



ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM

TO: MAYOR J. LEHMAN AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

FROM: K. OAKLEY, ACTING DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING

NOTED: D. FRIARY, DIRECTOR OF ROADS, PARKS AND FLEET

**A BOURRIE, ACTING GENERAL MANAGER OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND GROWTH
MANAGEMENT (ACTING)**

M. PROWSE, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

RE: DOG WATER ACCESS – COMMUNITY SUGGESTION
(FILE: A09-VO)

DATE: JANUARY 7, 2019

This Memorandum was prepared in response to two suggestions submitted by members of the public through the City of Barrie's online suggestion forum. The submitted suggestions are:

- To open a waterfront dog park by designating 100 metres of waterfront east of the Southshore Centre for off leash dog water access; and
- Make Johnson's Beach a dog friendly beach park.

The suggestions obtained enough support from Barrie residents to have staff investigate its viability.

Background

The City of Barrie currently has two Dog Off Leash Recreation Areas (DOLRAs), one in Sunnidale Park and one at Barrie Molson Centre. Neither DOLRA includes water access. The Sunnidale Park DOLRA is located next to the Kidd's Creek watercourse but dogs are not permitted access to the creek. This is to avoid further watercourse edge erosion, which creates barriers to the cold water fishery through increased siltation in the watercourse. The Barrie Molson Centre DOLRA is located next to a tributary of Lover's Creek but is not identified as water access to preserve the integrity of the watercourse.

Barrie's Animal Control By-law 210-035 contains the following regulations applicable to waterfront parkland:

- 5.1.0.0.0 No owner of a dog shall allow his dog to run at large.
- 5.4.0.0.0 No person shall allow a leash to extend beyond a length of six (6) feet and such leash must be held or restrained by a competent person who can reasonably control the dog.
- 5.5.0.0.0 No owner of a dog shall allow his dog in any waterfront park.
- 5.6.0.0.0 Notwithstanding Section 5.5.0.0.0, the owner of a dog may lead the dog, provided it is on a leash not exceeding 6 feet in length, on any signed walking path in Heritage Park, Allandale Park and Centennial Park.
- 5.12.0.0.0 Every owner of a dog shall immediately remove any excrement left by such dog on public or private lands not being the property of the dog owner, within the City, and shall dispose of such excrement in a sanitary manner.

The 2013 Barrie Waterfront and Marina Strategic Plan (BWMSP) was completed in 2013. The Gables Park is discussed in Section 4 as a possible location for a dog park with water access potential along the south shore of Kempenfelt Bay, as part of a comprehensive recreation node with possible day camp 'hub', winter recreation, environmental education and other complimentary uses. The report recommends that the 2008 Gables Master Plan be revisited to ensure that public use of the Gables Park is enhanced.

The report also recommends that location criteria be established as part of the future implementation of any water access dog park on the waterfront. Gables Park was the only location that was discussed in the report as a candidate for dog water access.

To date, no dog water access location criteria has been developed.

Environmental Scan - Comparators

Many provincial parks have designated on leash and off leash water access beaches where the dog beach is typically provided at physically different locations from the people beaches. At some provincial parks, such as Port Burwell and Arrowhead Provincial Park, the dog beach is separated from the people beach by signage. The Ontario Parks web page notes that public health rules prohibit Ontario Parks from permitting domestic animals in designated swimming areas and beaches. Chatham-Kent has river access for dogs at John Waddell Park. Other municipalities with beach access for off leash dogs include Cherry/Clarke Beach in Toronto, and Valens Conservation Area in Cambridge.

Online Suggestion Merits

The benefits expressed in the public suggestion forum for creating a waterfront dog park in Barrie include:

- Provision of controlled, legal access;
- Provision of safe environment;
- Cooling effect in hot weather for owner and pet; and
- Recreational enjoyment for owner and pet.

The benefits expressed in the public suggestion forum for permitting water access for dogs at Johnson's Beach include:

- Create a dog play area on waterfront that services the north end of Barrie;
- Accessible by walking, driving or bus;
- Small, remote beach distant from the other beaches around Barrie's waterfront;
- Could still retain leash laws and remove any need for fencing enclosures;
- Poop n' scoop laws enforceable; and
- No real cost to City to create.

Analysis and Considerations

Location criteria for dog water access areas could include the following, but not be limited to:

- Water Quality Regulations – subject to City of Barrie and all applicable external agencies standards, such as the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change and the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority;
- 'Blue Flag' Program Beach Criteria (if applicable);
- Separation standards between human use areas and dog water access areas;
- Human recreational use priorities and patterns;
- Maintenance practices to remove waste and beach grooming;
- Erosion control;
- Safety and security;
- Hours of Operation/Time of Day/Time of Year;
- Revision to Animal Control By-law and Regulatory Signage Standards;
- On leash vs off leash water access;
- Owner's responsibilities for control of dog behaviour, similar to existing designated off leash areas;
- Location capacity;
- Accessibility;
- Public Consultation; and
- Parking.

It would be premature to select a location without considering, at minimum, the various factors and content described previously.

Water access during peak season hours would require a thorough location review to ensure full separation between human use areas and dog water access areas. Water access during off season use could allow for area overlap.

An option currently used in other waterfront communities is a Time of Day/Year Dog Water Access Program. This approach avoids converting existing beach areas to dog friendly beaches by assigning limited time allotments. For example, during off season times from October to May, owners may be allowed access to the beachfront with their off leash dogs from 5:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. during the week (Monday to Friday), or some version of extended hours.

There is reportedly a strong social network through the dog walking community along Barrie's north shore, with an established unofficial off leash water access use of Johnson's Beach. A Time of Day/Year Off Season Program could be piloted at Johnson's Beach to evaluate dog waste management and monitor complaint levels. The beach would still be open to all users during the off leash period. Early morning North Shore Trail walkers and cyclists typically remain on the trail and do not access the beach as part of their exercise, which avoids off leash conflicts. Early morning activity along the beach area could aid in deterring undesirable behavior and increase public safety. A pilot program could be implemented with an amendment or exception to the Animal Control By-law and the addition of regulatory signs.

Suggestion Implementation

As per the recommendations of the 2013 BWMSPP, when the Gables 2008 Master Plan is updated, staff will revisit whether this park is a viable location for a dog water access beach. In the 2018 capital plan, an update to the Gables Master Plan is forecast for 2024.