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Acton/Georgetown, Friday, January 13, 2006 15

Pending budget approval Leash-free zone in plans for Cedarvale Park

A leash-free zone will be created in Georgetown's Cedarvale Park this year— if financing is approved during the 2006 budget discussions this month.

The zone— on a one-year trial period— is about one acre in size, located between Halton Region's water purification plant and Silver Creek. The area will be fenced, with six new parking spots adjacent to the main entrance. The area will be closed for special events, with the fencing and entry gates designed to accommodate the special event staging or parking as required.

Kathy Dorbeck, a member of HH-Dog, the Halton Hills dog owners' group, was thrilled with the decision, and thanked council at its December meeting. Council had earlier endorsed a staff report recommending the zone.

"The new provincial dog legislation has made controlled dog areas more important than ever before and we applaud the Town of Halton Hills for taking a progressive and proactive approach on the issue," said Dorbeck. "We're particularly pleased with the Cedarvale location. It's situated in an area that many citizens can walk to, has ample parking available, is plowed for year round use, is accessible for dog owners with physical disabilities, provides shade in the warmer months and is large enough to allowed the dogs to really exercise."

Earlier this year, Halton Hills council formally approved the Acton leash-free zone located in Prospect Park after a one-year trial period. The Town spent \$14,900 on the zone with HH-Dog contributing an additional \$2,200. The group has also raised an additional \$3,000 to help pay for fencing of the new leash-free zone, with the Town's share set at \$15,000.

Financing must be approved by council

during the ongoing budget discussions.

Average visits to the Acton zone are between 40-50 a day. HH-Dog volunteers are responsible for monitoring and upkeep of the leash-free zone, and will do so for the Georgetown one as well.

Dorbeck did not think the addition of the Georgetown zone would affect the number of people using the Acton zone. She said that zone has established regulars, which is unlikely to change, and the Cedarvale zone's location would only encourage new and more users living in Georgetown.

Originally, Halton Region had balked at having a leash-free zone located next to the water plant, for water quality concerns and site security reasons, but after negotiations by Mayor Rick Bonnette, agreed to a one-year trial period. The seating will also be located away from the shared fence.

According to Harris, "Experience at the Prospect Park leash-free zone has suggested that the risk to water quality is a minor issue, as the site is kept at an appropriate level of cleanliness."

As well, Credit Valley Conservation has requested a five-metre setback from the creek.

Bonnette, who uses the Acton zone with his greyhound, agreed that HH-Dog has been "extremely conscientious" in keeping it a "deposit-free" zone.

HH-Dog, currently with 70 members, has an ongoing membership drive— \$20 per year or \$30 per year for greyhound owners who have an hour a week of exclusive use of the zone for their dogs' unique needs. Donations are also accepted.

Contact details for the group are www.hhdog.com, group@hhdog.com or 905-877-1630.

—By Cynthia Gamble, staff writer

Friday the 13th

The Independent & Free Press

JANUARY

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