

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – MARCH 31, 2009

FORMATION OF AN OFF LEASH PARK STEWARD GROUP - WARD 4

Recommendation

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

- 1) Council approve the authority of the Off Leash Area Working Committee to provide start up support in the formation of an Off Leash Park Steward group for the City of Vaughan's first off leash park at the eastern most end of Concord Thornhill Regional Park.

Economic Impact

N/A

Communication Plan

Pending Council approval, an advertisement seeking interested individuals to form the Off Leash Park Steward group for the facility at Concord Thornhill Regional Park will appear on the City Page and also on the City of Vaughan web site.

Purpose

That Council approve the authority of the Off Leash Area Working Committee to provide start up support in the formation of an Off Leash Park Steward group for the City of Vaughan's first off leash park.

Background – Analysis and Options

The Off Leash Area Working Committee reported to Council on December 10, 2007, Item #31 of Report 58. Resulting from this report, Council directed that "members of the Off Leash Area Working 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 on the development and management of off leash parks."

A critical component of any off leash area management plan is the establishment of an Off Leash Park Steward group. Based on the experiences of many other municipalities like Toronto and Mississauga, it is apparent that much of the success of the off leash areas depend on the formation of a volunteer group of individuals (Stewards) who will utilize the facility regularly, share the ongoing responsibilities for educating off leash park users, and to assist with minor maintenance. Most municipalities require that a Steward group exist for each off leash area. The Steward group would not be a committee of Council, but would report through the Off Leash Area Working Committee. It is intended to be a separate, independent group supporting the daily management of the off leash area within Concord Thornhill Regional Park. Additionally, the Stewards will provide another level of monitoring specific to the off leash park within Concord Thornhill Regional Park that will augment tasks already being performed by Park Ambassador volunteers.

The role of the Off Leash Park Steward group will evolve over time and may include the following key tasks:

- Promote and advocate the use of off leash areas;
- Educate and foster awareness with users with regard to the rules of operation and potential consequences;
- Participate in activities to increase awareness of responsible dog ownership including licensing, pet care etc.;
- Facilitate co-operation and communication between the park users and deal with minor disputes;
- Facilitate communication and report through the Off Leash Area Working Committee and municipal staff should issues arise;
- Day to day minor maintenance including keeping the facility free of dog waste;
- Maintain a membership list (will contain an MFPPA consent statement);
- Participate in an annual review of the management of the off leash area.

The Off Leash Area Working Committee, through advertisements on the City Page, and City website will seek volunteers to form this Off Leash Park Steward group. Those who respond to the advertisement will be required to attend an information session to review their role and responsibilities, and attend a conflict resolution seminar hosted by the City of Vaughan Human Resources Department. All those who attend these sessions and remain interested in volunteering will form the Steward group.

As this is a one year pilot project, the Off Leash Park Steward group for Concord Thornhill Regional Park is tied to the success of the site, however over time it is expected that the membership will evolve and change. In order to function effectively, the Off Leash Park Steward group will be expected to maintain a minimum of five (5) active members. Following its initial formation as approved by Council, the Off Leash Park Steward group would be responsible for recruitment of new members.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

In consideration of the strategic priorities related to Vaughan Vision 2020, the project will provide:

- STRATEGIC GOAL:
Service Excellence - Providing service excellence to citizens.
- STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:
Pursue Excellence in Service Delivery; and Enhance and Ensure Community Safety, Health and Wellness.

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

Regional Implications

N/A

Conclusion

As the off leash area is expected to open in late June, 2009 (weather permitting) it is timely for Council to approve the authority of the Off Leash Working Committee to provide start up support in the formation of an Off Leash Park Steward group for Vaughan's first Off Leash Area at the eastern most end of Concord Thornhill Regional Park.

Attachments

Attachment "A" - Draft Advertisement

Report prepared by:

Melanie Morris, Landscape Architect, Ext. 3207
Paul Gardner, Director Parks Development, Ext. 3209

Respectfully submitted,

Tony Carella
Councillor – Ward 2

ATTACHMENT "A" – DRAFT ADVERTISEMENT



The Off Leash Area Working Committee
is seeking citizens interested in serving in a voluntary
capacity as

Off Leash Park Stewards

at the City's first off leash area, to open later this year at

Concord Thornhill Regional Park

(south side of Hwy 407, east of Dufferin Street, via Racco Parkway).

Stewards will be expected to promote the use of the park by resident dog owners; assist new park users to understand the rules respecting the operation of the park; and contact City staff if issues arise regarding maintenance, by-law observance, etc.

If you are interested in serving as a Steward at this off leash park, please contact Melanie Morris at melanie.morris@vaughan.ca or (905) 303-2069 ext. 3207 to receive the form or visit the City's website at http://www.city.vaughan.on.ca/vaughan/committees/off_leash_working.cfm.



Deadline: May 1, 2009 at 4:30pm