

Town of Yarmouth Dog Park

PROPOSAL FOR 28 JARVIS STREET
PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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Introduction

The Town of Yarmouth obtained the piece of land located at 28 Jarvis Street in January 2015 in order to upgrade local infrastructure and remedy storm water runoff concerns.

The Town of Yarmouth Land Use By-Law has designated this property in the Generalized Future Land Use Map as Residential. However, the Town's Municipal Planning Strategy is currently being reviewed and, as part of this process, improved protection around the Broad Brook area and restricting development has been recommended to Council. For this reason, the Planning Department has recommended that 28 Jarvis Street be developed into a Public Park.

At the December meeting of the Committee of the Whole, local community members presented to Council a proposal to turn 28 Jarvis Street into a Community Dog Park.

As a result of this, at the December 10th, 2015 Council meeting, Council moved that staff be directed to investigate turning 28 Jarvis Street into a Community Park, in consultation with residents in the area, to allow dogs to run off leash or on leash and provide a recommendation to Council within ninety (90) days.

In preparing the following recommendations, the Town's Planning Department was in contact with the Lunenburg Dog Park Society.

This year, there are currently sixty nine (69) dogs registered who live within the Town of Yarmouth and it is suspected there are many more who are not registered.

Benefits of Dog Parks

There are many benefits of Dog Parks. They provide the opportunity for people with dogs, who live in built up areas, the ability to socialize and be part of the community. In addition, because households in urban areas often have smaller backyards, there is a need for those who have dogs to have access to a larger area where their dog can run for physical exercise and sensory stimulation (Samuels, 2011).

By having designated off-leash areas, within a community, Municipalities are creating clear reasonable rules on where dogs are permitted off-leash and deterring undesirable use of other public space not intended for off-leash use such as baseball fields, school grounds, etc.

Dog parks also provide the opportunity to educate dog owners on animal health and welfare. Despite the potential health risks to having dogs interact in an open public space, Veterinarians have reported that the benefits far exceed the potential health risk (Ottenheimer, 2013).

Constraints & Considerations of Dog Parks

While there are many benefits to dog parks, there are also some concerns that should be considered when allowing dogs to run off-leash in a densely populated area. There is a perceived risk of dog aggression and lack of control as a result of off-leash dog environments. These concerns can easily be addressed through proper policy, education and design of the Dog Park. Owners should be responsible and consider their dog's temperament, age and size before determining if they are ready to be introduced to other dogs and people. As Biele (2014) states "not all dogs are dog park dogs".

There is also concern related to disease transmission between dogs as a result of dog socialization. Dog owners are expected to be responsible when taking their dog to an off-leash area. Dogs that show signs

of anxiety or aggression when interacting with other people and animals should not be taken to a Dog Park. Also, dogs that are not of a certain age and have not received all their vaccinations are at risk when in a dog park environment.

There are also concerns about noise and odours associated with having many dogs in one area. These can be addressed through proper park design and site selection.

There is also potential for environmental degradation from poorly designed parks, for this reason it is important that careful consideration be put into the types of materials, layout and activities that will take place at the Dog Park.

Best Practices

Behavioural	Veterinary
Separate small and large breeds	Waste disposal facilities (garbage cans)
Dogs must be under “voice control” at all times	Require vaccinations
Prohibit non-sterilized, aggressive, fearful dogs	Water Source
Prohibit highly desirable food, preferred toys, digging and excessive barking	

Dog Park Structure

There are two examples of dog park implementation and continued maintenance in Nova Scotia. The first is when the park is created and maintained by a society formed of local dog owners with some support and partnership with the Municipality. The second structure is where Municipalities own and maintain dog parks similar to any other space intended for public use.

Lunenburg Dog Park Society Example

The Lunenburg Dog Park Society was formed by local volunteers to create an organizational structure to direct and drive the design and deployment of a Town dog park. The Society is responsible for the long term operations of the park and was actively involved in the design and development. The society accepts new members and uses membership dues to continue the park. The society works in partnership with the Town. The society actively encourages dog events to take place at their park and tracks the economic spin-off.

The park is a fenced in property located at the edge of the Town. The park includes such features as a small dog section (constructed of grass), a walking trail (constructed of crusher dust), parking, waste disposal station, bag dispensers, signage with information and park rules, and a drinking fountain for dogs.

Halifax Off Leash Parks Strategy Example

The Halifax Regional Municipality has an off leash parks strategy and as a result own and operate a number of public parks that have been designated as off leash. The intent of the strategy is to establish fair and consistent criteria to ensure all park users will be able to choose a park experience that includes having their dogs off-leash.

HRM feels that access to a dog park is a right of its residents. The capital funds and reasonable maintenance costs of the park is managed by Council. HRM considers supporting voluntary fundraising efforts of dog owners to provide additional dog-related park amenities.

