Agenda – Council – September 24, 2014

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services – September 15, 2014

Item No. 3 Off Leash Dog Park at Little Mountain Park

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On September 17, 2014, the Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services and submitted the following to Council:

1. That an extension of time of 30 days be granted to allow the Winnipeg Public Service to report back on the matter after initial consultations have taken place.

2. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services – September 15, 2014

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On September 17, 2014, the Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services, and submitted the matter to Council.

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On September 15, 2014, the Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services recommended that an extension of time of 30 days be granted to allow the Winnipeg Public Service to report back on the matter after initial consultations have taken place, and submitted the matter to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

Further on September 15, 2014, Jordon Lobe, Vice-president Little Mountain Park Dog Club submitted a presentation with respect to the Off Leash Dog Park at Little Mountain Park.

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On July 4, 2014, the Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services referred the Council Motion of June 25, 2014 to the Winnipeg Public Service for report back at its September 15, 2014.

COUNCIL DECISION:

On June 25, 2014, Council passed the following motion:

WHEREAS the City Of Winnipeg's Little Mountain Park is not part of any Councillor's ward;

AND WHEREAS as a result of not having a Councillor for the park, Councillors Sharma and Mayes recently hosted a meeting for the users of Little Mountain Park to hear their concerns;

AND WHEREAS Little Mountain Park includes the third largest off-leash dog area in the City of Winnipeg;

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services – September 15, 2014

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

COUNCIL DECISION (continued):

AND WHEREAS as a result of this consultation a number of issues were raised by park users;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The City administration report back on the feasibility of extending the operating hours of the one building at the Park (washroom building) and report back on the provision of water at this building to ensure its safety, as the water is currently trucked into the site and;

2. The City administration report back by September 2014 in regards to the extending of off-leash dog access to all parts of the park from October 1 to April 30, as at present, only portions of the park are off-leash and dog owners are the heaviest users of the park's (on-leash) trail system during the winter months.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: Report on the Off Leash Dog Park at Little Mountain Park

Critical Path: **Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services – EPC - Council**

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
D. Domke	Jim Berezowsky	n/a	M. Jack A/CAO

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the operating hours for the public washrooms remain unchanged from 8:00 am to 9:00 pm from mid-May to mid-October.
2. That the water service for the public washrooms remain the same until the development of a new potential water source in the Rural Municipality of Rosser.
3. That Area B, the Ecologically Significant Area, not be included in the expansion of the current off leash dog park.
4. That Area C, the picnic site and open space area, be considered as an expansion as part of the upcoming "Off Leash Dog Park Master Plan for the City of Winnipeg".

REASON FOR THE REPORT

On July 4, 2014, the Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services referred the Council Motion of June 25, 2014 to the Winnipeg Public Service for report back at its September 15, 2014 meeting:

- The City administration report back on the feasibility of extending the operating hours of the one building at the Park (washroom building) and report back on the provision of water at this building to ensure its safety, as the water is currently trucked into the site.
- The City administration report back by September 2014 in regards to the extending of off-leash dog access to all parts of the park from October 1 to April 30, as at present, only portions of the park are off-leash and dog owners are the heaviest users of the park's (on leash) trail system during the winter months.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The current operating hours of the washroom building at Little Mountain Park are 8:00 am to 9:00 pm from mid-May to mid-October. The building is not winterized so opening the building during winter is not possible. Some members of the Little Mountain Dog Club were under the impression that the washroom hours were closed at 4:00 pm from mid-May to mid-October. The Public Works Department has clarified that the washrooms are normally open until approximately 9:00 pm. Closure may sometimes occur earlier (around 8:30 pm) due to operational requirements.

The water quality at Little Mountain Park is another concern of the Little Mountain Dog Club because there is no readily available supply of potable (drinking) water. Currently, the water is trucked in and pumped into a cistern.

It can be used for washing hands and flushing water, but not for drinking. In discussions with the Little Mountain Dog Club, they would like potable (drinking) water available at the washroom for both users and dogs.

Prior to 2000, the City was drawing water from a well at Little Mountain Park. In 2000, the City shut off the water supply at Little Mountain Park due to high bacterial counts in the well water. A positive E. Coli result was found that did not meet the guidelines for drinking water. As a result, digging a new well at this site is not favoured.

The most favourable option to develop a potable water supply at Little Mountain Park is to wait for the Rural Municipality (RM) of Rosser to develop a water supply for CentrePort and other areas in the RM. The Province, in partnership with the RM of Rosser, is presently considering alternatives for a secondary water source. Water for Little Mountain Park could draw from this new system. This option poses the best outcome for a safe and reliable potable water supply in the long term for this park. Development timelines by the RM of this water supply are still unknown. Once the new water system is developed in the RM, a capital budget could be prepared for Little Mountain Park.

