secretariat functions are provided by City of Vaughan Staff.

The committee will meet on a monthly basis or as necessary.
Additional meetings may be held at the discretion of the Chair.

All members of the Committee have equal status during discussion.

At the recommendation of the Committee, and with the approval of the Chair, interested parties or concerned members of the public may be invited to make deputations/representations to the Committee in writing or in person, or may be granted observer status for discussion of a particular agenda item, or for an entire meeting.

5. PROPOSED TENURE/LIFE CYCLE

Members are appointed for the duration of the Committee.

An individual may withdraw from service on the Committee at any time upon written notification to the Chair. Membership may be terminated at any time upon written notification from the Chair.

6. CONDUCT

All Committee members are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner, i.e., the use of their positions cannot be reasonably construed to be for their private gain or that of any other person, company or organization.

ATTACHMENT # 2 EVALUATION CRITERIA

PRIMARY CRITERIA			
LOCATION IN RELATION TO	Children's play areas, school yards, athletic fields and seasonally active play areas	0m - 15m 15m - 27m 27m +	1 3 5
	ESA / ANSI-designated Areas	Within	NA
		0m - 5m	1
		5m - 15m	3
		15m +	5
	Residential Areas	0m - 10m	0
		10m - 30m	3
		30m +	10
		15km +	1
	Distance from Intersection of Major Mac and Hwy 400	7km - 15km	2
		0km - 7km	5
		Availability	3 - 5 Years
	1 -3 Years		3
	Current Year		7
	Potential Off Leash Size	< 1 ha	NA
		1 ha - 2 ha	3
		> 2 ha	6
	Availability of Parking	Not Available	0
		Available - Poor	1
		Available - Good	5
Ease of Access / Egress	Poor	0	
	Average	2	
	Good	5	
Site Safety & Security	Poor	0	
	Average	2	
	Good	5	
Traffic Implications	Significant	0	
	Nominal	3	
City Property	No	2	
	Yes	5	
Proximity to a Major Street	Several Streets Away	1	
	Near	3	
	On	5	
Total score out of			66

SECONDARY CRITERIA					
LOCATION IN RELATION TO	Areas with Active and Passive Children's Areas	0m - 15m 15m - 27m 27m +	NA 2 3		
	School Yards	0m - 5m 5m - 15m 15m - 27m 27m +	0 1 2 3		
		Sports Fields and Athletic Running Tracks	0m - 5m 5m - 15m 15m - 27m 27m +	0 1 2 3	
			Seasonally Active Areas	0m - 5m 5m - 15m 15m - 27m 27m +	0 1 2 3
				Status of Park	Existing New
	Microclimate (sun, shade, wind, noise)				Poor Average Good
		Drainage (Water retention and pooling)		Poor Average Good	0 2 5
			Cost Implications	> \$100K \$50K - \$100K < \$50K	1 3 5
	Total score out of			27	

VAUGHAN OFF LEASH AREA RULES OF USE

OWNERS AND HANDLERS WHO USE THE VAUGHAN OFF LEASH AREA DO SO AT THEIR OWN RISK. The City of Vaughan and the Vaughan Dog Owners Group are not liable for any injury or damages caused by any dog or owner /handler in the off Leash Area.

Dog Owners/Handlers are subject the Dog Owners Liability Act and the City of Vaughan's animal control By laws 53-2002 and 272-2006.

Owners/handlers are responsible for any injury caused by their dog.

NO PIT BULLS ALLOWED, as defined by the above mentioned Act and by laws

For any damages noticed, or problems, please call Parks at 905 879-4357 or in case of non life threatening emergency call the York Region Police 905-881-1221

USERS OF THIS LEASH FREE DOG AREA ACKNOWLEDGE AND AGREE TO ABIDE BY THE RULES SET OUT ABOVE



ATTACHMENT #4 SECONDARY RULES AS REVISED AND REVIEWED



To ensure the safety and enjoyment of all park users, both two and four legged, please adhere to the following rules of responsible conduct:

The Vaughan Off Leash Dog Area is for dogs, their owners/handlers and those accompanying them. **THIS IS NOT A CHILDREN'S PLAY GROUND.** Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult at all times and kept under strict supervision. Do not allow children to run in the area or chase after dogs.

