KILCONA PARK DOG CLUB INC. (KPDC)

Submission Regarding Potable Water for KPDC Water Features Project

To the Executive Policy Committee

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Kilcona Park Dog Club's Mandate

KPDC is an advocate for Kilcona Park's largest user group. Our members are drawn from the thousands of dog owners that use Kilcona's off-leash area.

KPDC promotes responsible pet ownership and is recognized by the City of Winnipeg as Kilcona's official park steward through the Adopt-a-Park Program.

Kilcona Park Dog Club is here today to persuade the Committee to ask City Council to support our request for increased funding in the 2017 operating budget.

The funding will be used to support an important community-based initiative to bring clean drinking water into Winnipeg's largest regional park.

Increased funding is needed to:

1. Test Kilcona's picnic shelter well water on an ongoing basis to ensure it meets federal and provincial drinking water guidelines.

2. Maintain the well water treatment system.

3. Maintain the waste water system.

First of all, I understand that budgeting is complex. There are many competing demands for limited tax dollars. Why is Kilcona Park Dog Club worthy of Council's consideration?

First and foremost - Kilcona Park Dog Club has a special relationship with the City. And it's clear that the City gets a lot of value from the club.

Over the past three years our volunteers have raised approximately $90,000 in confirmed and committed funds for park improvements.

KPDC is also a service provider. Our volunteers have donated tens of thousands of hours of free labour, helping the City do more with less, particularly in the face of recent staff cuts at the park. KPDC is the only organization that has taken on this stewardship role.

An Administrative Report entitled *Off-leash Area Stewardship Groups*, presented to this committee on January 30, 2012, describes the uniqueness of the relationship.

"The City of Winnipeg maintains thirteen off leash dog areas, and is involved directly with two off-leash area stewardship groups - Maple Grove Park Dog Owners' Association and Kilcona Park Dog Club Inc." The report notes that these non-profit corporations were established to improve the parks.

The report emphasizes that the clubs' volunteer stewardship activities are managed and directed by the City. Under the Adopt A-Park Program, all stewardship activities are approved and overseen by Public Works.

KPDC members working with the authorization and under the supervision of the City of Winnipeg are considered volunteers under the City of Winnipeg Charter Act, and are protected under the City's liability insurance."

Over the years our volunteers have provided many valuable services. We've worked with the City Naturalist to plant trees, and with park staff to repair damaged sections of the hiking trails by spreading wood chips.

Each spring and fall KPDC hosts a park clean-up, recruiting hundreds of volunteers to collect trash in Kilcona's on-leash and off-leash areas.

KPDC's rapid response internal communication network is a valuable tool for the City. The public service has relied on the club's system to quickly deliver important messages to thousands of park users - unexpected open water on the ponds in winter, thin ice, the presence beaver traps that might accidently ensnare dogs, and the presence of coyotes at the park.

KPDC works closely with and is proud of our relationship with Winnipeg Animal Services. We support and actively encourage park users to license their dogs, to comply with off-leash rules and the Responsible Pet Ownership By-law.

We work with Animal Services to address issues that arise at the park. Twice a year KPDC provides the agency with education outreach and dog adoption venues at Winnipeg Dog Fest, and we pro-actively promote the work of the agency on KPDC's website and through social media.

In the past three years, the club has donated $40,000 worth of park benches and wheelchair accessible picnic tables to Kilcona Park. We have also donated six dog waste bag dispensers and 60,000 bags, which according to a recent survey of our members, has improved the pick-up rate by about 85%, resulting in a much cleaner park overall.

KPDC's Board, our volunteers, sponsors like Birchwood Ford and partners like the University of Winnipeg have worked very hard for the past three years to raise money bring clean, fresh drinking water into Kilcona Park.

Why is this project a priority?

Veterinarians in Kilcona's catchment area – Transcona, North and East Kildonan - have confirmed that dogs that are exposed to Kilcona pond water are developing very serious gastrointestinal, urinary tract and skin diseases. This year they added eye diseases to the list. This is a health and safety concern. This month we learned that at least one dog has died from exposure to Kilcona pond water.

Why are dogs getting so sick? Dogs are much more susceptible to heatstroke than humans. On hot summer days many overheated dogs attempt to cool down in Kilcona's retention ponds.

But this project is not only about the dogs. Many other stakeholders will benefit. On hot summer days – dog owners, cyclists, runners, sports groups like soccer, baseball disc golf players, and families on picnics – will all have access to clean drinking water.

As a community organization, KPDC has raised confirmed and committed capital funding for the installation of the picnic shelter water filtration system, a water line and electrical infrastructure, a drinking fountain and rinse station, and a waste water system at Kilcona Park.

This year KPDC's consultants completed a feasibility study verifying that the park picnic shelter well has sufficient flow to run a drinking fountain and dog rinse station. The news was encouraging.

A second critical question we needed to ask was, "What is the quality of the water? In 2015 and 2016, KPDC's Board contracted ALS Environmental to analyse the picnic shelter well water. All the samples passed Health Canada's stringent Canadian Drinking Water Standards for E. coli and other bacteria.

Because the picnic shelter is close to the old Springfield Dump, ALS also tested for the most common contaminants found in decommissioned landfills. Again all samples passed. The only elevated reading was for iron, which gives the water an unpleasant smell and taste but is not harmful to human health. The taste and smell will be removed with the new filtration system.

Manitoba's Office of Drinking Water recently informed our Board that Kilcona's picnic shelter well water CAN be used for drinking water. The City simply has to decide if it wants to do that.

The City has agreed to start testing the water with a view to obtaining a potable water license. Once a potable license is issued, there will be ongoing costs for testing the water, and maintaining the water treatment and waste water systems.

The Manager of Parks and Open Space recently advised KPDC's Board that the City will only undertake the operation of the system if additional operating funds are approved by Council. The costs are minimal.

That is why we're asking that the City identify funds in its 2017 operating budget for ongoing testing and maintenance.

Kilcona Park Dog Club encourages you to make the right decision to save dogs' lives and provide a valued but basic, low-cost amenity to Kilcona Park users.

Submitted by:

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