

MINUTES
PARKS, TRAILS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Council Chambers
April 28, 2021 at 4:00 pm

Present: Councillor Judy Brownoff (Chair), Ted Austin, Kathleen Burton, Leigh Campbell, Pamela Carroll, Annie Djiotsa (via MS Teams), Lyndsay Edgar (via MS Teams), Amy-Jade Louie (5:21 pm, via MS Teams), Dexter Owen

Staff: Eva Riccius, Senior Manager Parks; Gary Darrah, Manager, Park Planning & Development; Rick Hatch, Assistant Supervisor, Natural Areas; Pam Hartling, Senior Planner; Tania Douglas, Senior Committee Clerk

Staff present via MS Teams: Suzanne Samborski, Director Parks, Recreation and Community Services; Tiana Solares, Senior Manager, Recreation; Megan Catalano, Communications Manager; Julie Lommerse, Park Planner Designer

Regrets: Pat Danforth, Kyle Danielewicz

Minutes

MOVED by K. Burton and Seconded by D. Owen: “That the Minutes of the Parks, Trails and Recreation Advisory Committee meeting held March 24, 2021, be adopted as circulated.”

CARRIED

CHAIR’S REMARKS

The Chair stated that the budget discussions are finalized; with an increase of 5.76%. Saanich will hire approximately 21 staff including a new Manager of Urban Forests and Natural Areas. Approval of funding towards climate change initiatives means there is a little more money for planting trees. The budget will be formalized at the next Council meeting.

Dogs is an item many people have written in about recently and there have also been a couple of recent dog attacks. Council has asked committee to discuss.

REFERRAL FROM COUNCIL - DOGS

The Chair noted that a letter that had been sent to Council from the Cadboro Bay Residents’ Association (CBRA) regarding dogs has been referred to this committee. The CBRA had been previously asked by Council to provide a report which was received for information only.

Committee reviewed recommendations 1-5 noted in the correspondence and the Senior Manager of Parks highlighted a map of the park showing leashed and unleashed areas. She noted dogs are permitted to be off leash all year in one smaller areas on the beach on the northeast side of the beach near Telegraph Bay Road. Presently when people come to the park there is no legal way for an owner to get their dog to the unleashed area of the beach. It is proposed that the Bylaw be amended to allow people to walk their dog on leash through the park specifically to get to the unleashed area.

The following comments were noted:

- As of May 1st to August 31st there are no dogs permitted in Cadboro Gyro Park, nor on the majority of the beach except prior to 9:00 am.
- Council has recently approved food trucks to operate at this park.
- Many people are unaware of the rules in the park. This needs to be clarified as there will be more bylaw enforcement for the area.
- Many of the letters received are about accessibility as people find it difficult to get down to the water. Some letters of concern are from homeowners along the beach, however the northeast section has been established as a dog off leash area.
- It is important to provide pathway access to the beach as there is no legal way to do so during the seasonal restrictions.
- People can gain access to the east side of the beach at the sewer outflow by walking across the grass.
- Clear signage is needed for the area.

Motion: MOVED by K. Burton and Seconded by L. Campbell, “That the Parks, Trails and Recreation Advisory Committee recommends to Council specific wording changes in the Animal Control Bylaw to allow a park visitor to walk with their dog on leash from May 1 to August 31 through Cadboro-Gyro Park to the area of the beach that dogs are permitted.”

CARRIED

Comments:

- Dogs are part of people’s families and this strikes a balance and allows access while still limiting use for dogs.
- This access differs from winter in that dogs are permitted under effective control in the parks and on the whole beach during the winter.
- There still may be challenges for people with accessibility limitations; the sand is very soft on this beach. Staff advised that every year in the summer Parks installs mats to allow people to access the beach.

It was noted that signage that is currently on the beach has received feedback that it was suggested that it could be clearer.

Motion: MOVED by K. Burton and Seconded by T. Austin, “That the Parks, Trails and Recreation Advisory Committee recommends that Council request that staff review and replace the dog related signage at Cadboro-Gyro Park to create clarity on when and where visitors may be with their dogs.”

