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Item No. 4.1.1
Halifax and West Community Council
July 21, 2015

TO: Chair and Members of Halifax and West Community Council

Original Signed

SUBMITTED BY:


Brad Anguish, Director, Parks and Recreation

DATE: July 13, 2015

SUBJECT: **Service Dog Park**

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

- June 24, 2015, motion of Halifax and West Community Council:

MOVED by Councillor Mosher, seconded by Councillor Watts that Halifax and West Community Council approve the location of Ardmore Park, 6424 Almon Street, Halifax, for a service dog park to replace the existing service dog park at Cogswell Street.

MOVED by Councillor Mosher, seconded by Councillor Watts, to amend the motion to defer the item until July 21, 2015 as a special meeting preceding Regional Council. AMENDED MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Councillor Mosher requested that the item be deferred pending more information. She stated that the staff report required additional information pertaining to its origin, the process of creating the park, and information gathered during the public consultation.

- February 26, 2015, motion of the Transportation Standing Committee.

MOVED by Councillor Mosher, seconded by Councillor Mason that the motion contained in the staff recommendation report dated February 17, 2015 be amended as follows:

1. that Halifax and West Community Council recommend that staff proceed with the planning process for a service dog park in Ardmore Park, Oxford street, Halifax, in accordance with the existing HRM Off Leash Parks Strategy, and

2. that a report return to Audit & Finance Standing Committee recommending amenities based on community consultation that would augment the existing park. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Part 1, Section 21, of the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter* – Standing, special and advisory committees; and

Part 1, Section 25, of the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter* – Powers and duties of Community Council.

BACKGROUND

This information report is supplemental to the Staff Report provided at the June 24, 2015 Halifax and West Community Council meeting, which was deferred pending additional information pertaining to the process of site selection for the park, and information gathered during the public consultation.

As a result of the reconfiguration of the Cogswell and Rainnie Drive intersection, the existing service dog exercise area located near this intersection needed to be relocated. At the request of the Transportation Standing Committee, staff was requested to identify a potential new site to accommodate this use.

DISCUSSION

Staff attended meetings of the Accessibility Advisory Committee on October 20, 2014, December 15, 2014, February 23, 2015, and a meeting of the local Chapter of the Canadian Council of the Blind on January 8, 2015, discussing criteria for the site selection process and possible locations. The site selection criteria process was developed in consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee. The objective was that the facility would be designated for service dogs only.

The following is the list of criteria created for the site selection process:

- The new site must be located within the urban core
- The size of the park should be at least the same as the current location at the corner of Cogswell & Rainnie Drive or slightly larger
- Located on accessible bus route
- Near accessible on street parking
- On-site parking
- Near a HRM Recreation Centre
- Near an AT Trail

Considering all criteria developed for the site selection process, a list of options to relocate the existing Service Dog Park was presented to the Accessibility Advisory Committee (see Attachment 1). As a result of this presentation and review with the Committee, two options were selected for further study and review, on-site inspection and internal consultation process. The selected options were: Option 7 (portion of Chisholm Avenue Park near Fairview Cemetery in Halifax); and Option 15 (Northbrook Park school site located at the intersection of Victoria Road and Woodland Avenue in Dartmouth). As a result of the detailed examination process, both options were considered unsuitable by the Committee as potential sites for a Service Dog Park. Staff was asked to identify other sites in a more central location in the Halifax area. After additional analysis, staff identified Ardmore Park as a potential location for the Service Dog Park. This option was presented to the Committee for consideration and selected by the Committee as the preferred location.

Ardmore Park is located in the central part of Halifax Peninsula with good access to public transit and in close proximity to major streets. The Park is considered by local residents as a popular recreation destination. It includes several elements of community active recreation infrastructure. The Park is fronting public streets from three sides. It is proposed that the service dog park will be located in the north corner of the Park. This location provides excellent visibility from the adjacent Oxford Street. In the past, this particular area of the Park was developed for a horseshoe pit. Presently, the facility is not in use for this purpose and is not maintained.

On June 9, 2015, the proposed option of locating the Service Dog Park within Ardmore Park was presented at a community consultation meeting to residents of the area. A copy of the meeting notes is attached as Attachment 2.

During the public meeting, a number of items were raised associated with park maintenance and amenities, including: filling of holes, additional garbage receptacles, regular pick up of dog waste, bench installed by bus stop, removal of cement pad, signage, and landscaping. These items will be addressed by the State of Good Repair program for Parks maintenance.

