

Presentation to Council Nov 25 '19

Lynda Schofield

Good evening and thank you for your time and attention.

I represent the many citizens who have volunteered on steering committees and user groups and associations in the last 15 years, the predecessors to OLDPUG. I try to provide history and context to Connie, as chair of OLDPUG, since as we have seen repeatedly, people and policies can change a lot over the time it takes to actually implement the off-leash plans.

Like Councilor Flegel, I too am tired of talking about dog parks, and I fully support his comments at Committee that suggested "just find the money and put the municipal parks in place – why is it so hard to do this?" It is probably too much to hope that the funds can be found to do all three municipal locations, along with the Regent Par 3 development, but if nothing else, I fully support finding the funds for the Mt. Pleasant location as well as the Regent Par 3 development.

I cannot, however, support the proposal to develop two unfenced off-leash areas in a 3 year pilot project. This was first brought to Council in 2016 – it was not a good idea then, and it is not a good idea now. Following through on old directives, using old information, just because 'we were directed to do this in 2016' seems foolish. Since this Council created that directive, I am sure it can also remove it.

Why remove it?

In 2013 a survey conducted by the Regina Off-Leash Association, with well over 400 responses from dog owners in the city had 76.9% identifying that the most important consideration in new off-leash spaces was full fencing. Only 16% expressed a desire for unfenced off-leash space in their neighbourhood parks.

The City itself conducted a survey in 2015 or so, and asked about off-leash spaces – asking both dog owners and non-dog-owners and had similar results. Yet here we are, proposing two unfenced off-leash areas. There are many concerns regarding the safety of children and adults also using those spaces, the safety of dogs loose in small unfenced areas, and the concerns for traffic

and residential areas having dogs loose because they were too excited to read the signs. In addition, the whole purpose of neighbourhood off-leash space is inclusion – allowing those who cannot drive to municipal park locations, or walk long distances to get to them, access to off-leash space close to home. Making that space unusable to many who are not willing to take the risks involved – unusable to almost 80% of potential users if the City and ROLA surveys are correct, is not inclusive at all.

Other cities that have unfenced off-leash areas have very specific criteria in place for those spaces: usually quite large areas, areas with natural barriers like hedges, trees, ditches, berms. Winnipeg for example, has unfenced areas, but in its most recent master plan specifies that all neighbourhood parks MUST be fenced. Burlington, Oakville, Kitchener, all require fencing of ALL off-leash areas.

Guelph, a city that had 8 unfenced off-leash areas is moving to a model that requires fencing and other barriers.(See table 1 &2)

Even Calgary – the city most often waved as the poster city of off-leash use – along with Winnipeg and Edmonton – all require specific setbacks and multiple other requirements that do not seem to be in place for unfenced trial areas here. (See table 3)

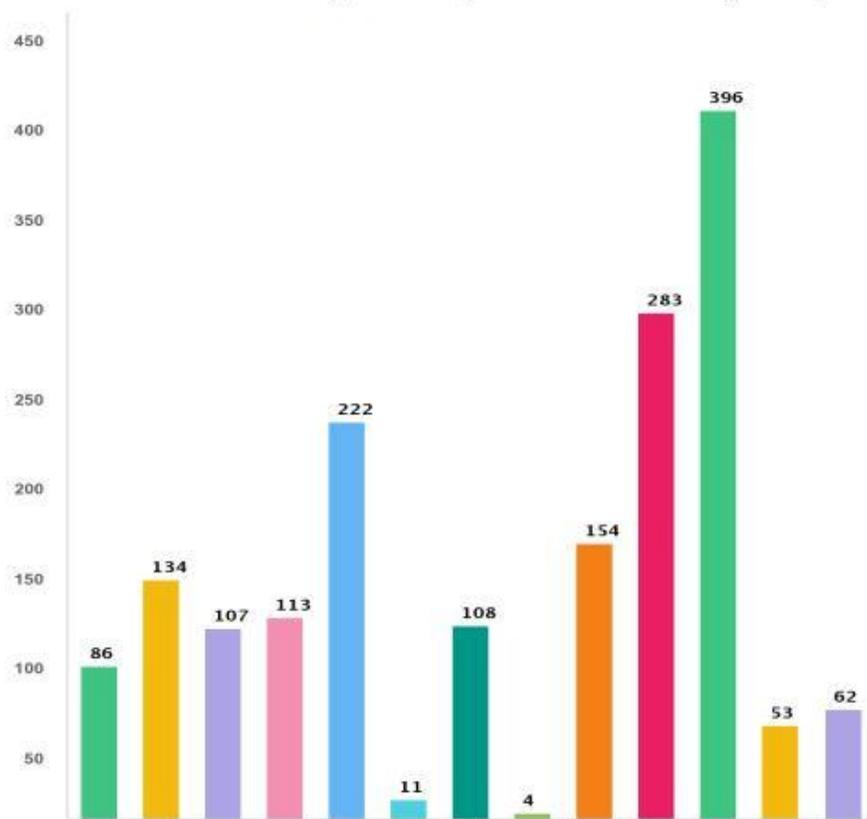
When asking the Administration what cities were used in the research for this proposal, and how recent the information is, the answers were rather vague, and came back to 'we were told to do this in 2016'.