CARRIED

It was suggested Council could send a Letter to UVic asking them to reopen the area off Cedar Hill Cross Road which was previously used by dog owners. As they are not using the area for any buildings at the moment it would be useful to have the space again for the community and their dogs. Dog licences have increased by about 200 since last year and there are over 7,000 licences issued annually.

Motion: MOVED by P. Carroll and Seconded by D. Owen, “That the Parks, Trails and Recreation Advisory Committee recommends that Council write a letter to the University of Victoria to request a re-opening of the off-leash dog area off Cedar Hill Cross Road, known as the dog park, to help alleviate the increase of dogs in other areas in Saanich.”

CARRIED

It should be fairly simple for the University to reopen this area. UVic had previously closed the Finnerty Gardens but they have since reopened that area.

The Senior Manager of Parks and the Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services noted:

- Saanich does not have any fenced dog parks; the amount of dogs that family members are bringing into homes has increased, and there has been a lot of interest around fenced dog parks.
- The suggestion from the CBRA regarding fenced parks is appreciated, and some research will need to be done for this. Staff will need to create a long-range plan and propose that in the summer some pop-up dog parks be installed on a short term basis in order to gather data.
- A few locations would have these temporary pop-ups and they would last for one-two weeks. These location would not necessarily be the final chosen location. Ideally, students will gather data and also be on hand to provide education on dog etiquette.
- Making this a district-wide dogs in parks process is important and will be a multi-year process. Until a funded process is in place, staff will need to collect evidence based research that can feed into a larger process.

Committee comments:

- Members appreciate this idea; suggestion made to offer these in more dense or urban area where people with smaller dogs do not have as much access to space nearby.
- Suggestion made that staff may be able to identify where dogs are located based upon licensing information.
- Definition on “leashed” and “under control” require clarification; suggestion made to have someone with dog handling training that could offer advice to the public on how to address dogs that are not under control.
- There may be a way to partner with local business; CRD once had a program where they gave away dog bags to attach to leashes.
- Not all dog breeds would suit this type of park and trail walking may be preferable to some dog owners. Question raised whether trails may be included in this pilot. Staff noted that this would be part of the district-wide planning process.
- Suggestion made that when the report is done, it should be sent to the CRD. They have designated un-fenced dog park at Elk Lake alongside an empty field and there may be an opportunity for the CRD to have some sort of dog program as well.

Motion: MOVED by P. Carroll and Seconded by L. Campbell, “That the Parks, Trails and Recreation Advisory Committee endorses the concept of a research and innovation project, “Paws in Parks – Roving Dog Parks”, to be carried out this summer and requests Council to consider funding this research project from the Council Special Initiative Fund, upon receipt of a staff report on this matter.”

CARRIED

It was noted that a holistic conversation with the community needs to occur regarding leashing of dogs and access to parks. This will take time and resources to do this correctly.

Motion: MOVED by D. Owen and Seconded by K. Burton, “That the Parks, Trails and Recreation Advisory Committee recommends that staff bring forward a report to this committee outlining options on a more comprehensive approach on dogs in the District.”

CARRIED

This would be a large report covering many different topics; Saanich has not previously done a report on this, and it will involve bigger discussions with the community.

A comment was made that commercial dog walkers can cause issues when they let multiple dogs run off leash. They can cause environmental damage in parks and conflicts with dog owners that have their dogs under control. These businesses are not licenced like other businesses and there should be ways to control their actions.

Staff noted they could bring a report on this to committee prior to sending it to Council. Other jurisdictions need to be researched on how they manage commercial dog walkers.

Motion: MOVED by T. Austin and Seconded by L. Campbell, “That the Parks, Trails and Recreation Advisory Committee recommends that staff bring forward a report to this committee with options regarding a District-wide approach to commercial dog walkers.”

