

# Considered at the July 14, 2021 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting

The Parks and Recreation Commission recommends:

**That Council approve this report and its recommendations for use by City staff to guide development of a municipal strategy addressing issues related to dogs in the city**

**AND**

**That city staff prioritize this work as part of the 2022 city work plan**

**July 2021**

## **Paws in Port Moody: A Guidance Report to Inform the Development of a Municipal Strategy for a Dog-Friendly Community**

Parks and Recreation Commission Sub-Group, May 2021

Written by Haven Lurbiecki with input from Megan Traverse and Wilhelmina Martin

### **Introduction**

Dog ownership can provide many positive benefits at the individual, family and community level. And while the ultimate onus of responsible dog ownership falls to individuals, efforts by local governments can greatly support dog-friendly cities that are good for both people and our canine friends. However, without proper management high rates of dog ownership in urban environments can lead to problems for residents (both with and without dogs), city staff and fidos alike. These include matters related to dog off leash areas, dogs off leash in on-leash areas, dog waste diversion, and enforcement. Port Moody is no exception.

Like other municipalities across the Lower Mainland, Port Moody's dog population has been growing and where dogs live has been changing as more and more families are living in urban, multi-family residential environments. The COVID-19 pandemic has seen dog ownership further increase in popularity, as well as other related societal changes such as increasing numbers of people working from home, more regularly accessing parks and trails. This 'new normal' has served to exacerbate long-standing issues in Port Moody related to dogs in the city and with population growth only projected to increase, these issues are likely to continue to get worse. The development of a formal approach by Port Moody in support of happy, healthy, and safe dogs and residents is more critical now than ever. Now is the time for the City to prioritize becoming a truly dog-friendly city.

# Considered at the July 14, 2021 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting

The role of the Parks and Recreation Committee (PRC) sub-group in developing this report is to provide information and recommendations to city staff and council towards addressing issues related to dogs in Port Moody. The intent of this report is for it to be used to inform development of a city strategy based on community and staff engagement and review of exemplary models and best practises.

## **Current Context**

### **Parks and Recreation Master Plan**

Public concern in Port Moody related to dogs and parks is not new. Issues related to dogs off leash in parks, lack of off-leash areas, dog waste, and enforcement were key themes strongly captured through community engagement within the *Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2015)* (PRMP).

Community engagement informed key recommendations pertaining to dogs in the PRMP, including:

#### *4.3.4 Conduct a comprehensive Park Master Plan for Rocky Point Park*

- *Including Improvements to the dog off-leash area, e.g., surface, seating, lighting*

#### *4.3.21 Work with others to educate dog owners about proper etiquette*

*4.2.4 In higher density developments, negotiate with developers to provide some on-site green space for use by residents, open to the public where possible, including seating areas, trees, community gardens, green roofs, and dog relief areas.*

#### *4.5.1 Consider establishing new dog runs or off-leash areas in the following areas:*

- *Inlet Centre*
- *North-east area of the City*

*4.5.7 Work with planners to encourage developers to provide dog relief areas in new projects that allow dogs.*

Each recommendation was ranked a 'high' or 'medium' priority for the City in the 2015 report. While Recommendation 4.3.4 (development of a Rocky Point Master Plan) is part of the city work plan for 2021/22 and some progress has been made towards improving the Rocky Point dog run, it does not appear specific progress has been made on the other recommendations to-date.

# Considered at the July 14, 2021 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting

## City Bylaws

The City's current bylaw pertaining to the regulation of dogs is *City of Port Moody Animal Control Bylaw No. 2677*. Adopted in 2008 with amendments in 2013 and 2018, the bylaw primarily oversees the control of dogs as well as cats in the city. It contains the following sections:

- Definitions
  - Includes definition of a "Dog run" as a designated fenced area in Schedule A.1 in which dogs are allowed to be off-leash while under the verbal control of their handlers.
  - No definition is included for an unfenced off-leash area
- Licencing of Dogs
  - All dogs over 4 months require a license
  - Dogs must wear licenses on collar
  - Separate license fees for vicious and dangerous dogs
- Care and Control of Dogs
  - Dogs are not allowed off leash at any time except in areas specifically designated by a posted notice as being off-leash areas and must be under verbal control by their handler at all times
  - "Immediate steps" must be taken by an owner to remove dog waste outside of their property
  - Amended by BL3159 in 2018 to include rules around ensuring animals in enclosed spaces have adequate ventilation, and welfare measures related to keeping animals outside
- Vicious Dogs
- Aggressive Dogs
- Establishment of a Pound
- Seizure of dogs
  - Dogs may be seized by Bylaw Officer or any police constable
  - Seizes can occur if unlicensed, running at large in a public place, among others
- Cat Control
- Cat Identification
- Cat Breeding Permits
- Offences and Penalties
  - Fine for contravention of a bylaw - not exceeding \$5,000.00 and/or up to three months in jail

Tickets related to dogs can also be issued under the *Parks and Community Facilities Rules and Regulations Bylaw (BL2894-C)* section 12 (b) relating to the prohibition of dogs in parks areas such as sport field surfaces, running tracks, playgrounds, tennis courts, and water parks.

# Considered at the July 14, 2021

## Parks and Recreation Commission meeting

### Corporate Policy: Dog Runs and Off-Leash Areas - Operating Policy and Procedures

In 2017 the City (under Parks administration) developed a Corporate Policy outlining operating policy and procedures for designated dog runs (fenced) and off-leash (unfenced) areas:

*“The City of Port Moody recognizes the need for and the benefits to dogs from the ability to run and exercise unfettered. In order to provide this opportunity for dogs and their handlers, the City has developed this policy creating both Dog Runs and Off-Leash Areas.”*

The policy outlines basic rules and expectations for the use of dog runs and off-leash areas in alignment with Bylaw 2677 and provides a definition for ‘off-leash areas’ not included in Bylaw 2677. It designates the City Park division as in charge of operations and maintenance of these areas. Enforcement of the dog runs and off-leash areas is authorized under *Municipal Ticketing Information Authorization Bylaw No. 3044*.

#### **Ticketing and Enforcement**

The City provided dog bylaw enforcement statistics over the last five years. An average of 24 tickets were issued annually pertaining to unlicensed dogs<sup>1</sup> and an average of 1.8 tickets issued annually related to dogs at large (off-leash). A total of 8 recorded warnings have been issued by bylaw officers in the last 5 years. Parks staff also give additional verbal warnings in the range of 2-3x/week and generally send requests for bylaw support in locations where there is damage from dogs (e.g. digging holes in fields and parks or where dog waste is being observed, usually sports fields). Bylaws staff follow a voluntary compliance approach to ticketing.

The City averages between 120-150 animal control related (at-large, unlicensed, barking, incidents, etc.) calls each year. The breakdown of calls by call topic was unavailable; however the City indicated that most calls were related to dogs off-leash. The City also receives regular emails related to dog off-leash conflicts (such as a parent with a child in a stroller who is jumped on by dogs off leash, bikers or joggers who are jumped on by a dog).

Ticketing statistics indicate an overall trend of a small number of tickets being issued relative to dog-related complaint calls, and while the majority of calls are related to dogs off-leash, the majority of tickets issues are pertaining to unlicensed dogs. This suggests that bylaw enforcement pertaining to dogs, especially issues with dogs off leash, may not be serving as an effective deterrent at current enforcement levels. To note, the City recently implemented a pilot Park Ranger program in April, 2021 focused specifically on bylaw enforcement in parks that the City expects will increase ticketing rates.

