

Town turns to community for feedback on off-leash dog park

Written By **Paula Brown**

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Town of Shelburne in turning to local residents for their opinions on an off-leash dog park in the community, and in the meantime has chosen not to implement a temporary location.

Shelburne Town Council during their meeting on Sept. 13 received a report from CAO Denyse Morrissey regarding potential locations, costs, and amenities associated with an off-leash dog park. Council voted to refer the off-leash park to the Town's parks and recreation master plan for community feedback.

"The Fiddle Park plan of the parks and recreation master plan is underway so we'll have that data with respect to the number of members of the community that would like to see an off-leash park or what people would like to see; there's a significant checklist of amenities that you would want to consider," said Morrissey. "We probably will know that by early Q1 2022."

Shelburne staff, in the report to council, considered four locations for the off-leash dog park: KTH Park, Simon Street Park, Greenwood Park, and four spaces within Fiddle Park.

"We evaluated each one and determined that Fiddle Park was the most preferred location," said Morrissey.

The locations for the off-leash dog park were evaluated under five criteria, including existing use, which Morrissey noted as one of the most important considerations in choosing the location.

At KTH Park, an off-leash dog park would see the elimination of the existing soccer field, while at Simon Street Park it would block the existing hill used for tobogganing, and at Greenwood Park would impact the splash pad, and proposed soccer fields.

While Fiddle Park has been chosen as the preferred location with its 33 acres of open space, Morrissey added there will be elimination of its existing uses, such as holding events, as well.

"In every single one of the placements there will be displacement of an existing use or it could change the ability for any use to be considered through the master plan process," said Morrissey. "Which is why it's recommended that while that is the preferred location, it's much better to allow the consultation to be undertaken."

Other locations in Town were not evaluated due to their lack of meeting base criteria for the off-leash dog park.

The cost of the off-leash dog park is estimated to be around \$92,000 with fencing (\$53,000), signage (\$2,000), trees and seating (\$5,000), water access (\$3,000), shade structure (\$15,000), and accessibility with parking and pathways (\$17,000).

The estimated budget for the dog park does not include operational costs for annual maintenance. The park is assumed to be open year round (12 months) from dawn to dusk and not open when it is dark. Operating related costs will be included in the draft 2022 operating budget.

In November 2019 town council directed staff to allocate \$20,000 from the future parks and rec reserve levy for the dog park, and \$60,000 is available from development charges to cover \$80,000 of the estimated cost, meaning there is a shortfall of \$12,000.

Morrissey said the \$12,000 can be made up through allocating the amount from the 2022 parks and rec levy, similar to what was previously approved by council, or through community fundraising initiatives.

?Some community members might not realize the price tag that is involved with this,? said Coun. Lindsay Wegener. ?Even myself, \$92,000 was more than I was expecting. It may change some community member's minds whether or not they actually do still feel that this is an asset to the town.?

A survey for the Fiddle Park plan has been launched by the town, and can be found at www.haveyoursayshelburne.ca.