CARRIED

CORDOVA BAY LOCAL AREA PLAN

The Senior Planner highlighted the Cordova Bay Local Area Plan as it relates to Parks, Trails and Recreation. The following was noted:

- The focus for this committee includes consideration of networks, wayfinding, beaches and honoring First Nations culture
- Thorough community engagement occurred, and meetings with the WSANEC Nation were invaluable in understanding their perspectives, priorities and values.
- The area is well served by parks, community facilities, walking trails and beaches.
- Beach accesses will improve with this LAP. Planning and Engineering staff will work together on these improvements. Upgrades are also planned for Fowler, Lochside and Cordova Bay parks.
- Some trail network and connectivity issues, specifically east to west, need to be addressed as well as improved wayfinding and signage.
- Working with First Nations peoples, staff will aim to educate and increase awareness in protecting ancestral burial sites. A legacy project at ƧEL, IŁĆ / čəlítč is planned.
- A list of priorities was provided to Committee members outlining seven major upcoming projects.

Responses to committee questions are noted:

- The legacy project which is noted as a mid-priority will likely start in the next couple of years with a completion of 3-5 years being realistic. Saanich is currently working on a Memorandum of Understanding with the WSANEC First Nation.
- There are five beach access road ends, and there are four parks in the area.
- Accessibility issues have been discussed with the Parks department and access will be installed where it is appropriate. Each access has different characteristics and Agate and Parker parks have the most potential.
- There will be ten more crosswalks installed along Cordova Bay Road for beach accesses.

Motion: MOVED by A. Djotsa and Seconded by K. Burton, “That the Parks, Trails and Recreation Advisory Committee supports the draft Cordova Bay Local Area Plan as presented by the Senior Planner, and approves of the future beach accesses and accessibility amenities included in the Plan.”

CARRIED

TRIPP BIKE PARK CONCEPT DESIGNS

Gary Darrah, Manager, Park Planning & Development provided information on the youth park planned for the George Tripp Hydro Station off Lochside Drive. The following was noted:

- A background of the youth park with the bike park component was given.
- Public engagement is occurring at the moment. Workshops were done with students from several middle and secondary high schools. Students are excited about potential art opportunities for the project. The public engagement ended on May 10th.
- There are display panels installed near the site along the Lochside Trail as an alternative to hosting a public (in person) open house which was not permitted by Island Health.
- The bike park designer has been hired; he is an ex-professional BMX cyclist and very experienced in designing bike parks.
- Three concepts have been developed and input is being received on these through the virtual open house on the Saanich website.
- This is a one acre site with a nice buffer of vegetation on two sides. There will be jump trails and bike skills course and it will be good for all abilities.
- There has been some concern expressed from the housing complex nearby.
- The transition into a youth park should help move along transient campers.
- The Saanich Police have been involved with the project and advised on CEPTED (crime prevention through environmental design).
- Parking management strategies have been discussed with Engineering staff who are receptive to making some changes to the existing parking situation on Lochside in particular. There are many parking spots on Lochside Drive but there is no time limit so one idea is to designate some with a 3-hour limit. It is not felt that traffic issues will be significant since the majority of park use will be on weekends and evenings. The exception will be July and August. Signage will also be installed in the area.
- Some road markings and curb improvements will be done for safety. Staff have not yet spoken with Don Mann about the project.
- It is hoped that construction will commence early to mid-June.

Responses to committee questions was noted:

- The maximum capacity of the park is not known; it will not be controlled, and it is felt riders will sort themselves out.
- It is thought that there is a Block Watch, and neighbours will keep an eye on the property.
- The park will not be lit, upon request from neighbours, and the area will not be fenced.
- There will be signage installed to describe appropriate activities and park etiquette. Split rail fence will be installed in some areas of the bike park to provide safe barriers and rest areas for riders and pedestrians.
- Staff have applied for a grant that would be used to purchase ten bicycles that would be made available for youth who do not have bikes. The specifics of this still need to be considered. Partnerships with other agencies are being looked at.
- Staff have tried to be as inclusive as possible in terms of community consultation.
- Discussions have been had with key community organizers and Pearkes Recreation staff with regards to bike programs to be run in the youth park.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:56 p.m. The next meeting is Wednesday, May 26, 2021

Councillor Brownoff, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

Committee Secretary