The PRMP (2015) survey found that 26% of households owned a dog in Port Moody. The 2016 census indicates there are 13,318 private dwellings in Port Moody. While roughly extrapolating these figures would estimate the dog population in Port Moody at 3462 (pre-pandemic) there

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<sup>1</sup> 1st, 2nd or 3rd offence for unlicensed dog or dog at large

# Considered at the July 14, 2021

## Parks and Recreation Commission meeting

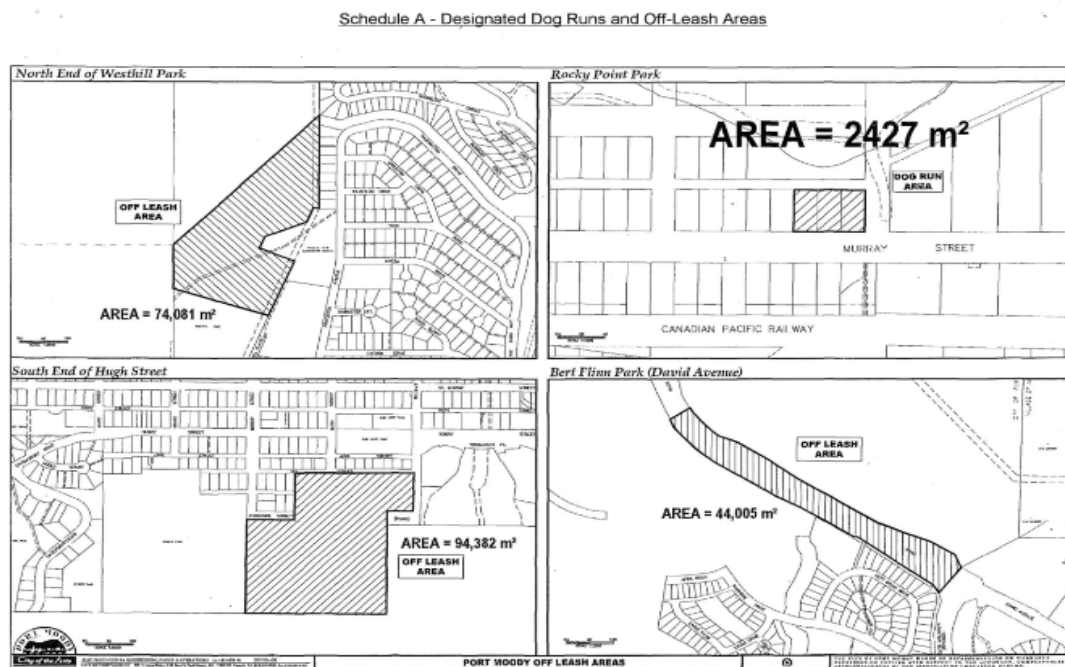
are currently only 2362 dogs licensed in Port Moody, suggesting there could be a significant number of unlicensed dogs in the city.

The City indicated they are currently considering initiating a capital project to increase dog license numbers in 2022 where students would go door-to-door to provide information and encourage owners to license dogs that are currently not licensed.

### Existing Dog Run and Dog Off-Leash Areas

Schedule A of the Corporate Policy designates existing dog run and off-leash areas. There is currently only one fenced dog run and three dog off-leash areas in Port Moody, pictured below:

**Corporate Policy Manual**  
Dog Runs and Off-Leash Areas – Operating Policy and Procedures



EDMS#380795

4

While the Port Moody website uses the term 'dog parks' there is no formal definition of a 'dog park' within the current Bylaw 2677 or Corporate Policy.

### **Rocky Point Park- Port Moody's Only Fenced Dog Off- Leash Area**

Rocky Point Park dog run is located beside Slaughterhouse Creek in Rocky Point Park. It is Port Moody's only fenced dog off-leash area (dog run). It is primarily gravel/dirt surfacing with a higher elevation grassy area on the West end of the run where there is also a smaller fenced area at the top for small dogs only. There is one red bin for dog waste and standard city signage

## Considered at the July 14, 2021

### Parks and Recreation Commission meeting

indicating an off-leash area at the main entrance of the run. Adjacent to the park is a small parking area.



