

SUMMARY REPORT
PARK REDESIGNATION REQUEST
FISHER PARK – WARD 15, KITCHISSIPI

Dogs-in-Parks Designation Policy

In 2003, concurrent with the enactment of the Animal Care and Control By-law 2003-77, Council approved the Dogs-in-Parks Designation Policy (DIPDP), which had been in place in a similar form in former Ottawa. Following the approval of the DIPDP, parks outside of former Ottawa were, on a Ward by Ward basis, reviewed under the policy, which involves assessing each park against the criteria in the policy, determining a total point score based on the criteria, making a recommendation for the designation based on the point score (i.e. the higher the point score, the more restrictive the proposed designation) and, finally, undertaking community consultation. The designation categories are generally dogs allowed (off-leash), dogs on-leash and dogs prohibited (no dogs), although mixed and/or timed designations are occasionally applied depending on the circumstances and results of community consultation, and with Ward Councillor concurrence. As part of the review of Ward 15 (Kitchissippi) parks, Fisher Park was designated “Dogs On Leash”.

As well, the DIPDP provides for park re-designations, with the requirements for said process, which also includes community consultation, outlined under Section 4 of the policy (ref. below). This process would apply in the case where a park has already been designated in accordance with the DIPDP and at least two years have elapsed since the designation took place.

“4. PARKS REDESIGNATIONS

Applications to change a park designation will be accepted by the Emergency and Protective Services Department if:

- submitted in writing by a recognized Community Association, or
- accompanied by a petition supporting the redesignation signed by the occupants of 25 or more households residing within a five-block or 500 metre radius of the subject park, whichever is the lesser distance, and
- no request for redesignation of the same park has been processed within two years immediately preceding the date of the application.

The application must outline clearly the reasons for the requested change.

If the application is in order, the Department will accept it and, as soon as possible, will post notices in the park of the redesignation request. Persons will be invited to submit comment to the Department during a specified timeframe (not less than three weeks).

At the conclusion of the consultation period, the Department will report to the Ward Councillor with the results of the public consultation, a history of dog-related service requests related to the park, and the Departmental recommendation.

If the Ward Councillor agrees with the Departmental recommendation, appropriate action will be taken by the Department to either effect the change or notify the applicant that there will be no change.

If the Ward Councillor disagrees with the Departmental recommendation, the matter will proceed to the Community and Protective Services Committee (CPSC) by way of Departmental report. The decision of CPSC will be final.”

Re-designation Request

A request to re-designate Fisher Park was received in March 2014.

The outline of the petition (with 31 signatures, all of which were verified to be within a 5-block or 500 metre radius of Fisher Park) is as follows:

APPLICATION TO CHANGE THE PARK DESIGNATIONS FOR FISHER PARK

We are writing as a group of dog lovers who have investigated the current options for off-leash walking of dogs in our West Wellington neighborhood and found them inadequate. The nearest two off-leash spots are not within walking distance for our group, some of whom need a solution that is close at hand due to mobility issues. We have met with the Principal at Fisher Park (the school) and the City to understand any concerns. We believe our two proposals below will not impact any of the current usage of either park space in a negative manner. We would like to work with all groups including the School, the City programming, and the Fisher Park Community Recreation Council's programming, and other groups that rent the Fisher Park field through permit usage.

Fisher Park new “Timed Designation”