It is proposed that the Service Dog Park include the former horseshoe pit area and will be extended further north to the existing street tree line. The access to the area will be facing Oxford Street and will be located directly adjacent to the existing bus stop. The proposed area is flat and naturally separated by a small bank from other recreation uses on the site. Existing trees provide partial shading of the park users. Parking area is located directly adjacent to the proposed park area. The fence will be new, black mesh at a height of 4 feet.

During the consultation process, concerns were expressed about the current service dog park at Rainnie Drive and Cogswell Street being used by non-service dogs which has had a negative impact on service dog owners. Input was received from the Accessible Advisory Committee that there is a need for restricted access to the facility for service dog owners only. Staff will ensure that site signage is posted to identify park rules and that the area is designated for service dogs only. Staff is also investigating the option of a swipe card or other mechanisms to limit access to the facility for service dogs and their owners. Regular monitoring will be carried out to address maintenance issues and to ensure successful operation of the facility.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Staff attended meetings of the Accessibility Advisory Committee on October 20, 2014, December 15, 2014, February 23, 2015, and a meeting of the local Chapter of the Canadian Council of the Blind on January 8, 2015. A Community Consultation meeting was also held on June 8, 2015.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Site Selection Options

Attachment 2 – Community Consultation Notes from Meeting held on June 8, 2015

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/index.php> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