The City has indicated recent improvements to the Rocky Point Park dog run include for site drainage, tree coverage and surfacing. It also now has a year-round fountain, and an enlarged small dog area. However issues with mud, lack of engaging design features, and crowding are challenges especially given the run's relatively small size (2427 metres - approx a half acre). For comparison, this dog run would be classified as a 'Neighbourhood Dog Run' in the City of Vancouver's [People, Parks, and Dogs strategy](#) (2017) which recommends providing Neighbourhood dog off-leash areas within approximately 15 minute walk of most residents. Rocky Point's fenced off-leash area is servicing all of Port Moody.

# Considered at the July 14, 2021 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting



Lack of adequate off-leash space at Rocky Point Park and the surrounding area may be contributing to instances of unleashed dogs in the park outside of the dog run. For example, it is common to see people walking dogs unleashed along the Shorelines trails. The City has also received requests from the public for after-hours off-leash times at Rocky Point Park indicating a desire by the public for additional sanctioned off-leash space.

## **Bert Flinn - One Path, Whole Park?**

The official off-leash area for Bert Flinn is the wide gravel trail that starts near the roundabout at Heritage Mountain Boulevard. It is not fenced and except for the addition of recent signage indicating the boundaries at both ends of the off-leash gravel trail there are no additional boundary markings. There are two red dog waste bins along the gravel dog off-leash area - one at the Heritage Mountain Boulevard entrance and one mid-way through the trail. There is no red dog waste bin for those exiting at the April road exit point.



While dogs must be on a leash on any trail beyond the gravel trail, dogs off-leash across the park are very common, with the City indicating they have received many calls and complaints specific to Bert Flinn, especially over the last few years. A designated nature park and Port Moody's largest urban park, Bert Flinn perhaps epitomizes an intersection of the related but

# Considered at the July 14, 2021 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting

often competing interests of residents - those who want to enjoy Port Moody's less crowded, natural trails such as those at Bert Flinn for hiking without coming across dogs off-leash, while others wish to utilize these same features while/for exercising their dogs off-leash. Bert Flinn also serves as a destination park for visitors across the Tri-Cities and beyond.

The park's current designation of an off-leash gravel area beside a natural forested area without clear and ongoing boundary markings could be contributing to confusion by some dog owners who are not familiar with the park. Others may be choosing to use unsanctioned areas of the park as off-leash for what may seem a higher quality off-leash experience with limited personal consequences to the dog owner. As more and more people witness off-leash dogs as a 'new normal' across Bert Flinn with limited enforcement of city bylaws in the park a two fold result may occur: individuals who do not wish to face dogs off-leash may avoid using Bert Flinn all together and those seeking additional off-leash areas will prioritize visiting. Left unaddressed there is a real risk Bert Flinn will become Port Moody's largest de-facto off leash dog park.

In addition, many may not be aware of the potential impact to the natural environment or risks/impacts from interactions with wild animals from dogs off leash in the park. Port Moody's limited availability of natural parkland like Bert Flinn means as our population of both people and dogs grow, the pressures being experienced by this park will also only increase.



## Chines Park - Hidden Gem?

Chines park is located along the escarpment that's south of Hugh Street and Port Moody's boundary with Coquitlam. It is unfenced and dogs are permitted off-leash in the designated area at the south end of Hugh street. Most of the park is undeveloped and while you are able to walk on narrow pathways around the natural areas of the park, the most universally accessible off leash area appears to be the well-drained gravel area at the Jane Street entrance with a small pond. The park has one older, unbranded off-leash area sign and a red bin.

The park is largely unmarked (e.g. no visible signage at the Hugh Street/Jane St. entrance) and located in a single-family home residential area. This in addition to a lack of defined off-leash



## Considered at the July 14, 2021

### Parks and Recreation Commission meeting

trails and/or a fenced area could contribute to it being underutilized in relation to other off-leash options such as Rocky Point or Bert Flinn, even though it offers a diverse natural off-leash setting.



