

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE - SEPTEMBER 15, 2003

GIOVANNI CABOTO PARK

Recommendation

Councillor DiVona recommends:

1. That Vaughan Council approves of camera-in the-park be implemented, at the earliest opportunity, for Giovanni Caboto park, subject to final approval subsequent to community consultation be received; and
2. That Vaughan Council request York Regional Police, City of Vaughan Bylaw Department to increase enforcement of Giovanni Caboto Park.
3. That Vaughan Council requests that a confidential report of the complaints received, actions taken be brought to the Ward 3 Sub-Committee at the earliest opportunity.

Purpose

To address Giovanni Caboto Park vandalism.

Background - Analysis and Options

The City of Vaughan has established a policy to identify parks as candidates for cameras in the park.

During the past two to three weeks overwhelming concern was raised with problems with drug related activity, vandalism and violations of the City of Vaughan park closure bylaw, City of Vaughan Noise Bylaw.

Problems encountered include and have been provided to both Councillor DiVona and Rogers television include:

- a trespassing charge was made by a student constructing a potato launcher.
- youth have been seen walking through the park with pellet guns and replica guns.
- dime bags and other drug paraphernalia have been regularly found in the park
- empty beer bottles have found in the park
- extreme noise throughout the night.
- double parking and parking in "no parking areas.
- speeding along Matthew Drive.

Residents have expressed that York Regional Police have been regularly called and the problems have not gone away. They have expressed that they come and the youth disperse and then vandalize those homes allegedly or felt to have called the police.

Conclusion

In response to request received from area residents they are requesting a camera –in –the park to be implemented as soon as possible. Also residents are requesting more enforcement from York Regional Police, and the City of Vaughan Bylaw Department. Residents want to feel secure and would like to begin going back to Giovanni Caboto park once again with their families.

Attachments

1. Drug Activity In Park Disturbs Residents article printed in the Vaughan Citizen.

Report prepared by:

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Respectfully submitted,

Bernie Di Vona
Councillor, Ward 3

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Drug activity in park disturbs residents

BY ROGER VARLEY
Staff Writer

During a brief stroll Wednesday through Giovanni Caboto Park in Woodbridge, it wasn't difficult to see evidence of drug use.

In an area at the southern end of the park, the grass was littered with small plastic packets — all empty, of course — which police identified as "dime bags" used in dealing small quantities of drugs.

'I'm fearful of what they're going to do in the night.'

Drug use is just one of the complaints Mary Carodi has about activities in and around the park.

She said crowds of youths speed along the road bordering the park, play loud music late at night, break bottles and try to start fires.

Mrs. Carodi said her husband complained to a group one night recently and, the following morning, found someone removed the hub caps on his vehicle and loosened the lug nuts.

"I'm fearful of what they're going to do in the night," she said.

Some women watching their children at the park's playground said they hadn't experienced trouble, but heard numerous complaints from other residents about rowdy activity.

Mrs. Carodi said dozens of cars and hundreds of youths gathered along the street and in the park earlier this week, honking horns, swearing and playing loud music. She said her husband saw youths shove a bylaw officer and rock his car when he showed up to investigate complaints.

She claimed the problem has been going on for 2-1/2 years and has made numerous complaints to the city and police.

"No one is doing anything about this," she said. "It's a high frustration level."

'We're behind the 8-ball for small use. Unless we see drugs changing hands, it's hard to control.'

Tony Thompson, head of Vaughan's bylaw enforcement office, denied any of his officers had been shoved or otherwise assaulted, but added "we've been very active in that park".

He said his office has had 12 calls about the park so far this year, the last being Aug. 19 when officers dispersed a group of youths who were loitering after the park closed.

"We'll be paying special attention to the park for the next week," Mr. Thompson said.

Ward 3 Councillor Bernie Di Vona, however, said he had received only one complaint about the park this year.

"York Regional Police have no complaints in 2003, bylaw officials have no complaints in 2003," he said.

"People should call bylaw officers if anyone is in the park after closing."

Mr. Di Vona said a stop sign has been installed on the street to prevent speeding.

When told of Mrs. Carodi's complaints, he said he is willing to organize a community meeting to discuss the problem.

"We'll have a look at it," he said.

Det. Mike Kimm of the York Regional Police drug squad said police receive complaints "about all our parks".

As for the small plastic pouches, he said there is little the police can do, given recent changes to laws governing marijuana possession.

"We're behind the 8-ball for small use," he said. "Unless we see drugs changing hands, it's hard to control."

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City: Vaughan
Circulation: 31610

Publisher: Metroland Printing, Publishing & Dist.
Section/Category: News
Item #: 20030904PL-1145