Report Prepared by: Margaret Soley, Manager Parks Capital Projects, 902.490.5591

HALIFAX

(Attachment 1) SERVICE DOG PARK

PROPOSED LOCATIONS FOR
SERVICE DOG PARKS IN HALIFAX, DARTMOUTH AREA

June 9, 2015

SERVICE DOG PARK CRITERIA

Site Selection Criteria

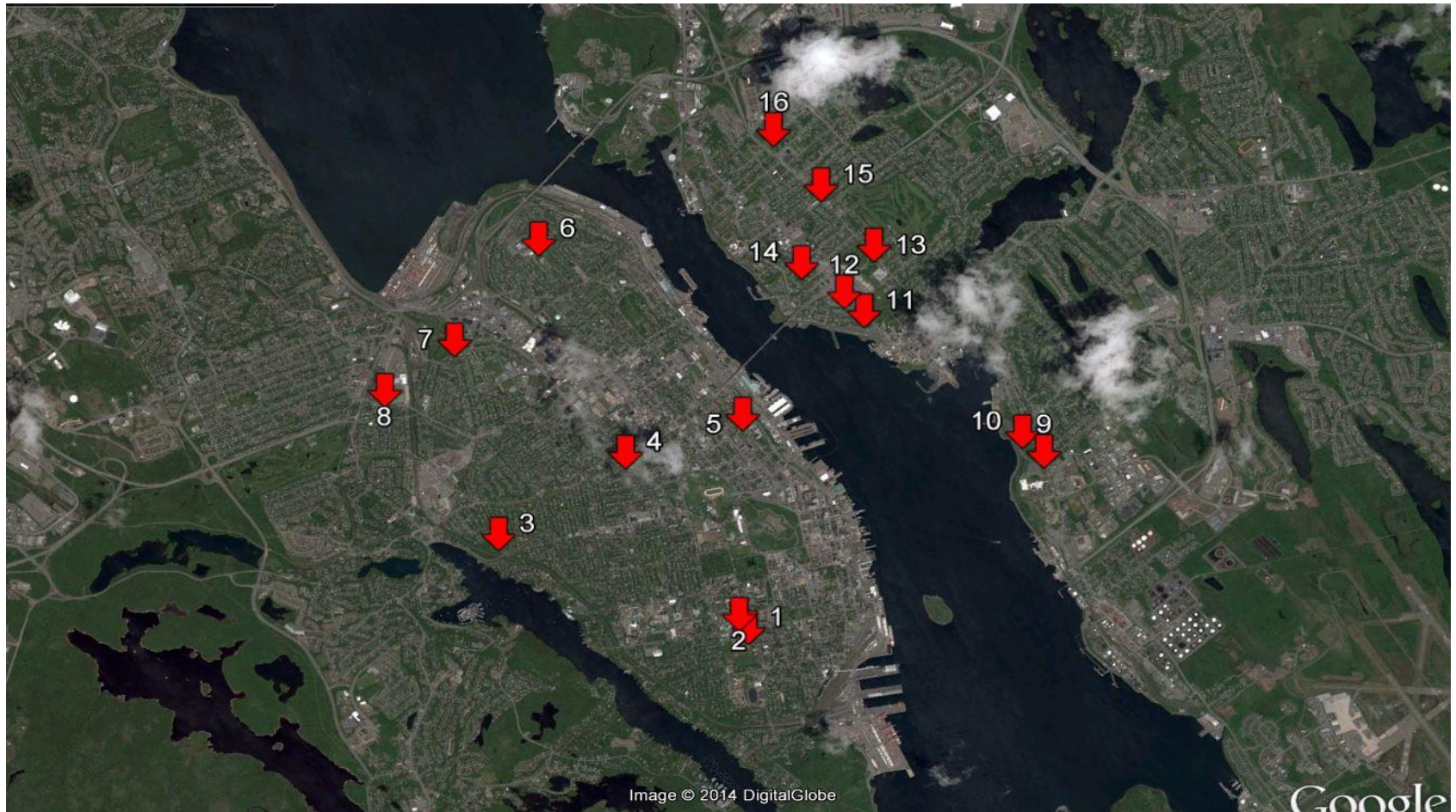
Service Animal Park

The new site must be located within the urban core. The size of the park should be at least the same as the current location at the corner of Cogswell & Raine Drive or slightly larger.

The following is a list of criteria and their weighted value in the selection process;

1. on an accessible bus route
2. near accessible on street parking
3. on-site parking
4. near an HRM Recreation Facility
5. near AT trail

