

Feedback on July 2020 Design of Picnic Area and Off-Leash Dog Park (Beryl Gaffney Park)

From: Manotick Culture, Parks and Recreation Association (MCPRA)

Introduction

MCPRA has been tracking and providing input on the development of Beryl Gaffney Park since 2017. Our Association was therefore surprised to discover a 'Survey' posted on the City's website, mid-summer, amidst the pandemic. Further, there is no context on the City's website for the apparent decision to prioritize an Off-Leash Dog Park and Picnic Area and/or how this action fits with the original Concept Plan.

Given the COVID-induced financial condition that the City faces, and will continue to face, and the challenge to secure park development funding, MCPRA is somewhat perplexed with the initiation of a fenced Off-Leash Dog Park in Beryl Gaffney Park, when the park itself is a designated Off-Leash site.

Further, staff have advised that there is no intention, now or in the future, to remove the Off-Leash designation from either Beryl Gaffney Park or the nearby 35-acre David Bartlett park that is also currently an Off-Leash site.

MCPRA finds the expenditure to acquire this parcel of 1.695 ha in 2019, at approximately \$400K, and the proposed expenditure for a Fenced, Off-Leash Dog Park, estimated at ~\$400K-500K, to be *contrary* to the original RVCA Agreement and provision of *park development* funds; *contrary* to the existing Beryl Gaffney Master Plan; and a reckless misappropriation of scarce financial resources.

Background

- MCPRA supports the original 1999 Beryl Gaffney Park Master Plan and prioritized development – as outlined in our 2018 [submission](#).
- The City's [Agreement](#) with Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) requires an annual contribution of \$32,000..... "to be used for development of Beryl Gaffney Park.....[City of] Ottawa to ensure that the funds received from the RVCA will be spent on park development and agrees to match the total contribution of the RVCA prior to undertaking a development in the park....[City of] Ottawa to be responsible for implementation of the park development master plan....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."
- The Beryl Gaffney Park Development Fund is now approaching \$1M. To MCPRA's knowledge, neither the City nor RVCA have leveraged community/corporate/ or government funds to augment this park development fund.
- There doesn't appear to be any 'needs assessment' to justify the construction of *another* Off-Leash Dog park, given the current Off-Leash designation of both David Bartlett and Beryl Gaffney Parks (total of ~135 acres).
- City staff have indicated that there is no intent by the City to change these designations now or in the future.

- The July 2020 design proposes a further 1 ha (2.47 acres) for Off-Leash dogs and an area 60 m x 25 m (1/3 acre) for a Picnic Area. Why is the south area of the City so heavily endowed with this Off-Leash designation? What other part of the City has two city-wide parks, within 5 minutes walking distance of each other, both with 'Off-Leash' designations? Who determined these designations?
- With the fiscal impact of COVID both now and in the immediate future, there is no rationale for expending scarce resources on yet another Off-Leash Dog location in the south area of the City. Wouldn't access to the waterfront or an Adventure Play area for children better serve the population? The need for these nearby spaces has become even more obvious during COVID.
- This 'gateway' to the City, is part of a UNESCO World Heritage site....and the top priority is a Fenced Off-Leash Park?
- Finally, and sadly, the 20-year neglect to implement the Beryl Gaffney Master Plan has been a true injustice to the park's namesake, Beryl Gaffney.

MCPRA Comments on the July Proposed Off-Leash Dog Park

IF the fenced Off-Leash Dog Park in Beryl Gaffney Park proceeds, MCPRA provides the following Input on the July 2020 Proposed Design.

The Fenced Off-Leash Dog Area

- As a priority, immediately remove the 'Off-Leash' designation for the rest of Beryl Gaffney Park.
- The proximity of the fenced Off-Leash Dog Park to the Picnic area is problematic – dogs and sandwiches don't mix well.
- Move the fenced Dog Park closer to the parking lot and Rideau Valley Drive, consider a natural buffer, and keep the users separated.
- The tall grass mown annually in the Dog Park is an invitation to neglect the 'poop & scoop' protocol.
- The cedar rail fence panels in the Dog Park while 'nice to have' are frivolous, expensive and unnecessary.
- The in-ground dog waste receptacles should be located deeper into the Dog Park (not attractive to other park users).

The Kiosk/ Picnic Area:

- The Picnic Area should reflect the size shown in the original Master Plan.
- Option A for the group picnic design is preferred as it reflects the stone element commonly found along the Rideau River.
- Many more individual picnic tables should be added – two individual tables will not meet the anticipated demand, especially during these COVID times.
- Financially, priority spending should be on the Picnic Area, not the Off-Leash Dog Area.
- The Kiosk/ Interpretive Signage needs to be improved – can we not do better than what is being proposed? This is a *city-wide park* – let's look like it!