As part of the process of creating a new dog park, HRM requires that the space meet the following principles; accessibility, affordability, balance, cleanliness, environmental and cultural sustainability and natural beauty. As part of the proposal process public consultation for the selection, design, approval and operation of the off-leash area is performed.

In implementation of the Off Leash Parks Strategy Halifax has developed seven (7) off-leash dog park and one currently under consideration.

Public Participation

As this would be the first Off-leash Dog Park permitted in the Town, it is recommended that the Town of Yarmouth perform the following Public Participation programs in order to gauge public support for the project.

Letter to Residents (Jarvis St, Argyle Street, South East Street)

A letter will be sent out through Canada Post to residents who live within five hundred meters (500 m) of the proposed park, on Jarvis St, Argyle St, & South East St. The letter will provide the details of the project; identify the time of the public meeting, the online survey link & the contact information for the Planning Department.

Online Survey

An online survey shall be created and distributed through Survey Monkey. This survey will have a question to distinguish if respondents live in the Town, in the Jarvis Street area (on Argyle Street, South East Street or Jarvis Street), or the surrounding community. The online survey will be identified to residents of the Jarvis Street area through a letter to residents.

Public Meeting

Two public meetings will be organized to provide the public opportunity to provide their comments, concerns and suggestions on the project.

Public Meeting #1 – Residents of Area

A public meeting will be organized in the project area for residents who live within five hundred (500 m) of the subject property. This will be an opportunity for any residents that have concerns about dogs running off-leash in their area to express them to the Town Planner, and any members of Council that wish to attend.

Public Meeting #2- Residents of the Town of Yarmouth

A public meeting will be organized at Town Hall for residents of the Town of Yarmouth who are interested in the concept of an Off-leash Dog Park in the Town of Yarmouth. The intent of this meeting will be to present the proposed concept for the Jarvis Street property, collect contact information of interested residents and private funders and gauge public support for the project.

Newsletter

A newsletter will be created that the public can subscribe to in order to receive updates on the park progress and volunteer/donation opportunities.

Draft Letter to Property Owners

Planning Department

Town of Yarmouth

400 Main Street

Yarmouth, NS

February 25, 2016

Re: 28 Jarvis Street Dog Park Proposal

Dear Resident:

As you may be aware, the Town of Yarmouth recently purchased the property located at 28 Jarvis Street in order to upgrade our infrastructure and improve the storm water runoff issues in your area. This property is located in a low lying area around Broad Brook. Future development on the property is not recommended as it would result in further strain on the Town infrastructure and consequently flooding. For this reason, the Town's Planning Department has recommended that the property be protected and instead be turned into a Public Park for the community to enjoy. The intent is to develop a park through community support that would incorporate storm water retention features such as rain gardens, rain barrels, swales to direct water flow, and permeable surfaces.

Your community has communicated to Council that there is a growing interest for a dog friendly park where residents of the Town of Yarmouth may allow their dogs to run off-leash. At the December meeting of Committee of the Whole, community members proposed to Council that 28 Jarvis Street be turned into an Off-leash Dog Park. As this would be the first park of this kind permitted in the Town, I would like to hear from you, your concerns, suggestions, and comments.

You are invited to come to a public meeting at Shoreline Bible Baptist Church, 163 Argyle Street, on **Date** to meet with myself, the Town Planner, and discuss the proposal of turning 28 Jarvis Street into an Off-leash Dog Park. If you are unable to attend the meeting you may share your thoughts online as the following survey **link**.

I thank you for your time and support moving forward with this project. You may contact me by phone at (902)742-1505 or by email at planning@townofyarmouth.ca. I look forward to meeting you and discussing further.

Sincerely,

Planning Department

Director of Planning & Development

Draft Public Survey

First Page

Welcome to the Town of Yarmouth's Public Survey.

At the December meeting of the Committee of the Whole, local community members presented to Council a proposal to turn **28 Jarvis Street into a Community Dog Park**.

As a result of this, at the December 10th, 2015 Council meeting, Council moved that staff be directed to investigate turning 28 Jarvis Street into a Community Park, in consultation with residents in the area, to allow dogs to run off leash or on leash and provide a recommendation to Council within ninety (90) days.

As this would be the first park of this kind permitted in the Town, the Planning Department would like to hear from you, your concerns, suggestions, and comments.

Please complete this short survey, it will take you about 5-minutes, to help us gauge public support for the 28 Jarvis Street Community Dog Park project.

If you have any questions about the survey please contact Caroline Robertson, Town Planner, at planning@townofyarmouth.ca or (902)742-1505.

Second Page

Please identify as one of the following:

- A resident of the Town of Yarmouth.
- A resident of the Jarvis Park Area (residing on Argyle St, South East St, or Jarvis Rd).
- A resident of one of the adjacent Municipalities (Municipality of Yarmouth, Municipality of Argyle).
- Other (please specify).