PROPOSED LOCATION FOR SERVICE DOG PARKS IN HALIFAX DARTMOUTH AREA



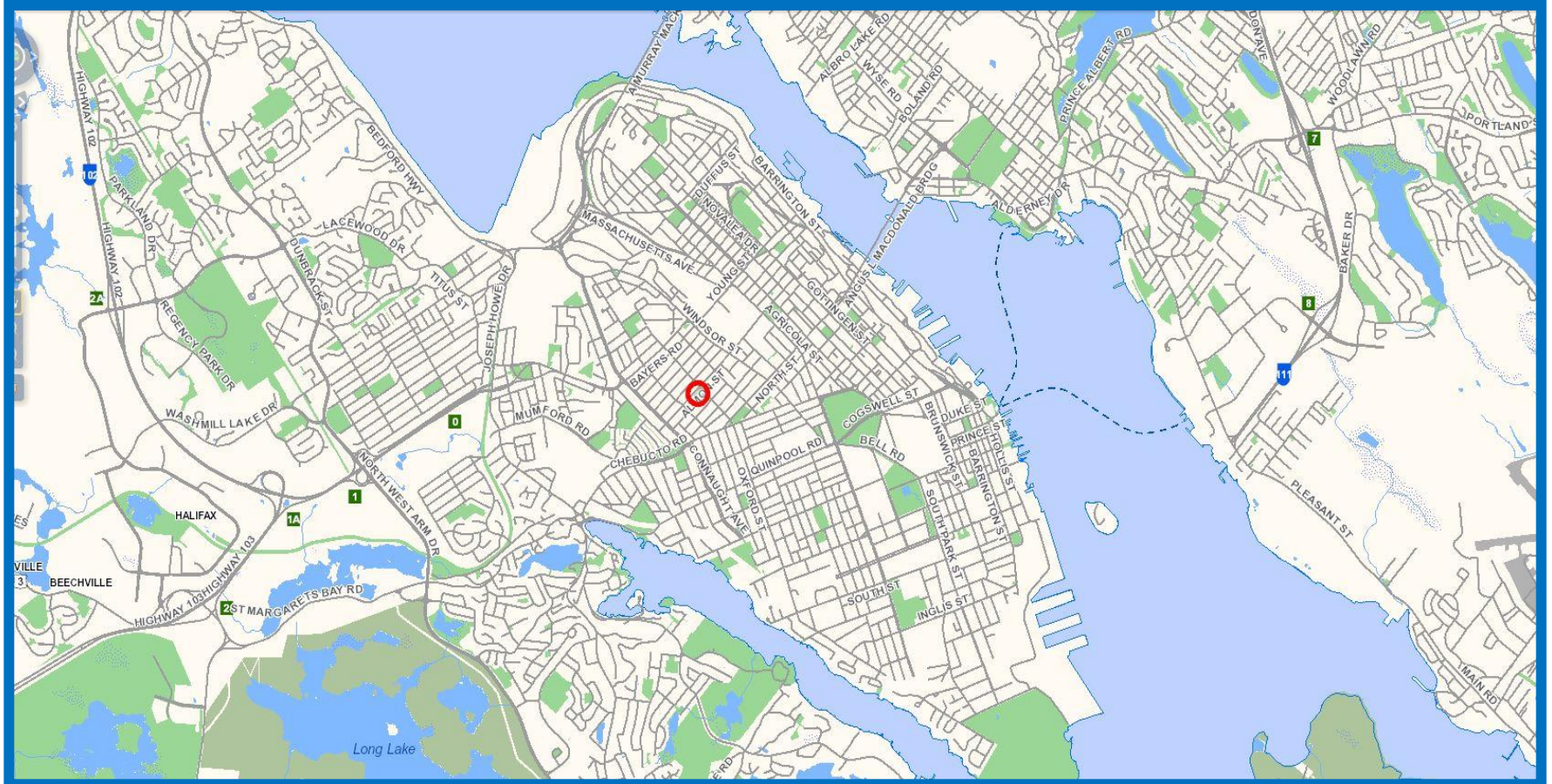
HALIFAX

PROPOSED LOCATION FOR SERVICE DOG PARK IN HALIFAX DARTMOUTH AREA **REVISED**



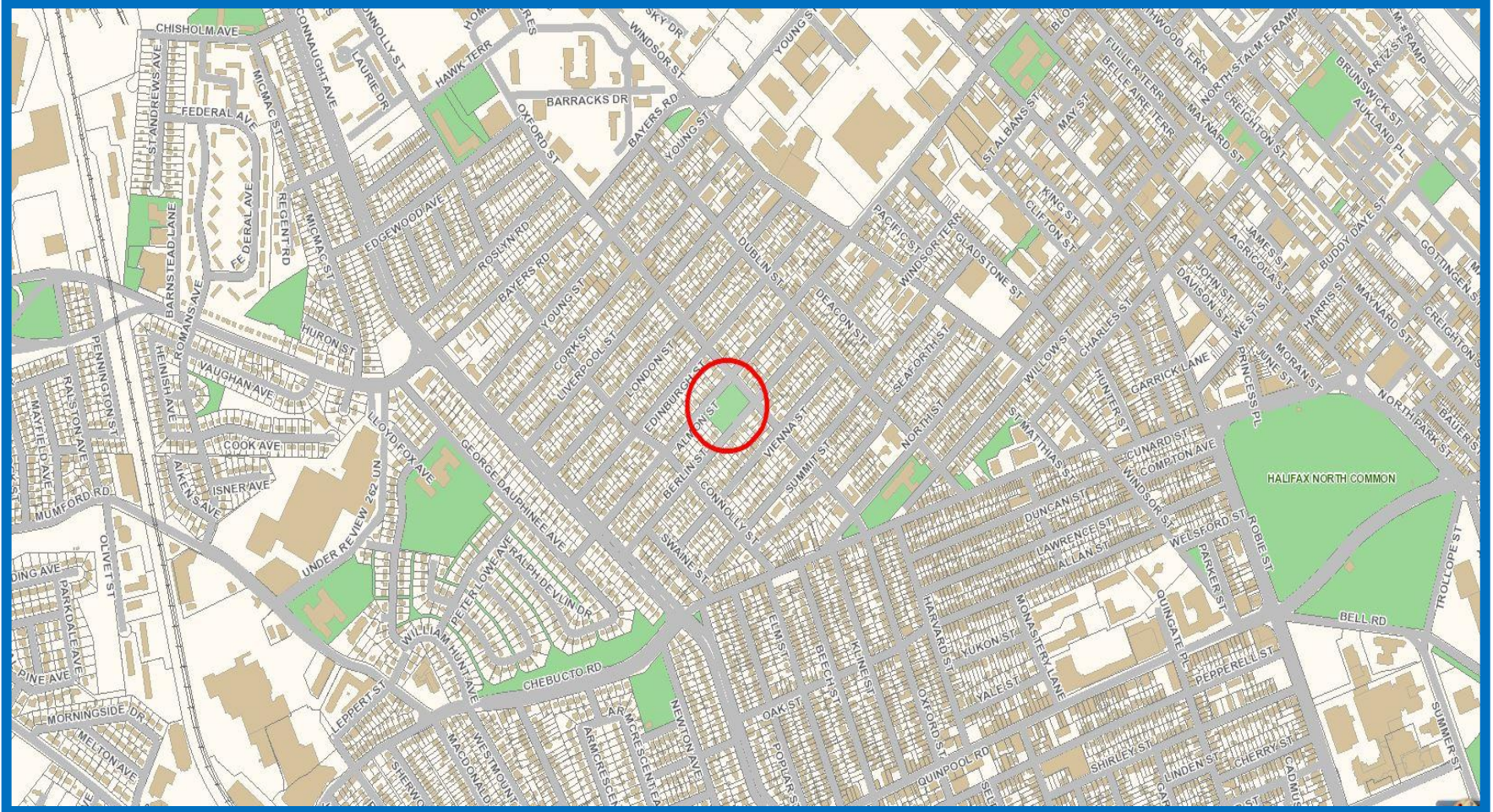
ARDMORE PARK

Recommended Service Dog Park location



ARDMORE PARK

Community context



HALIFAX

ARDMORE PARK

Area of the Park



HALIFAX

ARDMORE PARK

Area of the service dog park



EXISTING SERVICE DOG PARK

Cogswell Street



HALIFAX

ARDMORE PARK

proposed service dog park area



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ARDMORE PARK

Oxford Street entrance



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ARDMORE PARK parking area



HALIFAX

ARDMORE PARK

Almon Street frontage



HALIFAX

ARDMORE PARK

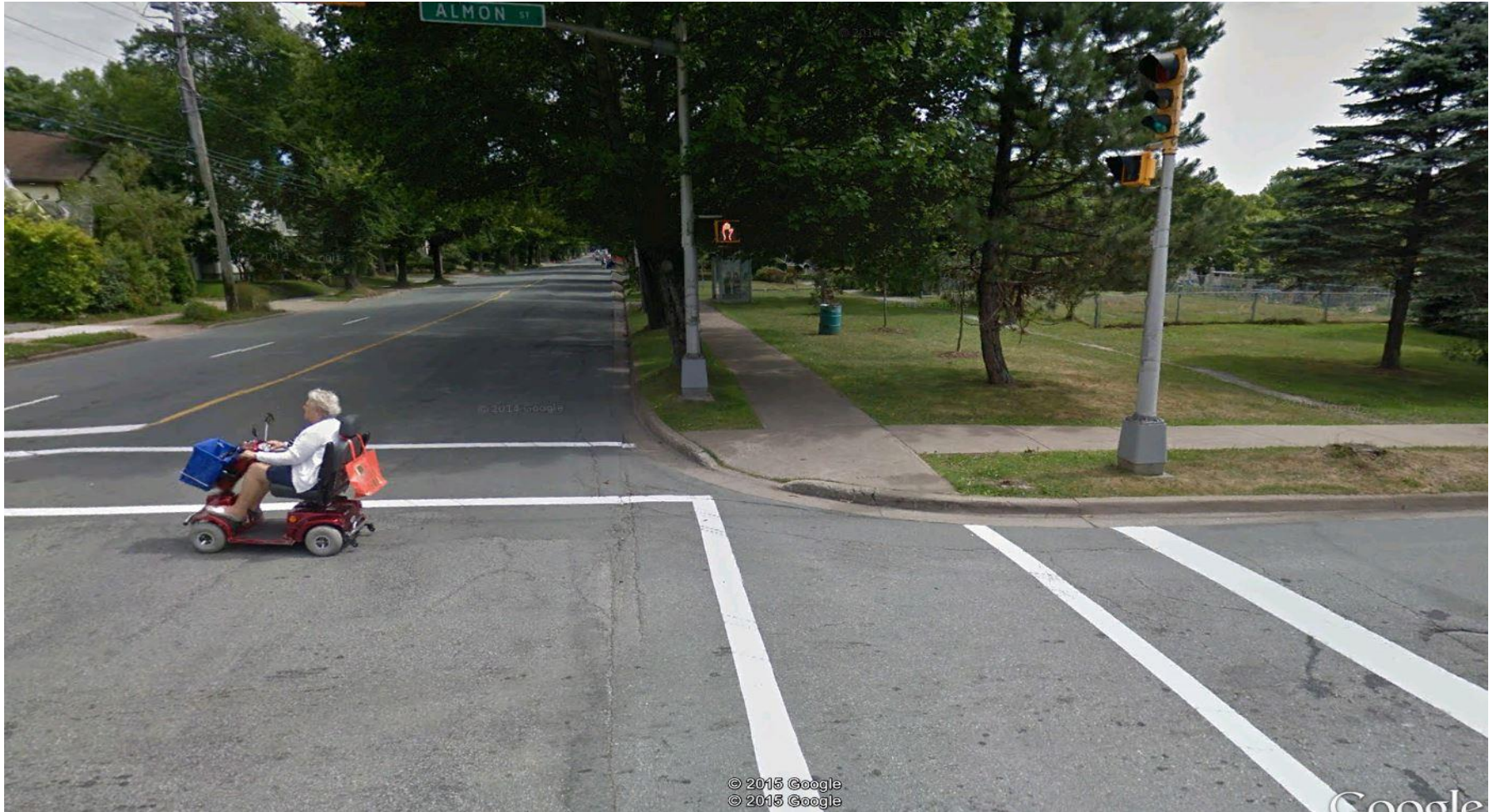
Oxford Street



HALIFAX

ARDMORE PARK

Oxford and Almon Street intersection



HALIFAX

Service Dog Park site selection process

As a result of reconfiguration of Cogswell and Rainnie Drive intersection, existing service dog exercise area located near this intersection needs to be relocated. At the request of Council staff was requested to identify potential new site to accommodate this use. The site selection criteria for this process have been developed by Accessibility Advisory Committee of Halifax Regional Municipality.

Service Dog Park Criteria

- The new site must be located within the urban core.
- The size of the park should be at least the same as the current location at the corner of Cogswell & Rainnie Drive or slightly larger.

The following is the list of criteria and their weighted value in the selection process

1. Located on accessible bus route
2. Near accessible on street parking
3. On-site parking
4. Near HRM Recreation facility
5. Near AT trail