The second motion asks the Public Service to consider extending of the off-leash dog access to all parts of the park from October 1 to April 30 each year. The park consists of three distinct areas (Attachment 1). The existing off leash dog park is the first area (Area A). The second area comprises the ecologically significant area of the park (Area B), and the third area contains picnic spaces and open areas (Area C).

Due to limited enforcement resources, off leash dogs have been observed in all three areas of the park throughout the year in Little Mountain Park. This situation poses a potential public safety risk because many users of the park, particularly in Areas B and C, do not expect to encounter dogs while they are hiking or picnicking. In 2013, the picnic sites at Little Mountain Park were rented on 29 different occasions. In addition, the Public Works Department (Naturalist Services) programs hikes with school groups in Area B through to the end of October.

The majority of the aforementioned activities occur from May 1 to October 30, and there are additional reasons not to support extending the off leash dog park during the period of November 1 to April 30 identified below. Extension of the dog park into the ecologically significant area (Area B) is not recommended for two additional reasons. First, an off-leash area should not contain significant visual interference such as forested or shrub cover. By-Law 92/2013 states that a dog owner at an off-leash area must be present and have the dog within view at all times. This is not likely to be the case where there is a forest with winding pathways and heavy vegetative cover. Park users, particularly those without dogs, may become startled and the dogs may pose a safety concern to these users.

Secondly, Little Mountain Park is considered an ecologically significant area, and is considered the second most valuable site in the City's natural area inventory. The tall grass prairie portion is one of the few remnants of its size within the Winnipeg area and even within Manitoba. It hosts the largest and one of the only native crocus populations within Winnipeg's parks. In fact, the Public Works Department harvests seeds from the native plant community in Little Mountain Park for propagation of Winnipeg's natural heritage species for use in restoring and enhancing other natural park spaces.

Extension of the dog park into this ecologically significant area is potentially damaging, and is not safe for wildlife which relies on these areas for habitat. Deer and other wildlife take refuge in naturalized portions of parks, and may become the target of off-leash dogs either by simply being harassed or by using up valuable energy in the winter months. It is even possible that some wildlife may be attacked or killed by off leash dogs.

The third area for consideration of extension of the dog park is in the picnic areas and green space (Area C). In the winter season, the picnic sites are rarely rented. If the dog park was extended, the picnic sites would not be rentable. As a result, an extension of the off leash dog park into Area C could be considered. Nonetheless, the current trend is to develop single use off leash dog parks so that multi-use conflicts are limited. Furthermore, at its

July 15 meeting, the Executive Policy Committee supported a motion for the development of an "Off Leash Dog Park Master Plan for the City of Winnipeg." It is recommended that expansion of the dog park in Area C be reviewed upon the completion of this Master Plan.

It is understandable that the Little Mountain Dog Club would like to see an expansion of the off leash dog park. This group is likely the greatest user of the park with over 100 members. Nonetheless, City parks are provided for the benefit of all residents in Winnipeg. It is important to note that dogs are still allowed in the other two areas of Little Mountain Park albeit while the dogs are on leash. Moreover, the park is also an important ecologically significant area providing a unique habitat and genetic material whose benefits accrue to all the residents of Winnipeg (whether they visit the park or not). Protection of this unique environment for future generations is important.

HISTORY

Little Mountain Park is owned by the City of Winnipeg, but is located within the R.M. of Rosser, Manitoba. The site once contained two operating limestone quarries from 1898 to 1905, and was the first City owned quarry in North America. The quarry played a major role in the early development of Winnipeg and the Exchange District. Not only was it a source of crushed stone for Winnipeg's streets, it was also a supplier of cobblestone curbing. Some of this curbing is still present in the Albert Street area of the City.

The land was purchased by the City of Winnipeg in 1965, and was appropriately named Little Mountain Park, after the original farm on this site (little Stony Mountain Farm) owned by Mr. William Nimmons circa 1869.

The Little Mountain Park is bordered by Farmers Road to the North and Klimpke Road to the west. It consists of 65 hectares of land with approximately 17 hectares of developed grass fields and nearly 48 hectares of natural area.

In the January 30, 2012 Administrative Report to the Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services, the Public Service identified that many off-leash sites in the City have specific issues and concerns related to their use as off-leash dog areas. These include adjacency to busy roads, sharing the site with incompatible users, too many users in too small a space, and increased public demand for amenities, etc. Other concerns include sites that are prone to development pressure due to their proximity to, or location on private property not under the control of the City of Winnipeg.

On June 5, 2012, the Public Service commissioned a study by Dean Spearman that included a jurisdictional review of other dog parks, existing facilities in Winnipeg, and guidelines for the development of existing and future dog parks. The study is entitled "Guidelines for Off Leash Dog Parks in the City of Winnipeg".

On May 12, 2014, the Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services concurred with the recommendation of the Public Service that the "Guidelines for Off Leash Dog Parks in Winnipeg" report be endorsed as a guide the Winnipeg Public Service will refer to when making decisions about existing and future off-leash dog parks.

