

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – JUNE 19, 2006

LEASH FREE AREA

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Community Services in consultation with the Director of Reserves and Investments and the Director of Parks Development recommends:

1. That this report be received for information; and,
2. That staff be authorized to enter into discussions with Ontario Hydro regarding developing a leash free area within the hydro corridor in the vicinity of Highway #7 in Ward 2 of the City of Vaughan; and,
3. That this project be considered for capital funding in the 2007 budget.

Economic Impact

There will be approximately \$75,000.00 impact on the capital budget (taxation) should Council approve the capital funding request as part of the 2007 budget cycle. If approved during the 2007 capital budget cycle, 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 information regarding the development of a leash free area as a pilot project, and seek approval to enter into discussions with Ontario Hydro regarding developing this leash free area within the hydro corridor in the vicinity of Highway #7 in Ward 2 of the City of Vaughan (refer to attachment 'A').

Background - Analysis and Options

Most other municipalities including Toronto, Mississauga, Brampton and Markham have leash free areas. Staff have obtained information from these municipalities, in addition to information gathered on successful "dog parks" in the United States. The provision of leash free areas can reduce the number of dogs off leash in parks, while providing a safe area for owners to exercise their dogs. The leash free areas have rules and regulations which are enforced, mainly by the users themselves, such as cleaning up dog excrement, prohibiting aggressive dogs, prohibiting dogs in heat, and not allowing young children into the leash free area.

Several residents have expressed the need for leash free dog areas in Vaughan. Two community residents have come forward to Committee of the Whole on deputation to outline the need for such areas and the benefits to the community. Staff was directed to review the logistics of providing a leash free area in Vaughan and report back to Council. Staff met with one such resident and toured possible locations for leash free areas, looking at both open spaces and existing parks.

Staff held a meeting with representatives from across the City on October 15, 2001 to determine the potential interest for a leash free area and to discuss issues relating to the implementation of such a facility.

On June 9th, 2003 Council adopted the Committee of the Whole (Working Session) recommendation that this matter be referred to the Local Councillors to determine, in consultation with staff, an appropriate location and justification for a leash free area in their respective Wards, and report back to Council.

Council, at its meeting of May 23, 2006, adopted the following recommendation "Councillor Tony Carella recommends that appropriate staff be directed to investigate all issues relating to the development on a pilot project basis of a suitable open space within Ward 2, to serve as a venue for dog owners to exercise their pets off-leash such issues including but not limited to the following: location, physical components, and all associated costs".

As directed, staff undertook a detailed review of potential sites specifically relating to access, parking, topography, adjacent land use, size available, visibility for security purposes, and potential costs to develop. Based on the experiences in other municipalities and this detailed site review, staff have identified potential sites within the Ontario Hydro corridor at Highway #7 in Ward 2 of the City of Vaughan (attached) that may successfully accommodate a leash free area as the site of a pilot project. Locating the leash free area in either of these locations will require approval and a formal agreement with Ontario Hydro.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007

This report recommends a change from the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have not been allocated.

Conclusion

That Council receive this report for information, that a capital funding request be brought forward for consideration in the 2007 capital budget cycle and staff be authorized to enter into discussions with Ontario Hydro regarding developing a leash free area within the hydro corridor in the vicinity of Highway #7 in Ward 2 of the City of Vaughan.

Attachments

Attachment 'A' - Location Map – Leash Free Area, Ward 2

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Respectfully submitted,

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