

Dog Parks & Dog Poops



There are two long-standing requests in our community with respect to dogs: one is for an off-leash dog park, and the other is for Council to make all dog owners pick up their dog's poop. Council is currently in the process of consulting about creating a new off leash dog park, that's something within our control. However, ensuring every dog owner picks up after their pet is beyond the bounds of Council's (and the City bylaw officers') domain of influence.

I was actually quite shocked at how angry people get about dog poop. During my first year as Mayor when I was making the rounds of our business organizations and neighborhood associations, dog poop was clearly on the minds of the latter. I happened to first meet with the neighborhood associations in the spring, when the melting snow had revealed how much of this stuff was irresponsibly plopped on residential lawns and public right of ways. And every spring since, I get an ear full from some residents about how dog poop is the bane of their existence.

Seriously, it is irresponsible for dog owners to not equip themselves to pick up after their pet. It's simply a matter of tying a few plastic bags to the dog's leash, or using the ones provided by the City along the riverfront trail and in our public parks. Depositing these bags into the nearest garbage container is simply the next logical step (not abandoning them to the side of the trail or on the grass in the park). We would have a much cleaner (and happier) community if every dog owner did their duty after their dog has done theirs.

With respect to the other dog-related request, Council has been reviewing options to create an off leash dog park for almost two years now, however the original request for a dog park was made in 2010, so it is truly a long-outstanding request. There are some mixed opinions about the effectiveness of these public amenities, but most communities now have at least one and they have become an expected part of any vibrant and progressive community.

Council's policy committee explored best practices for both the construction of these venues and for locating them, and, after much debate and deliberation, Council is suggesting we locate an off leash park on the Carson field below Nadeau Street, snuggled up against the fence next to the river and at the terminus of the paved trail that runs down to it from Nadeau. Dog owners already use this area and there is parking on the other side of the highway on Nelson, which will be developed to accommodate more vehicles as part of this project.

This location for a proposed off leash park meets the best practices criteria and, if approved, the park will contain two fenced off areas, one for small dogs and one for larger ones, and seating and shade areas for the pet owners. Bags and signage will also be provided to ensure dog owners pick up after their pets so the park is kept clean for all users, and there will be a clear set of rules for the use of the park.

In order to accommodate the community dialogue that has already started around this new community asset, Council will be hosting a public information and consultation session at the Legion on June 7 starting at 5 pm; this will be followed by a formal public hearing in Council Chambers at 7pm on June 20 on the proposed zoning change that will be required to make this park possible. The budget for a dog park has already been approved and, if this location is approved, construction of the park would occur this year.

If this topic interests you, I hope you'll make the time to attend the community information session on June 7.

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This column is paid for by the City of Quesnel.

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