Considering all criteria developed for the site selection process, the following options have been identified to accommodate new Service Dog Park (SDP) location.

Proposed locations for Service Dog Park in Halifax area:

Option 1

A rear portion of the property located at 5940 South Street. The parcel is owned by Department of Transportation & Infrastructure Renewal Province of Nova Scotia and operated by Special Education Authority. Reconfiguration of the existing infrastructure of the existing land use located in this area may allow a convenient location of the SDP. The proposed use will be fully compatible with the existing uses and activities on this parcel. The proposed location is easy accessible and will provide a high level of safety and security. The required parking area can be arranged on the property. The site is accessible by public transportation system.

Option 2

A front portion of the property located at 5940 South Street. The parcel is owned by Department of Transportation & Infrastructure Renewal Province of Nova Scotia and operated by Special Education Authority. Currently the area has no designated use. The site is flat, well visible from South Street and may allow a convenient location of the SDP. The use will be fully compatible with existing use and activities on this parcel. The proposed location is easy

accessible and will provide a high level of safety and security. The required parking area can be arranged on the property. The site is accessible by public transportation system.

Option 3

The eastern portion of Upper Flinn Park located near intersection of MacDonald Street and Quinpool Road. The property is owned by HRM and designated for a community park. This particular portion of the park is not developed and is used as a grass meadow. The site has a gentle slope to the south and is well visible and accessible from MacDonald Street. The proposed location