Friends of King George V Off Leash Dog Park

submission regarding the Winnipeg Off Leash Area Master Plan (OLAMP)

Executive Policy Committee

July 11, 2018

My name is Rene Bisson and I live in Old St. Vital close to the Superstore at St. Anne's and Fermor, which is adjacent to the King George V park. On October 11, 2015 I contacted Councillor Mayes suggesting the underutilized open field and treed areas of the park be used as an off-leash dog park as it was already unofficially used as such by many local dog owners. (email conversation attached as "original email request") The area features a network of walkways connecting the Des Meurons area, Windsor Park, and with the new tunnel being built under Fermor it will soon more closely connect the Niakwa area which features a dense population.

At the time, Councillor Mayes indicated that he thought the idea was a good one and indicated that there was a study on dog parks that was kicking off and he'd prefer to wait to see what the study would reveal.

While out walking my dog I continuously encounter people who desire to have an off leash dog park in their neighbourhood and treat King George V park as an off-leash area. I created the Friends of King George V Off Leash Dog Park, which currently has 76 members. In the group we share ideas, information, and organize clean up activities for the park. The intention is to grow the utilization of the group if and when the park is approved and become more active in taking care of the park.

On August 9, 2016, I emailed Councillor Mayes asking for an update, and he indicated that another site was being considered at St. Vital Park (email conversation attached as "follow up email").

On May 1, 2017 I presented my request to the Riel Community Committee, a copy of which is attached as "WINDOG PowerPoint Presentation to RCC - May 1 2017". A petition was also presented which showed almost unanimous support for this type of utilization in the park.

On June 3, 2018 an article was published in the Lance community newspaper talking about this initiative and I was quoted to indicate the support that had been received when soliciting signatures for the petition. Link to Lance article, dated June 3, 2018:

https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/our-communities/lance/correspondent/Is-an-off-leash-dog-park-in-the-offing-476028973.html

Throughout 2017, the OLAMP project held public sessions which I attended and provided input to, published online surveys which I filled out, and pop up sessions which were also well attended.

Throughout this lengthy process, the citizens of Old St. Vital and surrounding areas were patient and respected the process. We spoke positively about the request and the City of Winnipeg process that was followed. W told each other we need to give the project some time to make decisions.

It is now 2.5 years later and the project has been completed without a process to request, decommission, or alter an existing dog park. It is a 245 page document that the ordinary citizen will not read. The ordinary citizen who wants a dog park will look for the application form and the request process but will not find either of those things.

The grass roots conversations that I have with citizens who stop me in the streets asking for updates indicates they are filled with cynicism, almost dismissal. The attitude is that although they appreciate my efforts, they never thought the City could deliver on a request that is so clearly wanted by the citizens, and which so clearly would benefit an established and dog-densely populated area.

I ask that given the reputation of the City of Winnipeg not being able to deliver on what the citizens want, given the reputation that the City of Winnipeg has for churning out study after study but not really delivering anything of substance, given that this request was made respecting all protocol and existing processes, given that the local residents have everything in place to make this successful for the foreseeable future, please consider granting permission for the installation of fencing, signage, and garbage bins and the designation of the King George V western-most section as an off-leash dog park.

Friends of King George V park

Rene Bisson Dec 27, 2017, 9:37 AM

to Brian, mallard, bcc: president

Good day,
I hope everyone had a great Christmas and is enjoying quality time with loved ones.

We're all busy so I'll make this as quick as possible.

I am extremely disappointed that I haven't heard any kind of response to the presentation I made back in May of this year. This fall marks the second anniversary of my first contact with Mr. Brian Mayes regarding the possibility of an off-leash park at King George V park.

I understand there is a study going on. I understand that this project will outline the process to follow to request a dog park. I have participated in the workshops. I believe I have provided positive feedback and honest discussion. I have provided the City with a petition that makes it clear that it is almost unanimous that the citizens of this neighborhood want this park to be an off-leash dog park.

One of my comments at a workshop was: Given the City has approved the creation of dog parks in the past without a formal process... given the City is about to approve (and since my comment was made has made a decision) a downtown dog park... It is clear that there is a way to make a decision on my request without waiting for the project to come to it's conclusion.

The City gvt suffers from a bad public reputation regarding studies. All the City does is pay for studies is what we hear in the media, in the workshops and on the streets. When the study doesn't provide the answer they want (Portage and Main), the City creates a new study... While I have an open mind about those comments and I defend the process, this is what people are telling me.