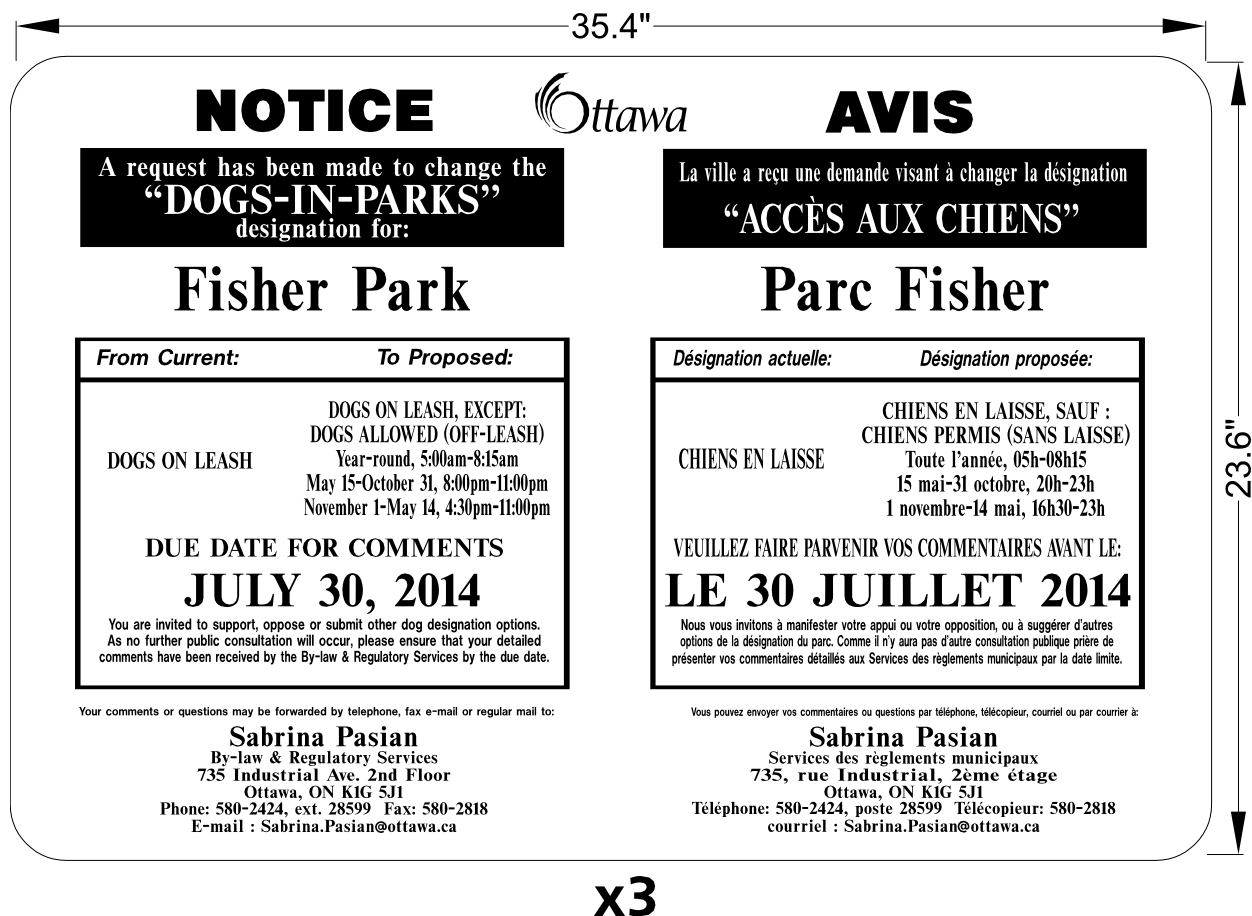
We propose a timed designation for the field to become off-leash from 5:00a.m.-8:15a.m. year-round. Additionally we propose off-leash hours from 4:30p.m.-11p.m. from November 1st to May 14th and 8p.m. to 11p.m. from May 15th to October 31st. All other hours would remain on leash. The space would be from the path bordering the splash pad on the North side to the East and West fences over to the pathway on the South side. These times would avoid contact with the school children at Fisher Park who start their day at 8:45a.m. and are released at 3:15p.m. We have calculated the elements and points assigned for the park and believe at 23 points we are within the evaluation criteria.

The petition met the requirements of the DIPDP and the process proceeded.

Consultation

In accordance with the DIPDP, three (3) signs notifying park users of the request to re-designate Fisher Park (Figure 1.) were posted in the park commencing June 16, 2014. The comment period was scheduled to end on July 30th, 2014.

Figure 1. Notification Sign



Results of Consultation

Comments were received via telephone and electronic mail, although the majority were submitted via electronic mail. A total of 117 submissions were received and reviewed. Of these, 85 were verified to be from Ward 15 residents and were considered to be eligible comments. Noteworthy is that several individuals from the same residence submitted comments; however, only one response per household was considered as part of the consultation process. A number of submissions were also received after the deadline.

Of the 85 eligible submissions, **46 (54%)** individuals were in favour of the requested change in designation and **39 (46%)** were against it. Of these 85, 18 (21%) respondents suggested compromises, such as having fixed off-leash hours year-round in order to simplify the DIPDP designation. Several staff members associated with the Ottawa Catholic School Board were aware and submitted comments as well.

The majority of those who were not in favour of the proposal commented that 4:30p.m. was too early to have off-leash hours given that children's programming occurs in the park during this time. Moreover, they also commented that May 14th is too late in the season to reduce the off-leash hours and stated that programming begins in the park in early April.

Service Requests

According to the By-law & Regulatory Services Branch database (MAP) records, from 2009 to July 2014, a total of twenty-one (21) Service Requests (SRs) relating to dogs in Fisher Park were received by By-law & Regulatory Services – 1 in 2009, 0 in 2010, 6 in 2011, 6 in 2012, 1 in 2013, and 7 in 2014. Of the 21, 19 were related to off-leash dogs in the on-leash park.

Staff Recommendation

Based on the foregoing, it is recommended that the designation of Fisher Park be changed from "Dogs on Leash" to "Dogs on Leash, Except: Dogs Allowed (off-leash) year-round from 5:00 a.m.-7:30 a.m. and 8:30 p.m.-11:00 p.m." This designation would be a compromise for all park users and does not interfere with children's programming in the park.

Ward Councillor Review

In accordance with the DIPDP, the Department reported to the Ward Councillor with the results of the public consultation, a history of dog-related service requests related to the park, and the Departmental recommendation. The results of the consultation demonstrate that there is a call for accommodation for off-leash dogs at Fisher Park to some degree. A compromise of the original proposed hours allows all park users to utilize the park facilities throughout the year. Councillor Leiper concurs with the staff recommendation.