

More dog parks coming to Halton Hills

By **Nelia Raposo**
Special to The IFP



Council has directed staff to coordinate with Halton Hills Dog Owners Group (HHDOG) to identify future leash-free options in existing and future parkland areas and report back to the Community Affairs Committee.

HHDOG is a community group that has a management agreement in place with the town since 2003 to operate leash-free zones in both Acton and Georgetown.

We will need another dog park in South Georgetown to accommodate the 20,000 people who will move into the Vision Georgetown new development. Do you live in South Georgetown? Do you want a dog-park there? the groups website asks. We need a dedicated group of people to promote and ensure that a new off-leash dog-park is built. You need to get involved, now. It won't take much time at all just your documented support.

This motion was moved by Councillor Bob Inglis. Seconded by Councillor Ann Lawlor and carried unanimously on June 20.

We do have two existing dog parks Cedarvale Park in Georgetown and Prospect Park in Acton. I understand that it is actively used and managed well by the user group. I know some of our parks and open spaces are being used informally today. We know there is going to be a significant population increase in future years. With an increase in people there will probably be an increase in pets, Inglis said.

Councillor Lawlor added, I do think there is a huge demand for this type of thing. I certainly get the sense when I am door-knocking by the number of dogs that hurl themselves at the door. I think a lot of them really need to go for a walk.

Councillor Moya Johnson pointed out that pet owners have an obligation to keep

pets safe as well as ensuring that the dog doesn't pose a threat to others in the community.

I've gotten a couple of calls recently about dogs being off leash in areas where they shouldn't be. Especially on trails, people seem to think they can let their dogs free. An accident can happen. If your dog is off leash and they get into conflict with another animal there is not much you can do. At least if a dog is on leash, you can pull it in.

Mayor Rick Bonnette said these comments are timely as the summer weather is here.

Town bylaws require dogs to always be on a leash when in public, except in the designated leash-free zones in Prospect Park, Acton and Cedarvale Park, Georgetown.

Animals must be kept in the owner's control at all times, especially in public spaces, such as playgrounds and sports fields.

For health reasons, animals (leashed or not) are not permitted in water play areas and pet owners are required to stoop and scoop and clean up after their pet, said Warren Harris, Commissioner of Recreation & Parks Department for Halton Hills.

Let's ensure that parks remain as spaces for the benefit and pleasure of all residents, Harris said in a recent press release.

People are encouraged to call Halton Hills Canine Control Services at (905) 877-6235 to report a dog running off leash when a stray dog has been found, when a bite occurs or if they suspect an animal has rabies.

To learn more about HHDOG and off leash zones in Halton Hills, visit www.hh-dog.com.

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