Leash your dog when entering or exiting the park. Please **DO NOT** open both gates at the same time and please carry the leashes within the park.

Limit of 3 dogs per handler. A handler aged 12 or older must be present and in control of their dogs at all times.

Dogs should be spayed or neutered – No female dogs in heat allowed.

Ensure that your dog(s) is vaccinated and in good health before using the Off Leash Area.

Puppies must have their 12-week shots. It is advised that a puppy be 4 months old before coming to the leash-free park.

Dogs must be licensed and shall wear a visible dog tag at all times.

Dogs must be under control and in sight of their handler at all times. Be ready to take control of any situation, you are responsible for your dog's behaviour.

Owners/handlers must pick up after their pet. In Vaughan it's the law to "stoop and scoop". Waste bags are provided. Failure to do so could result in a \$130 fine.

Fill in any holes your dog digs or make appropriate repairs to disturbed areas.

Human food and glass bottles not permitted.

Aggressive dogs are not permitted within the Off Leash Area. Persistent aggressive action by dogs or people will not be tolerated; both the handler and the dog will be asked to leave. Violators may have their park privileges suspended.

Spiked or pinch collars are prohibited on the dogs when inside the Off Leash Area.

Respect the rights of others.

Be safe and have fun! Woof!



If applicable on a separate sign: The separate, enclosed area is intended for smaller dogs (i.e., less than 11kg) and they should be given priority. If the area is not otherwise in use, you're welcome to use it with your larger dog, but you may be required to vacate it.

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 29, 2007

Item 10, Report No. 1, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on January 29, 2007.

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OFF LEASH AREA

The Committee of the Whole recommends:

- 1) That the recommendation contained in the following report of the Commissioner of Community Services, dated January 22, 2007, be approved;
- 2) That Councillor Carella and Councillor Di Vona be appointed as Council representatives to the Off Leash Area Working Committee; and
- 3) That the following deputations and petition be received:
 - a) Ms. Deborah Schulte, 76 Mira Vista Place, Woodbridge, L4H 1K8;
 - b) Ms. Susan Tam, 1 Lucerne Drive, Woodbridge, L4H 2Y4, on behalf of The Vaughan Dog Owners Group, and petition;
 - c) Mr. Greg Preston, 353 Waterside Crescent, Maple, L6A 1V4;
 - d) Ms. Mirella Chiappetta, 67 Agincourt Road, Woodbridge, L4L 2Z8; and
 - e) Mr. Nick Pinto, 57 Mapes Avenue, Woodbridge, L4L 8R4, on behalf of West Woodbridge Homeowners Association.

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Community Services in consultation with the Director of Parks Development recommend:

1. That the proposed location of an off leash area in the vicinity of Highway #7 and #27 within the hydro corridor not be pursued; and,
2. That Council directs staff to establish an Off Leash Area Working Committee that will provide assistance in the development of an off leash area; and,
3. That the Off Leash Area Working Committee be comprised of City of Vaughan residents as outlined in the Background section of this report; and,
4. That the Budget Committee considers a request for funding in the 2007 budget for \$80,000.00 for the establishment of an off leash area located centrally in the City of Vaughan.

Economic Impact

There will be an impact of approximately \$80,000.00 on the capital budget (taxation) should Council approve the capital funding request as part of the 2007 budget. Financial sponsorships secured by the Off Leash Area Working Committee may reduce this impact. If approved during the 2007 capital budget, an annual operating cost of \$5,000.00 will be required in the operating budget.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a synopsis of comments resulting from the public consultation meeting on the implementation of an off leash dog area pilot project that was held January 10, 2007 at Woodbridge Memorial Arena and to seek approval to establish an Off Leash Area Working Committee.

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 29, 2007

Item 10, CW Report No. 1 – Page 2

Background - Analysis and Options

At its May 23, 2006 meeting Council approved a recommendation by the Councillor of Ward 2, to direct staff to investigate all issues relating to the development of an off leash area in Ward 2 as a pilot project.