#### Westhill - Where Am I?

The North end of Westhill park behind the westhill pool area is an un-fenced off-leash dog area. It is a section of the Alfred Howe Greenway that includes sections of gravel trail and surrounding nature setting. The North entrance is marked with an older, unbranded off-leash area sign and has one red dog waste bin. There is also a map of the Alfred Howe Greenway at the trail entrance (pictured below). However, the dog off-leash area is not clearly marked at the Northern (Barnet Highway) or Southern greenway entrances. While there are no visibly defined off-leash area markers on the trail, it appears that chain perimeter fencing with a gate to the rest of the Alfred Howe Greenway serves as an undefined marker for the North side of the off-leash area, but there is no sign indicating when leaving an off-leash area.



# Considered at the July 14, 2021 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting



## City Dog Waste Diversion Program

The City's Red Bin Program was initiated in 2016 to ensure dog waste is diverted out of the municipal landfill waste stream in order to comply with Metro Vancouver direction on waste diversion. Dog waste that goes to landfill contributes to methane gas production, a powerful greenhouse gas. Currently, the program is specific to city parkland and trail areas and not at any Operations-serviced sites. There are currently 18 bins located across the City.

### Red Bin Locations

- Rocky Point Park - Dog Run
- Klahanie Drive x 4
- Shoreline Trail (Trasolini Field)
- Bert Flinn Park x 2
- Westhill – Alfred Howe Trailhead
- Murray Street (Suter Brook)
- Capilano Road (Suter Brook)
- Forest Parkway (Noons Creek Trailhead)
- Mosaic Park (Inlet)
- Easthill (Burrard)
- Washington Drive
- Brookmount Trail
- Sycamore Park
- Park at Marcon development

The City of Port Moody contracts Red Bin collection at \$40 for each bin location which is emptied weekly. The waste collected is taken to an offsite location where the waste is separated from the plastic bags. The waste is then sent to Metro Vancouver wastewater treatment ([that utilizes a special process for the treatment of dog waste](#)) while the bags are sent to landfill.

# Considered at the July 14, 2021 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting

The City currently determines the placement of bins based on estimated needs such as staff noticing a high volume of dog waste in the municipal garbage, and resident requests/complaints of high amounts of improperly discarded dog waste.



## Recommendations

**The PRC is calling on the City to prioritize development of a municipal strategy that supports a dog-friendly community while addressing key issues related to dogs in Port Moody. It should address the following recommendations:**

- 1. Determine community needs through community engagement and data analysis**
  - Undertake analysis to gather baseline data related to existing dog off-leash areas, service calls and complaints, and bylaw enforcement relative to the number of people and dogs in Port Moody including:
    - Up-to-date dog licensing and dog population data for Port Moody (trends and current status)
    - The population, residential density, number of licensed dogs, and size of dog off-leash areas compared on a neighbourhood basis to identify and map the most underserved neighbourhoods. Future population growth should also be considered to identify areas where there may be increasing demand for dog off-leash areas.
    - Identify current usage of existing dog off-leash areas such as by assessing the number of licensed and unlicensed dogs within the radius of existing dog off-leash areas and performing site surveys
    - Identifying each city block's distance from a designated off-leash area
    - Analyze and map dog-related service calls, emails, bylaw enforcement, seizing of dogs, verbal warnings etc. over the last five years to better assess existing challenges (e.g. related to: off-leash in on-leash areas, dog waste, aggressive dogs, noise),
  - Conduct a well-advertised, creative and easily accessible public engagement campaign to inform strategy development including surveys, open-houses and workshop events both in-person and online

# Considered at the July 14, 2021 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting

- Ensure the design and delivery of all public engagement materials follow best practises and any questions asked directly serve to inform the City on how to address the key issues and recommendations raised in this report