of SDP use will be well visible from public streets. The proposed use will not compromise current recreation use of the park. The proposed location is easy accessible and will provide a high level of safety and security. The required on-street parking and designated parking area can be arranged on the property. The site is accessible by public transportation system.

Option 4

The northern portion of municipal park parcel located near intersection of Chebucto Road and St. Matthias Street. The property is owned by HRM and designated for a community park. The proposed area for SDP is not developed and it is used by the area residents as a grassy meadow. The site is flat and is partially visible from Chebucto Street. Pedestrian access to the proposed SDP area is partially restricted. The proposed location will not compromise current recreation uses located on this parcel and the proposed location will offer a high level of safety and security. The required on-street parking and designated parking area can be arranged in close proximity to the site. The site has relatively easy access to public transportation system.

Option 5

The northern portion of Murray Warrington Park located near intersection of Divas Lane and Brunswick Street. The property is owned by HRM and designated for a community park. The proposed area for SDP is not developed and it is used as a grassy meadow. The site has a gentle slope to the east direction and is well visible from Brunswick Street and other streets. The proposed area has excellent access from the adjacent public streets. The proposed location of SDP will not compromise current recreation uses located on this parcel. The required on-street parking and designated parking area can be arranged in close proximity to the site. The site has relatively easy access to public transportation system.