At its meeting of June 26, 2006, Council adopted a recommendation that staff be authorized to enter into discussions with Hydro regarding the development of an off leash area in the hydro corridor in the vicinity of Highway #7 in Ward 2 of the City of Vaughan.

At its meeting of December 18, 2006, Council deferred Clause 3 of Report No. 46, Item 3

"That pending Council approval of the Capital budget request, staff be authorized to enter into a lease agreement with Hydro One regarding developing a leash-free area within the Hydro corridor in the vicinity of Highway #7 & 27, in Ward 2 of the City of Vaughan".

and directed staff to report back following a public consultation meeting regarding the implementation of an off leash dog area in Ward 2 within the Hydro corridor in the vicinity of Highway #7 and #27.

The public consultation meeting was held January 10, 2007 at Woodbridge Memorial Arena and approximately 100 residents attended the meeting. In addition to the attendees, "Vaughan Unleashed", a local dog advocacy group submitted a letter of support with 370 names of residents in favour of an off leash area in Vaughan. The input and comments from the residents that attended the meeting varied, however, it was evident that the off leash dog area initiative is widely supported in principle within the City of Vaughan and the residents in attendance did not support the proposed location.

A summary of the comments follows:

Comments in Support of Off Leash Area

- residents can safely exercise and socialize their dogs locally
- safe fenced area
- costs for the implementation are reasonable with potential for corporate sponsorship
- reduced travel times to this location over neighbouring municipalities
- Improve public safety, lowering potential conflict
- opportunity for education of Vaughan Dog owners by their peers
- sharing of knowledge and teaching of responsible dog ownership
- safe place for the elderly and disabled to let their dogs/companions run and exercise freely.
- social opportunity for owners
- addresses the needs of Vaughan dog owners
- good use for underutilized land
- equalize Vaughan with other GTA municipalities by providing off leash areas
- start changing opinions and behaviours about off leash areas
- implement user fees to assist in operational costs

Comments Not in Support of Off Leash Area

- hydro wires a perceived health and safety concern
- safety of children an perceived problem
- access and egress on Highway #7 will be difficult
- not part of multi-function park
- isolated location

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 29, 2007

Item 10. CW Report No. 1 – Page 3

- industrial site may have environmental issues
- not attractive park setting
- not located centrally in Vaughan
- not lit for evening use (security concern)
- costs are high and should be used for more important City initiatives (garbage in parks)
- ongoing lease costs

Based on the comments, staff recommends that an "Off Leash Area Working Committee" be established to provide assistance in the development of an off leash area located within the City of Vaughan. The mandate of the committee may include, but not necessarily be limited to:

- liaison with City of Vaughan staff, local Ratepayer Associations and land owners to identify and assess potential sites,
- undertake feasibility studies,
- raise funding and in-kind donations from public and private entities, and,
- provide assistance in the development of an off leash area within the City of Vaughan

It is suggested that the Committee be comprised of the following representatives:

- City of Vaughan Council representatives (2)
- Members representing established dog owners groups (3)
- Community Representatives (5 total – 1 from each Ward). Individuals having expertise or background in the area of off leash area design/development, dog training/handling, animal health, or marketing/fundraising
- City of Vaughan staff (2) – One Parks / One By-Law

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007

The provision of an off leash area is consistent with Vaughan Vision as it acts to serve our citizens through the promotion of community safety, health, and wellness.

Conclusion

That the proposed location of an off leash area in the vicinity of Highway #7 and #27 within the hydro corridor not be pursued and that Council approve the formation of an Off Leash Area Working Committee to provide assistance in the development of an off leash area located within the City of Vaughan. The Committee will liaise with the City of Vaughan, local Ratepayer Associations and land owners to identify, assess and raise funding.

Attachments

- A. Correspondence from Vaughan Unleashed (Vaughan Dog Owners Group)

Report prepared by:

Melanie Morris, Landscape Technician, Parks Development – Ext. 3207
Stephanie Snow, Landscape Architect, Parks Development – Ext. 3210
Paul Gardner, Director, Parks Development – Ext. 3209

(A copy of the attachments referred to in the foregoing have been forwarded to each Member of Council and a copy thereof is also on file in the office of the City Clerk.)