Off Leash Park Policy Presentation – July 19 2018

Hello, my name is Lloyd Johnson and I'm here to represent the Little Mountain Park Pet Owners Association and the Little Mountain Park Conservancy Group. I am here to speak about the Off-leash / Single-use dog park.

The term "single-use dog park" is a bit misleading as it sounds like "off leash dogs only." What we are really asking is for official acknowledgement of the practical reality – that off-leash dogs and their human keepers are the majority of users at our Park. We are asking that Off Leash Dog Park Use be privileged over all other uses. That said, no one is suggesting that Little Mountain Park exclude anyone.

We are the dog owners that use the Park every day of the year, rain or shine, summer and winter, and we comprise the vast majority of the Park's user population.

During the winter the off-leash area is open to the elements which forces us to use the trails. The City has scaled back most of the garbage containers along the trails forcing people to travel further to deposit the waste bags. We nevertheless help to take away garbage and have installed and maintain eight Recycle Everywhere bins at strategic locations throughout the Park.

Little Mountain Park has long been a beacon of co-operation between the pet owners and non-pet owners. We have respected the rights of others' use of the Park while remaining compliant with the City bylaws. However, the existing by-laws governing off-leash Parks are incompatible with the reality of our Park and the majority of its users.

For example,

-Little Mountain has on numerous occasions been the site of Track and Field meets. The organizers leave behind unsightly and damaging spray paint on the trees and rocks.

-Bike riders on the trails travel two abreast, and do not use warning bells, creating dangerous encounters between surprised dogs and cyclists.

- Large festivals involving fireworks create serious trauma for many unsuspecting dogs who have firework-phobia, and attendant dangerous situations when they bolt in fright.

- the City actually gave permission for a Football club to play in the DESIGNATED off-leash area, resulting in confusion for dog walkers and football players with predictable thefts involving footballs, and canine tackles of players.

Having these activates in our ecologically protected environment is inherently risky for the dog users of the park. In the spirit of co-operation, a privileged off -leash dog park designation would eliminate the fear of conflict that arises. A $200.00 fine for a dog chasing a bike, doing what a dog does, is ridiculous in the designated off-leash area.

Little Mountain Park, as an entire off-leash space, would also facilitates healthy activity for seniors and mobility challenged people with their dogs in ALL SEASONS. Instead of being forced to exercise their dogs on Winnipeg's treacherous sidewalks in winter, off-leash strolling allows the human and her dog to exercise and socialize without the fear of on-leash interaction with others on the sidewalk and its attendant potential for falls or other difficulties.

As well, designating the trails at Little Mountain Park off-leash provides a sanctioned sheltered environment for all daily users during the coldest months of the year.

As I have stated before, we the Dog Owners of Little Mountain Park have long been the stewards of the park. We are the ones who pick up after these groups have used the park. Leftover food, garbage, cigarette butts and other debris such as balloons are dangerous to the entire environment and all its inhabitants.

We love our dogs and our Park, and in practice, use the Park in a manner that respects it as a precious naturalized area while benefitting the health of our dogs and ourselves. We ask the City honour our stewardship by designating this and other such areas as single use Parks.

Thank you for your time.