

PENDER ISLANDS PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION (PIPRC)
Minutes of a Regular Meeting
Friday, May 7, 2019 (10:30 am)
Community Hall, North Pender Island

Present: Tom Bell, John Chapman, Susan Parr, Ray Pink, Derek Wolff, Jan Kirkby, Arnie Alksne, Hans Tammemagi, Shannon Brayford (recorder)

Regrets: David Howe (Director, CRD, SGI)

Guests: 22 members of the public

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Tom Bell called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. He noted that the Commission is meeting in the Traditional Territory of the Coast Salish People. He provided an overview of the process, noting that this meeting will be used to hear the information from those wishing for the dog park to remain in its current location

Gerald McKeating read a written statement including the following points:

- There is not a formal club for the group who meet on Monday mornings, it is an informal group of people who are concerned with their pets.
- Displeasure that there is a hostile attitude toward the park, but hopeful that management of the park will remedy the situation.
- The group present is open to relocation of the park, but not open to immediate closure.
- Noted that the package submitted to the Commission includes Pender Post Articles, letters to immediate neighbours, public announcements, and other modes of community consultation,
- A history of the process and rationale for seeking a public dog park location.
- An overview of the selection of the site and the other sites that were considered.
- The park is not used all hours of the day and the high use is exaggerated, but it is used more heavily than it was when it was at Southridge park.
- The rules are stated at the park and are consistent with other dog parks
- The wood chips are contributed by local arborists and are spread by the dog owners as volunteers. The risk of the wood chips as a fire hazard was exaggerated.
- Representatives of the ball park were consulted and gave their support. The rules state that the dog park is not to be used during practices or games. It may be an experience that those attending the game put their dogs in the dog park and they may need to have this addressed.
- The primary users of the park are good at picking up waste and this is inherent in the dog park culture.
- They placed conditions on having their park relocated:
 - PIPRC finds the location and fully develops the park
 - The current park remains open for use during the time for relocation,
- Would be happy to participate in developing stricter rules including
 - Hours of use
 - Larger signs with the rules for smoking, alcohol, etc.
- Would support more strict enforcement

Chair Bell noted that Don Peden, CRD Bylaw Enforcement and Animal Control, was in attendance at the meeting.

The Chair asked and received responses to the following questions

- Whether the dog park users are aware of an incidences in which the compatibility of the two uses in the same space caused concern.
 - It was noted that the park was open throughout the baseball season the previous year and there were no incidents.
 - Dogs live in the neighbourhood and can get out of their homes.
- Whether the users of the dog park have any concerns with the park, its present location, and its operation
 - Generally pleased with hour it is operating.
 - Concerned when the public does not follows the rules of the park as they would be with anyone not following the rules in any location.

Debbie Katz read a presentation including the following points:

- The dog park is used 365 days a year by a large group of adults, children, visitors, and their dogs. The baseball diamond is used by a small group of children who use the park only on select evenings during their baseball season.
- Regular group of people who meeting from 9:30-10:30 daily.
- Encouragement that the groups collaborate on a solution.

Kim Brown read a presentation including the following points:

- Highlighted the importance of dogs within the users' lives and presented a picture of dog owners who are actively engaged in their dogs' lives and who are responsible owners,
- She noted that in July 2017-January 2019 she had saved 214 dog park related emails.
- She noted that when they first approached the situation, the process was very unclear and the proponents of the park worked diligently to follow the process.
- Regular dog park users take responsibility for the site and help to enforce rules.
- Those who were involved in the park are feeling personally attacked by the allegations that they did something wrong.

Herb Katz read a presentation, including the following points:

- The allegation that owls haven't been heard since the dog park went in is more likely that the owls have relocated due to food source.
- The allegation that the wood chips are saturated in urine and a health issue is not substantiated. Dog urine can be found in lots of places in the community.
- The issue of the score board being inside of the dog park is not an issue because the score board is on the dog park property and outside of the area that is leased to the baseball diamond.
- Dogs in the dog park during games is not an issue unless it is the dogs of the users.
- Statistically a dog may bite a child is accurate, but the dogs are behind a fence and away from the children. If this is a concern then it is a community concern since dogs are found everywhere. People who argue this are putting their kids in a bubble.
- The petition does not include signatures and is a list of names. This should be fact checked. People who were approached to sign the petition and refused felt pressured to change their mind.
- The neighbours do not believe that they were consulted, but he argues that they were. He notes that item 8.7-8.9 of PIPRC Terms of Reference states that neighbours should be consulted, but it does not say how that consultation has to happen. He provided an overview of the modes that were used to provide information to the community about the park.
- Sometimes the neighbourhood's opinion will be overridden by the greater community good.
- Agreed that people play music, smoke and drink in the dog park and that this is concerning to the dog users as well. He noted that the baseball games attract the same type of behaviour and should draw the same level of concern.
- The wood chips, as they are currently spread and used, do not provide an opportunity for combustion.