On July 16, 2014, the Executive Policy Committee approved an administrative report that a consultant be hired to create an Off Leash Dog Park Master Plan for the City of Winnipeg and that up to $100,000 be committed in the upcoming 2015 – 2019 capital budget discussions for this project.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statemen Date: July 29, 2014

Project Name:

Report on the Off Leash Dog Park at Little Mountain Park

COMMENTS:

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

"Original signed by H. Schoenfeld CA"
H. Schoenfeld CA
Acting Manager of Finance & Administration

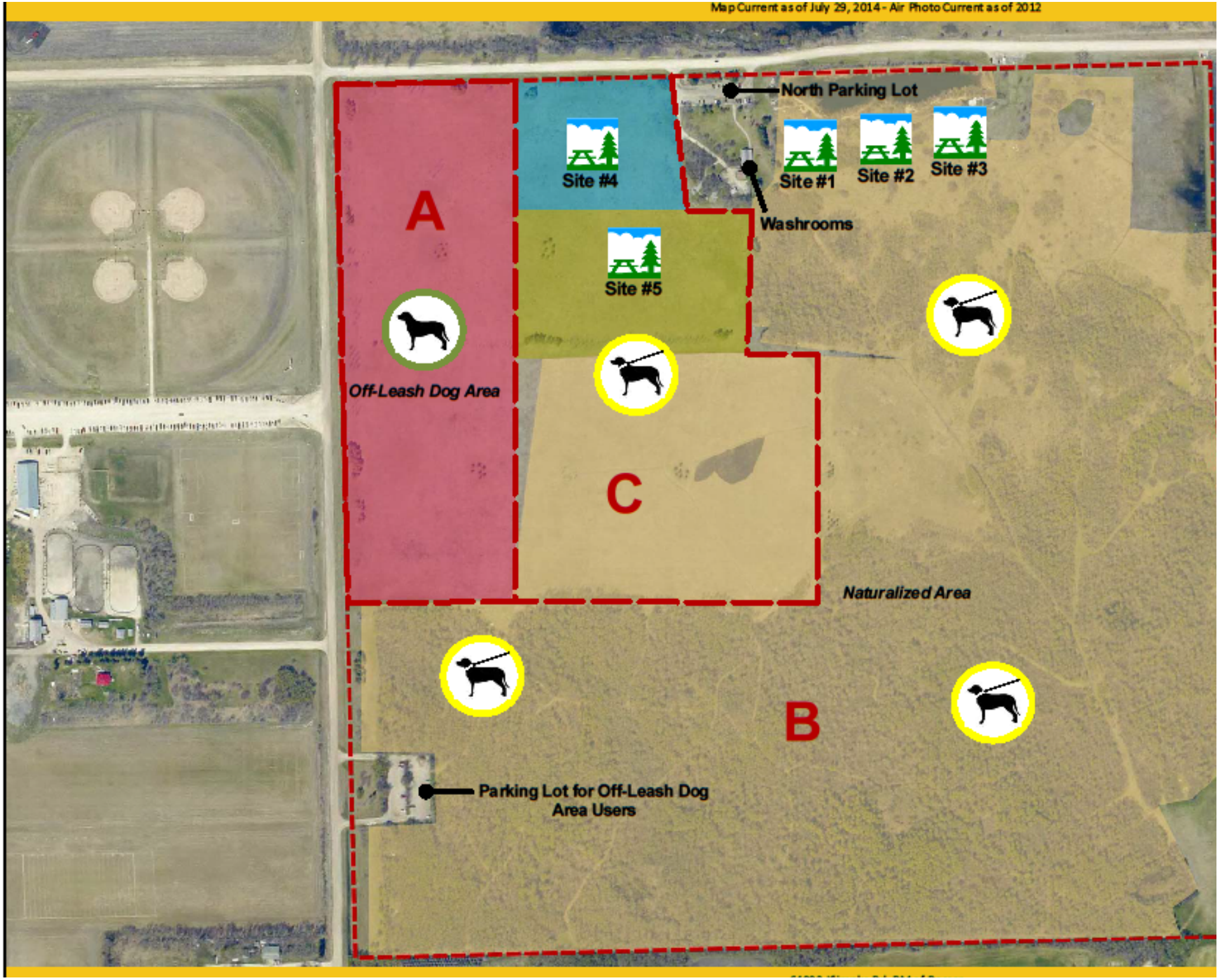
CONSULTATION

In preparing this Report there was consultation with Animal Services.

SUBMITTED BY

Department: Public Works
Prepared by: D. Domke and J. Houldsworth
Date: July 29, 2014

Attachments: Attachment 1: Little Mountain Park Map


Map Current as of July 29, 2014 - Air Photo Current as of 2012
North Parking Lot
Site #4
Site #1
Site #2
Site #3
Washrooms
Site #5
A
Off-Leash Dog Area
C
Naturalized Area
B
Parking Lot for Off-Leash Dog Area Users