So my request to Council is to not proceed as planned with unfenced trials until current data is reviewed, criteria for development is in place, and criteria for measuring success or failure are created. Let's not spend money on options that may not still be the best choices, just because they are fast and cheap.

Thank you

Table 1

Figure 10 - Question 7: What are your most important concerns with parks that have leash free areas in the City of Guelph? Please choose your top three.



- I don't feel safe in leash free areas
- My dog is not safe in leash free areas
- Not enough enforcement of the Animal Control Bylaw
- Hours of leash free areas are too short
- Dogs wandering out of leash free areas
- Guide dogs and their users feel unsafe
- There are none close to where I live
- Costs to maintain leash free areas
- Dog waste
- There are not enough leash free areas in Guelph
- Lack of fenced leash free areas
- Conflicts between dogs and wildlife and natural areas
- None of the above

Table 2

Analysis of Leash Free Areas

Figure 1: Comparison of leash free areas, facilities and service levels

Municipality	Number of Dog Parks (a)	Number of Dog Parks (b)	Number of Leash Free Areas	Fully Fenced Facilities	Unfenced Facilities	Separate Areas for Small and Large Dogs	Lighting	Water Stations/ Access	Parking	Permitted Hours of Use	Dog Waste Specific Disposal	Dog Waste Bags Supplied	Signage Indicating Rules, Regulations and Expectations	Dogs Permitted on Sports Fields	Leash Free Areas Per 1,000 Population (Service Level)
City of Burlington	3	0	0	3	0	2	1	0	3	YES	0	3	YES	NO	0.02
Township of Centre Wellington	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	YES	0	1	YES	NO	0.04
City of Hamilton	7	1	4	8	4	0	1	3	7	YES	9	9	YES	NO	0.02
City of Kitchener	3	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	3	YES	3	3	YES	NO	0.01
Town of Oakville	7	0	0	7	0	2	0	2	7	YES	7	7	YES	NO	0.04
City of Guelph	0	0	8	0	8	0	0	0	7	YES	0	0	NO	YES	0.06

Figure 1 illustrates the differences in leash free areas and facility styles and service levels between the studied municipalities and compared to areas and service levels in the City of Guelph.

Table 3



Figure 10: Illustrative Example of a 'Large' Neighbourhood OLA

- 3.3.4.5 Large Neighbourhood OLAs should be approximately 0.1 to 0.5 hectares in size.
- 3.3.4.6 Large Neighbourhood OLAs do not need to be completely fenced in; however, clearly defined boundaries must be established using a combination of secure and permeable boundaries such as landscaping, berms, trees/shrubs, partial fencing, or other boundary features. Where necessary, the installation of partial fencing may be required to maintain and enhance the safety of all users, or to protect adjacent land-uses. In addition, where feasible, a small fenced enclosure should be considered.
- 3.3.4.7 Small Neighbourhood OLAs should be approximately 0.04 to 0.1 hectares in size.
- 3.3.4.8 Small Neighbourhood OLAs shall be completely enclosed with a minimum 1.5-metre (5 foot) fence, a double-gated entry, and be classified as 'single-use'.
- 3.3.4.9 The establishment of small Neighbourhood OLAs should be focused in Winnipeg's high-density urban neighbourhoods.
- 3.3.4.10 The City will encourage multi-family residential developers to establish private small Neighbourhood OLA facilities within their development sites.