Kilcona Park Dog Club Inc. (KPDC) Submission Regarding Winnipeg's Draft Off-leash Area Master Plan (OLAMP) to

Executive Policy Committee - July 11, 2018

KPDC requests that EPC amend the Off-Leash Area Master Plan to designate Kilcona Dog Park OLA (Kilcona OLA) as 'single-use'.

Kilcona OLA is the largest OLA in Winnipeg with over 50% of all Off-leash space. KPDC is also the largest OLA stewardship group with almost 1,100 members in our database.

Off-leash dog parks are the only public spaces where dogs can legally be off-leash to exercise and socialize. With over 10,000 acres of parks and greenspace, and hundreds of kilometers of bike and pedestrian trails, there's no shortage of places where Winnipeggers can bike, jog and spend our leisure time. We don't have to do that in off-leash dog parks.

I heard repeatedly during the consultations for the OLAMP that the reason is one of balancing the needs of the various users of OLAs. I suggest that with less than 200 acres of OLAs in Winnipeg there are no valid reasons for conflicting activities to be carried out in any OLA.

The inconsistency in the OLAMP is almost humorous; the City won't allow an OLA to be located next to a multi-use trail (or other incompatibles) without mitigation measures such as fencing, but it will allow multi-use trail activities inside an OLA.

KPDC requests that the City set aside Kilcona Dog Park OLA for dogs and their families in the same way it has created municipal golf courses, soccer and baseball fields, skateboard parks, and children's pools and splash pads for specific user groups.

History of conflicts within Kilcona OLA

People who visit dog parks know dogs love to chase. They love to chase each other but what they really love to chase are fast-moving objects.

At Kilcona, dog owners have years of experience co-existing with incompatible recreational activities. The City permits tobogganing, mountain biking, jogging/running and school sports events in the off-leash area.

Multi-use' means Kilcona dog owners need to be extraordinarily vigilant, constantly shoulder-checking for runners or cyclists approaching from the rear so they can quickly recall and leash their dogs. We consider this an unreasonable obligation that spoils what is supposed to be a pleasant recreational experience for dogs and their families. The need for dog owners to be constantly on the alert for joggers and cyclists in an off-leash area is the unfortunate result of a reasonable animal control by-law and a poorly conceived multi-use OLA policy.

Winnipeg's Responsible Pet Ownership By-law states that a dog owner 'must ensure that the dog does not pursue any individual…'. If a dog were to chase a football player, a jogger, or cyclist in an off-leash area, even if the person was not injured, the owner would be in breach of the law and could be fined $200.

The 'multi-use' designation is a dangerous one that endangers humans and animals. Over the years, dogs and people have been seriously injured on Kilcona's high-risk unofficial toboggan run, which inexplicably terminates in the dog play area.

At one time the City placed "no tobogganing" signs at the top of the hill in the OLA only to have the signs be pulled out and disappear.

We have had individuals that come to Kilcona OLA on a bicycle specifically to engage with the dogs and try and create problems.

Many groups over the years have had runs, walks or other events in the Kilcona OLA even though there are many paths and trails in other areas of Kilcona that are not within the OLA.

Related Issues - Fencing

The OLAMP indicates that single-use OLAs must be fenced.

KPDC's view is that, while fenced off-leash areas is a preferable way of protecting dogs and minimizing user group conflict, a single-use OLA does not necessarily need a secure boundary.

This view is informed by our experiences at Kilcona.

Single use OLAs can be defined by permeable boundaries and clear signage informing other park users that they are entering an OLA where only activities related to off-leash dogs are permitted.

Kilcona, with its current boundaries, is mostly contained by waterways and existing fencing and would only need about 2,000 feet of fencing to complete.

Conclusion

KPDC requests that EPC amend the Off-Leash Area Master Plan to designate Kilcona Dog Park OLA (Kilcona OLA) as 'single-use'.

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