The Chair asked and received responses to the following questions

- Whether they have been incidences of dog-to-dog violence .

- Provided an overview of the etiquette of the dog park when someone new arrives at the park. Noted that people who have dogs with special social needs tend to come at their own time,
- Does anyone have authority to expel a dog owner who continues to break the rules or cause problems.
 - There are 6-8 regular users who do tend to oversee the use of the park.
 - 9:30-10:30 on Monday mornings is for the reactive dogs.
 - The special time for the reactive dogs is a highlight for the people and dogs who use it and it helps those dogs to improve their socialization skills.
- Are the dog waste receptacles adequate and are they being emptied adequately?
 - They could be emptied more frequently, but there hasn't been a situation of overflow
 - Last year, while the service providers got used to the volume, there was an adjustment period, but this has been remedied.
- Is the size of the park adequate?
 - Ideally the site would be larger and there would be a big dog – small dog side, but the site is adequate and during the development process there were not other sites available.
 - Estimate that Tuesday-Sunday 9:30-10:30 is the busiest time with 8-9 people and about 8 dogs. Noted that there is adequate space for that.

Kathy Gilbert spoke and noted that 9:40-12:00 did a count of the dogs. She recorded the users, the dogs, and did a bark count. She provided the list to the Commission. She also commented that the park is self policing.

John Chapman noted that the park is more popular than was expected and this has created more sound than expected.

Derek Wolff asked whether the park users would be willing to consult among themselves. There was agreement that this would be welcomed.

Lisa Smith stated that she lives directly across the lake from Buccaneers and can hear a lot of barking from the dogs that live on the road.

Tom Rolph noted that he lives in the Hope Bay Area and in his area dogs will bark to each other. He noted that dogs will bark.

Hans Tammemagi requested information on how early morning barking is dealt with. It was noted that if the dog barking is outside of bylaw hours that a complaint can be lodged with the RCMP.

Don Peden was invited to speak. He made the following points:

- He has not received any complaints.
- Dog owners are responsible for the dogs in their charge.
- If people are using the dog park to hold their animals while they play baseball then that dog is not in their control and they are violating a bylaw.
- The park does not circumvent the bylaws. Dogs still need to be under control.
- Smoking prohibition is under Vancouver Island Health Authority.
- CRD bylaw issues are complaint driven due to budget constraint, however he noted that in some areas the local Commissions contract with the CRD to provide additional proactive patrolling of certain areas.
- Below 50 decibels at the edge of the park would be acceptable and would not go far beyond the edge of the park.
- The Commission can put rules on their signs, but it would be worth having those rules evaluated legally so that violating the rules becomes a CRD bylaw offence that can carry the weight of a ticket.
- Encouraged that all dogs need to be licensed at the park.

Herb Katz spoke in favour of increasing the strength of the signs prohibiting smoking at the dog park.

Jan Kirkby asked whether the groups could meet independently. There was general consensus from the public present that they would like the Commission to continue to play a role.

Chair Bell thanked those who attended the meeting. He noted that the matter will be addressed next at the regular scheduled meeting of the Commission on May 17, 2019 at 9:00 at Plum Tree Court.

The public departed the meeting at 11:16 am.

Chair Chapman noted that there are no longer any maps at the CRC office and that the Commission should print 1000 maps.

MOTION: It was moved by John Chapman, and seconded by Jan Kirkby, that the Pender Islands Parks and Recreation Commission approve the spending of up to \$1000 for the printing of 2000 trail maps.

CARRIED

It was noted that Arnie Alksne will order the printing.

A discussion was held regarding whether refreshments should be provided at the open house. There was general consensus that refreshments shall not be provided.

A discussion of staffing the open house was held and there was general agreement on which Commissioners will attend at which times.

Chair Chapman recommended that the Commission form a subcommittee to address the Dog Park matter and provide recommendations to Commission at the next meeting. There was general consensus that John Chapman, Susan Parr, Jan Kirkby, and Tom Bell shall form the committee

A discussion was held regarding the next steps and it was noted that the community should be informed that the dog park matter will form one portion of a larger regular meeting.

By general consensus, the meeting was closed at 11:28 am.