Option 6

The western portion of St. Stevens School property located near intersection of Leeds Street and Highland Avenue. The property is owned by HRM and most of the parcel is occupied by the elementary school. The proposed area for SDP has not been developed and is covered with natural landscape and vegetation. The site is generally flat but some improvements will be required to make the site suitable for SDP. The area is well visible and has a good access to the adjacent streets. The proposed location will not compromise current recreation use of the

school and park. The required on-street parking and designated parking area can be arranged in close proximity to the site. The site has relatively easy access to public transportation system.

Option 7

The north portion of Chisholm Avenue Park located near Fairview Cemetery. Access to this area is available over existing driveway serving also several residential dwellings and apartment building. The area proposed for the SDP is flat and not developed and is occasionally used by local residents for recreation as a grassy meadow. A small portion of land is also used by the area residents for a community garden. The site is flat and is partially visible from Chisholm Avenue. The site has a convenient pedestrian access to Chisholm Avenue. The proposed location will be relatively safe and secure. The required on-street parking and designated parking area can be arranged in close proximity to the site. The site has relatively easy access to public transportation system.

Option 8

One of green undeveloped grassy areas located between Bayer's Road, Highway 102, Ashburn Avenue and Samuel Walker Drive. Visibility of this area from public streets is excellent. A safe and convenient access to the site will present some challenge and needs to be developed. The proposed area is generally flat and capable to accommodate SDP use and well maintained. Due to lack of safe access the land is not use by the local residents for recreation. The elongated portion of one the parcels located east from Fire Station 5 offers the best opportunities for the proposed use. When developed, the proposed location can be relatively safe and secure for SDP users. Tny required on-street parking and designated parking area can be arranged in close proximity to the site. The site has relatively easy access to public transportation system.

Proposed locations for Service Dog Park in Dartmouth area:

Option 9

A parcel of land owned by Department of Transportation & Infrastructure Renewal Province of Nova Scotia located between Pleasant Street, Mawiom Place and Oceanview Drive in front of main parking area of NSCC Dartmouth Campus. The proposed area is undeveloped and covered with natural vegetation. The site is generally flat with gentle slope to the west and is well visible and accessible from Pleasant Street. The proposed use will be fully compatible with adjacent land uses. The proposed location will provide a safe and secure environment for the SDP users. The required parking area can be arranged on the property. The site is accessible by public transportation system.

Option 10

The western portion of Northwood Community Centre property located along Oceanview Drive. The proposed area is connected with the Community Centre by pedestrian trail and is well visible and accessible from Oceanview Drive and the adjacent AT trail. The area proposed for the SDP is sloped to the west and is covered with trees and vegetation. The area is not

developed and use for recreation. The proposed location will not compromise current public use of the property and will be relatively safe and secure for SDP users. The required on-street parking and designated parking area can be arranged on the site or in close proximity to the site. The site has relatively easy access to public transportation system.

Option 11

A portion of parcel located along Geary Street, owned by Halifax Regional Water Commission and used as a gravel parking area and pumping station. The northern portion of this parcel has no specific use or designation and is capable to accommodate the proposed SDP use. The site is generally flat, accessible and visible from Geary Street and the adjacent parking area. This location will provide a high level of safety and security for the proposed SDP users. The required on-street parking and designated parking area can be arranged on the property or on the municipal parking area. The site has excellent access to public transportation system for residents of Dartmouth and Halifax.

Option 12

A portion of Dartmouth Commons located along Windmill Road and opposite Hare Lane. The area is currently not developed for any specific public recreation use. The site is generally sloped in west direction. The proposed location will not compromise current public use of this property and will be relatively safe and secure for SDP users. This area is well connected to public transportation system. Development of the required designated on-street and on-site parking will be a challenge.

Option 13

A portion of Dartmouth Commons located in area of the former ROW corridor of Nantucket Avenue. Currently, this area has no specific use or designation for public use. The middle section of this road still has an asphalt surface. The site is suitable to accommodate SDP. The proposed area is flat, visible from the adjacent public streets and accessible. The site is located next to Dartmouth Bus Terminal, and is well accessible by public transportation system for Dartmouth and Halifax residents. The required parking area can be arranged on the site or on the adjacent municipal land.