## 2. Modernize park classification and municipal by-laws so they better support responsible dog ownership

- Create a new classification of municipal park as 'dog park' that includes definitions for secure/fenced urban neighbourhood dog parks and unsecured off-leash areas in place of the current use of 'dog run' in bylaw 2677 and 'off -leash area' found in the Corporate Policy. The PRMP should be updated to include this new classification of park.
- Develop best-practise guidelines for creation of new dog parks such as establishing minimum size, standard amenity requirements (e.g. red bin, doggy bag dispenser, seating, water, timed lighting), drainage and buffering (e.g. from houses, school grounds) and consider the prevention of issues such as noise, environmental impact and wildlife interactions
- Review and update bylaw 2677 with consideration towards:
  - Broadening the bylaw to address issues related to animal management in alignment with the [BC-SPCA Model Animal Responsibility By-Laws](#)
  - Ensuring consistent language and logic throughout the document
  - Streamlining regulations for 'dog parks' under one bylaw instead of a bylaw and a Corporate Policy
- Improve ongoing tracking and reporting mechanisms for data and statistics related to dogs so that the information is easy to access. For example, the ongoing tracking and reporting of calls related to dog incidents by topic and location.

## 3. Improve existing dog off leash areas

- Prioritize improvements to Rocky Point Park dog run that reflect the value of this fenced off-leash area as a key city amenity. This includes redesigning the space following best practises such as:
  - Improved surfacing to reduce issues of dirt and mud including a mix of durable surfacing types, with specialty surfacing (e.g. synthetic turf)
  - Inclusion of linear high durability areas for running and fetch
  - Adding additional speciality amenities such as agility features, climbing elements, sand area for designated digging and dog relief
  - Improvements to fencing (e.g. high quality decorative fencing instead of chain-linked)
  - Improvements to accessibility (e.g. wheelchair accessible area, adding concrete under seating and for pathways)
  - Additional greenery
  - Keep the off-leash area of Rocky Point to the fenced area only to protect wildlife and the natural environment
- Explore adding a fenced dog run at the Hugh entrance of Chines Park as well as standard amenity requirements such as seating. Improve visible signage indicating location of the park.

# Considered at the July 14, 2021

## Parks and Recreation Commission meeting

- Add maps indicating the boundary of the off-leash area at entrances/exits of Westhill park (similar to map signage currently at Bert Flinn Park)
- Undertake an in-depth review of Bert Flinn park for opportunities to improve the off-leash gravel area, keep dogs off-leash within the allocated boundaries and mitigate dog/wildlife conflict. For example:
  - Adding additional signage and wildlife friendly (e.g post and rail) fencing indicating when leaving the off leash area.
  - Exploring if there is any appropriate area for a new fenced dog run within the treed environment (following best practise guidelines)
  - Exploring expansion of off-leash area to the top of April Road
  - Adding a fenced dog run at the top of April Road
  - Consideration of improvements to parking at Bert Flinn for dog off-loading and safe entry to the off-leash area.

### 4. Create new off leash areas

- Identify priority locations for new urban neighbourhood dog parks (fenced) that:
  - Follow best practises and are informed through geographic analysis and public engagement (Recommendation 1).
  - Include immediate action towards creating new fenced off leash areas for Inlet Center and the North East side of the City (a key PRMP recommendation from 2015).
  - Utilize creative and temporary solutions in the interim such as use of City-owned lands, partnerships with existing strata buildings
- Implement a walkability target for all residents to a fenced dog off leash area (e.g. City of Vancouver has identified 15 minutes)
- Include planning for dog park acquisition as part of the City's Parkland Acquisition Strategy for both urban dog parks and off-leash areas in more natural settings (e.g. loco Lands)
- Implement requirements for new multi-family developments in support of pet friendly design informed through review of best practises such as [guidelines by the City of Toronto](#) . Consideration of pet friendly amenities such as dog relief areas should be part of the City's Sustainability Checklist when considering development proposals.