Do you currently have a dog that resides in your household?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer Not to Say

If yes, how many dogs reside in your household?

- 1
- 2
- 3+

Do you support the concept of the development of an Off-Leash Dog Park in the Town of Yarmouth?

- Strongly Oppose
- Somewhat Oppose
- Neutral
- Somewhat Favour

- Strongly Favour

If the Town of Yarmouth were to develop an Off-leash Dog Park, how often would you use this service?

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- A Moderate Amount
- A Great Deal

Do you have any comments, suggestions or concerns you would like to share on the development of an Off-leash Dog Park in the Town of Yarmouth?

Do you support the concept of the development of an Off-leash Dog Park at **28 Jarvis Street**?

- Strongly Oppose
- Somewhat Oppose
- Neutral
- Somewhat Favor
- Strongly Favor

Do you have any comments, suggestions or concerns you would like to share on the development of an Off-leash Dog Park at **28 Jarvis Street**?

Third Page

The Town of Yarmouth would like to develop the proposed park at 28 Jarvis Street through private donations and volunteer support. How likely are you to volunteer or provide a monetary or material donation?

- Extremely unlikely
- Unlikely
- Neutral
- Likely
- Extremely Likely

Would you like to receive e-mail updates on the progress of this project?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide your e-mail & phone number. Please note that you will not be contacted for any reason except to provide updates on the proposal to create a Dog Park in the Town of Yarmouth.

- Email
- Phone Number

Jarvis Street Property Proposal

Design

It is recommended that the following features be incorporated in the design of the park in order to reduce dog related concerns:

- Signage with clear obligations (designating the area that is off-leash);
- Clear boundaries;
- Fencing with a minimum feet of one point two meters (1.2 m);
- A double gate enclosure to ensure safe leashing and unleashing of dogs;
- Barriers between non-dog and dog areas;
- Safety for access of area (no entrances located in corners to avoid dogs and owners from being cornered when entering the park);
- Minimum distance of twenty five metres (25m) from a school, community centre, or residential property;
- Minimum of point five hectares (.5 h) of area (28 Jarvis St is 2.21 Hectares);
- Signs to be posted outlining rules of conduct; and
- Vegetation that is dog friendly.
- Parking
- Seating/picnic area
- Section for small dogs
- Circular walking path

In additions to incorporating features for dog safety, it is also recommended that the Town partner with Clean Foundation and use this site as an example of positive storm water management techniques by incorporating the following features:

- Trees (300 saplings supplies by Clean Foundation);
- Water loving vegetation that is dog friend (list provided by Clean Foundation);
- Permeable surfaces, possibly grid strips for parking; and
- Rain water dog fountain ;

It is also recommended that there be a phase two (2) development option for this site, where the Town consider obtaining 142 Argyle Street to extend the park and create a walking trail system that connects to the Brood Brook Trail.

Structure

The park will be designed in a manner to reduce the maintenance needs and improve storm water runoff concerns in the area. The property will continue to be owned and maintained by the Town of Yarmouth. The initial start-up costs and labour associated with building the park will be crowd sourced from the public who have expressed interest in the project.

Implementation Strategy

Private Donations

Private Business will be encouraged to support the implementation of the park through donations either in the form of financial support or materials. **There will be opportunity for private donors to receive a tax receipt on their donations.**

Volunteer Support

Volunteers will be coordinated for a number of weekend events in which the public will help to build the park through laying materials, planting, & building site features (benches, planters, etc.)

A newsletter and e-mail list will be established so the community can subscribe to receive updates on the project and be reached when volunteers and donations are needed.

Policy and By-Law

There is no policy changes required.

The Municipal Government Act through, section 175, allows Municipalities to adopt Dog By-Laws which may regulate the running at large of dogs, including permitting the running at large of dogs in certain places or at certain times.

The Town currently has a Dog By-Law which was adopted in 1995 and was last updated in 2013. Section “Dog Control Provisions” which states that if an owner chooses to unleash their dog, they must be able to control it, if they are not, then they would be in violation of the by-law.

This provision is palpable that an owner of a dog is responsible for the actions of a dog at all times, whether they are complying with the by-law or not.

The Town Solicitor has recommended that clear signage reinforcing this message is erected at the park.

References

Biele, H. (2014). Dangers at the DOG PARK. *Veterinary Economics*, 55(9), 15.

Ottenheimer Carrier, Lydia, Cyr, Amanda, Anderson, Rita E., & Walsh, Carolyn J. (2013). Exploring the dog park: Relationships between social behaviours, personality and cortisol in companion dogs. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 146(1), 96-106.

Samuels, Sirrika, Koo, Michelle, Levitt, Dale, & Fagan, Julie M. (2011). Dog Park Health.