The inability to make a decision is upsetting people. It's discouraging to the public who initiates projects like mine without an answer. I have no choice but to tell people who ask me for an update that there is, in fact, no update to our specific request. I point them to the project pages like a good positive citizen, but this is not appeasing anyone. I'm trying so hard to keep positive about this and not be rebellious. Others I speak to are losing patience.

The City Animal Services has been coming around our park again, handing out tickets, but the citizens are resilient and insist on continuing to use the park as an illegal off-leash dog park. This will not stop. It is the most obvious request that this neighborhood can see yet they see the City taking over 2 years to make a decision.

I want to reassure you that I respect the process that you are going through and will continue to do so. I love my neighborhood and I want positive things for it. Basically, my request is for a fence and a few garbage cans... People see it as a positive item for this community that the City won't make a decision on...
Thank you for listening. I felt the need to share this update with you.

Mayes, Brian Jan 3, 2018, 10:48 PM

to Matt, me

Thank you for the email. We are , as you know, in the midst of an off leash dog park master plan. We get many requests - in north St Vital alone I have had requests at King George, Canoe Club and Render parks. Every advocate feels their plan is a common sense proposal. I am waiting for some results of the study before proceeding with Coun Allard to look at the best plan. Your idea is not forgotten. It is not ignored. When Canoe Club advocates hammered me I pointed out your similar request for a nearby park. The request will be dealt with.

Sent from my iPhone

King George park

Rene Bisson Oct 11, 2015, 8:48 AM

to bmayes

Good day.

As you know the only dog park in St Vital area is Maple Grove park, which is very far for most of the residents of St Vital.

If you drive by King George park or anywhere along the walkways along the park through to Windsor Park or the streets along the golf course, you will see several dozen dog owners walking their dogs at all times of the day.

King George Park has an unused baseball diamond that will soon require maintenance. In fact, the fencing for the entire park is in disrepair. I have never seen anyone even playing catch there.

With the pool opening next year and I'm assuming new play structure being installed to replace the one that was recently removed, wouldn't it be wonderful to have a fenced in off leash dog park at the other end?

If you are a dog owner I don't have to spend time convincing you about how important socialising is for dogs and how much it brings owners together creating a social atmosphere and bringing the community closer.

If this is something you would entertain considering and supporting, I could volunteer much time to this project by getting a petition going or anything else required. I'm certain I could get dozens of signatures within days and a few hundred over a month.

Let me know what you think. Think of how diverse that park would be with a pool, a play structure, horseshoe game area and a dog park. Right in the core of St Vital. All of it adjacent to trails etc.

Thanks for listening.

Mayes, Brian Oct 11, 2015, 9:07 AM

to me

Interesting idea - and that is an underused park space. There is a big study though coming about dog parks so I can't immediately say yes, but this idea should be part of the study.

Sent from my iPhone

Rene Bisson Oct 11, 2015, 9:37 AM

to Brian

Thanks for the quick reply. Do you need me to do anything?

Mayes, Brian Oct 11, 2015, 10:28 AM

to me

Not yet
Sent from my iPhone

Dog park

Rene Bisson Tue, Aug 9, 2016, 6:59 PM

to Brian

Good day.

Any new developments on an old st vital dog park? Behind superstore st annes would be awesome. I never see anyone but dog owners there anyway. Fenced off area would be awesome and wouldn't take away from pool patrons or families going to the play structure.

Thanks
Rene Bisson

Mayes, Brian Tue, Aug 9, 2016, 9:17 PM

to me

We are studying dog park options. I have an idea near StV Park, and your suggestion is very viable.

Sent from my iPhone

Rene Bisson Fri, Aug 12, 2016, 5:16 AM

to Brian

Sure. Why not both. There's also that spot adjacent to Windsor park golf course along Fermor where people used to have urban gardens. Doesn't have to be big. Just a fence and a few signs. I'm sure you'd see a citizen group pop up who would fund getting a picnic table etc. Every dog owner I meet along that path talks about it.

And I don't want to sound like a pest and I know money is a scarce resource but it might be time to upgrade those paths along the park and over the seine. There are near misses between dog walkers and fast moving bikes. It's a good sign that so many people are using the paths but widening it might be due.

I care about this beautiful area and like I say I don't want to be a pest but I just thought you'd like to hear from normal citizens like me.

Thanks again.
Rene