



August 30, 2019

Kevin Wherry, Manager, Parks and Facilities Planning
Recreation, Culture and Facility Services Department
City of Ottawa

Dear Kevin;

As requested, the Manotick Culture, Parks and Recreation Association is providing comments regarding staff's recommendations put forth at the June 24, 2019 Beryl Gaffney (BG) Park Open House.

We understand that staff proposed two immediate actions for the \$1M allocated for BG Park Development:

- Buy adjacent land to create a fenced, off-leash dog park area (adjacent to Rideau Valley Drive) - \$400,000.
- Install a traffic light and parking lot off Prince of Wales, across from Capital Memorial Gardens - \$600,000.

We do not support the \$1M being spent in the above manner. It would be a travesty if this dedicated park development money were to be used for anything other than creating the destination park for which the funds were intended.

We propose the following:

- *Work with the community to leverage the \$1M park development funds* to garner further grants and financial contributions, with a goal of doubling the investment. While the Agreement with the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, as referenced in the March, 2008 report (ACS2008-CPS-PAR-0002) included their organization leveraging additional grants, to our knowledge this has not happened.¹ It's time to get creative and tap into other resources.
- *Invest in Beryl Gaffney Park.* We support the following items, contained in the BG Master Plan approved in 2008, in order of priority, being accomplished in the next 2-5 years:

¹ "RVCA to apply annually for external funding and investigate fund raising opportunities in partnership with local community and interest groups to further the development of Beryl Gaffney Park...An annual report will be provided to City staff for information purposes." [March 6, 2008, Community and Protective Services Committee Report ACS2008-CPS-PAR-0002]

- Construction of a foot bridge in proximity to the rock crossing. This is an accessibility issue and therefore prioritized. (\$65K)²
- Construction of the Picnic Area including infrastructure - water supply, drainage, electrical service, septic, landscaping (\$745K) and site furnishings, signage, picnic shelter buildings, washroom (\$1.5M). The picnic area serves all ages, reduces the risk of Lyme disease, and is fully compatible with the natural setting.
- Construction of the Adventure Play Area – (\$150K) – totally complementary to the picnic area, and a novelty for the whole City, if designed well.

The above projects not only protect the natural features but also appeal to all ages. We also support the amphitheatre, look-outs, board walks, channel ferry crossing, and canoe/small boat concession (all as designed in the BG Master Plan), should funding opportunities arise to pursue these specific park features.

- *Proceed to Community and Protective Services Committee and Council* with approval in principle, to move forward with the above prioritized items. Given that this is a City-wide, destination park and that it's a 'recreation' matter, we assume that the staff report would go to Community and Protective Services Committee, and not Agricultural and Rural Affairs Committee.

In addition, beyond the capital investments as noted above, Manotick Culture, Parks and Recreation Association recommends that the following actions be undertaken immediately:

- *Improve BG Park maintenance* – allocate an appropriate budget to maintain the park e.g. pruning pathways as needed; re-surfacing paths where required; providing winter maintenance of pathways; removing dead trees where warranted, etc. These funds should not come from the \$1M allocated for capital works.
- *Ensure there is an Asset Management Allocation* for the future replacement of park infrastructure (similar to other City amenities).
- *Address and remove the current off-leash dog designation for BG Park.* Historically, this matter was not addressed in the original BG Master Plan because former Nepean regulated that all parks required dogs to be on-leash. MCPRA does not know when the off-leash designation came into effect, why it was created, and what process was undertaken to designate the full 95 acres as an off-leash park. Given the proximity and size of David Bartlett Park (5 minutes away and 35 acres), which also has been given an off-leash designation, there is *no justification* or needs analysis, that warrants an additional 95 acres for dogs. The off-leash designation is *not* compatible with other proposed uses in BG Park (e.g. picnicking, cycling, adventure play area, or amphitheatre).

² Cost estimates based on the 2008 Estimates by Lashley Associates; however, not adjusted for inflation.

While adding acreage to a destination site has some merit, the requisite funds should not be taken from the allocated \$1M for BG park development. If the additional acreage is purchased, as proposed by staff, we recommend using city-wide, cash-in-lieu of parkland funds. If the additional acreage is used as proposed (i.e., for a fenced off-leash park area), then the off-leash designation for BG Park (95 acres) must be removed.

- *Ensure all future BG Park consultations are held at Ben Franklin Place*, thereby reflecting the city-wide nature of the park.
- *Hire a professional mediator or facilitator* - given the lack of consensus in the community, the lack of progress over almost two decades, and the disrespectful nature of the public forums, it's perhaps time to bring in a professional facilitator to build consensus and find a way forward.

The unsubstantiated recommendations put forth by staff on June 24, 2019, are a complete misappropriation of the designated park development funds and would appear to contravene the intent of the original agreement.

A city only gets one kick at the can to create a destination park - so let's get it right. Let's not neglect this precious space any longer. Build it and they will come.

We would be pleased to work with staff and Council, as partners, to implement some of the BG Master Plan, per the above.

Kind Regards,



Anne Robinson,
President, Manotick Culture, Parks and Recreation Association
www.mcpra.org

c.c. Mr. Dan Chenier, General Manager, Recreation, Culture and Facility Services
Mayor Watson and Members of Council