### 5. Implement new approaches to compliance and enforcement

- Identify opportunities to increase dog licensing rates such as through:
  - Creation of a dog off-leash park improvement fund supported through dog licensing fees where the use of fees towards improvements are clearly communicated to the public.
  - Auto-renewal of dog licensing
  - Licensing incentives program (e.g in partnership with local businesses)
  - Going forward with the proposed door-to-door initiative in 2022
- Review dog licensing and bylaw violation fees to evaluate effectiveness towards promoting compliance and alignment with other municipalities

# Considered at the July 14, 2021

## Parks and Recreation Commission meeting

- Identify and implement opportunities for increased resourcing and enforcement for dog bylaw infractions including ongoing commitment to specific position(s) towards animal and park patrol with a focus on ensuring on-leash and no dog areas are respected in known high conflict areas (e.g Bert Flinn). Port Moody should look to other municipalities such as Coquitlam who are also understood to be taking this approach.
- Update and improve online information pertaining to how residents can lodge complaints about dog-related issues including updating the bylaw complaints contact site and contact form to include the option to select dog-specific considerations. This should also include identification of opportunities for increasing enforcement outcomes when those witnessing bylaw infractions report them.
- Add specific requirements for commercial dog walkers as part of issuance of business licenses including limiting the number of dogs allowed to be walked at a time. Consider fines specific to commercial dog walkers that break city animal control bylaws.

### 6. Focus on public education

- Improve signage towards using visuals instead of written explanations of rules and etiquette both for dog off leash and on-leash areas. Consider the use of humour and other engagement techniques (e.g. see the District of North Vancouver park signage)
- Provide clear maps of dog off leash boundaries at the entrance of all off leash areas (e.g. such as the signage currently at Bert Flinn)
- Improve the City website towards ensuring all materials related to dogs and dog parks are in one place, are easy to find and understand, and include visuals such as an updated and downloadable map indicating the location and description of all dog parks in Port Moody

### 7. Expand Red Bin Program

- Expand the Red Bin program across the City so that:
  - Red Bins are located at the entrances and mid-points of each major trail and park, prioritizing Rocky Point Park, Old Orchard and Shoreline Trail.
  - Bins are placed beyond park sites and trailheads focusing on areas identified through analysis as having high population density/dog ownership
  - Mandate Red Bins as part of new multi-family developments
  - Ensure bin design promotes use (e.g. hands-free and/or external-facing mechanisms that do not require someone to touch a surface not easily visible)
- Update information and map of Red Bin program on City's website

### 8. Integrate residents in decision-making and stewardship

- Develop community-based volunteer initiatives such as Coquitlam's recent Adopt-a-Dog Park program
- Establish new opportunities for the public to communicate and engage with City staff on dog-related issues
- Ensure when possible City events are dog-friendly
- Host pet-related topics for City-offered talks and webinars to increase community engagement

# Considered at the July 14, 2021 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting

## 9. Undertake Pilot Projects as a First Step

- While the City is working to develop a broader strategy it should undertake opportunities to implement the above through pilot projects supported by publicization and public feedback. Pilots to consider include:
  - Bylaw blitzes at busy areas focusing on dogs (Bert Flinn, Shoreline Trails), including enforcement during evenings and weekends
  - Community marketing campaign around dogs in the city supported by partnerships with local pet food stores, dog daycares
  - Adding a fenced dog off leash area at Chines park and the top of April Road
  - Implement a temporary solution to adding a fenced off-leash area in Inlet Centre while a permanent off-leash area is created (e.g. the use of the old Fire Hall site, City Hall lands)

## Case Studies

The PRC puts forward the following municipalities as case studies for review by the City:

- City of Vancouver
- District of North Vancouver
- City of Coquitlam

# Considered at the July 14, 2021 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting

## INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT

**Lepus Impudicus**  
**Common names: Crap-rabbit, Keister bunny**

The combined offspring of *Canis Familiaris* and *Homo Ignoramus*, these obnoxious creatures are fast becoming a regular feature throughout the trail networks of this region and beyond. While usually found along the edge of trails, often within 100 meters of the trailhead, they have also been observed perched on stumps and rocks, nestled into nooks and crannies, even hanging in the limbs of trees. They are easily spotted and identified, as they have no lawful or aesthetic precedent in the natural forest setting. The known native habitat for these invaders is in waste receptacles, which is the only place that they should be seen. Ever.

Seriously.

Spread the word, control the blight.  
#turdfreetrails