Option 14

The eastern portion of Victoria Park located along Dawson Street. The property is owned by HRM and designated for a community park. In the past, this particular portion of the park has been developed for a ballfield. The site is infrequently use for recreation activities. Most of the time this particular area is used as grass meadow for unstructured recreation use. The proposed area for SDP is generally flat and is well visible from the adjacent streets and residential development. It is not expected that the proposed location will compromise recreation use of the remaining portion of this park. The proposed location is easy accessible and will provide a high level of safety and security. The required on-street parking and designated parking area can

be arranged in the area of the property. The site is located in close proximity to public transportation system.

Option 15

The Northbrook Park school site located at the intersection of Victoria Road and Woodland Avenue. The property is owned by HRM and designated for a community park. The proposed area for SDP is located near Victoria Road and is not developed for recreation use. This area is only occasionally used for unstructured recreation activities. The site has a gentle slope to the west and is well visible from Victoria Street. The proposed location of SDP will not compromise current recreation use of this property. Current municipal uses of the former school building will provide excellent security for SDP users. The proposed location has easy access to public transportation system. The required parking spaces can be arranged on the property.

Option 16

The Brule Street Park located at the intersection of Victoria Road and Primrose Street. The property is owned by HRM and designated for a neighbourhood park with limited active recreation opportunities. Most of the park area is located under high voltage power line. The proposed for SDP use area is located along Victoria Road and is not developed for recreation use. The site has a gentle slope to the south-west direction and is well visible from Victoria Street. The proposed location of SDP will not compromise current recreation use of this park. The proposed location has easy access to public transportation system. The required on-street parking and designated parking area can be arranged in the area of the property.

Summary of the site selection process.

All options have been presented to municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) for review. As a result of this presentation, two options have been selected for further study and review, on-site inspection and internal consultation process. The selected options were: Option 7 (portion of Chisholm Avenue Park near Fairview Cemetery in Halifax) and Option 15 (Northbrook Park school site located at the intersection of Victoria Road and Woodland Avenue in Dartmouth). As a result of the detail examination process both options have been rejected by AAC as potential sites for Service Dog Park.

The request has been made to staff to identify other potential sites for the Park in more central location in Halifax area. After additional analyses of the potential sites, staff identified Ardmore Park as a potential location for the Service Dog Park. This option has been presented to AAC for consideration. The option has been accepted as a suitable site subject to public consultation process. On June 9, 2015 the proposed development of SDP on Ardmore Park has been presented at the public meeting to residents of the area. The proposal has been generally accepted by the community.

Attachment 2

Service Dog Park Public Consultation Meeting

Halifax Forum Maritime Hall, June 8th 7:00pm – 9:00pm

Attendees

Councillor Linda Mosher – District 9 Halifax West Armdale

Parks and Recreation: Margaret Soley, Jan Skora, Tom Jangaard, Phil Hammond, and other HRM support staff

Halifax Transit: Erin Harrison

Members of the Accessible Advisory Committee and Local Chapter of the Canadian Council for the Blind

Members of the Public

Councillor Mosher welcomed everyone in attendance and introduced staff. She explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss a proposed service dog park at Armdale Park to replace the existing service dog park on Cogswell Street. The existing service dog park is closing due to the construction of the North Park Street round-about project. Feedback is being requested on the proposed plan as well input is being sought on other ideas and suggestions for improvements to the Park.

Mr. Jan Skora, Coordinator, Parkland Planning, provided a presentation on the site selection process and criteria (attached). After considerable review, Armdale Park was recommended as the preferred option for the facility. It is located in the central part of Halifax Peninsula, has good access to public transportation system, and is in close proximity to major streets. The Park is considered by local residents as a popular recreation destination. It is well maintained and includes several elements of community active recreation infrastructure. From three sides, the park is fronting public streets. The existing metro transit route bus stop is located directly in front of the Park.

It is proposed that the facility will be located in the north corner of the Park. This location provides excellent visibility from the adjacent Windsor Street. In the past, this particular area of the Park has been developed for a horseshoe pit. Presently, the facility is not used for this purpose and is not maintained. Occasionally the fenced area is used as off leash dog exercise area. The area is flat and naturally separated by small bank from other recreation uses on the site. Existing trees provide partial shading of the park users. Parking area is located directly adjacent to the proposed park area.

Tom Jangaard, Park Planner, provided an overview of the design for the Park. The Service Dog Park is proposed to be located in the former horseshoe pit area. The existing horseshoe pit is 45 feet in width and 60 feet in length. The area of the Park will be 45 feet in width and 90 feet in length. The fence will be new, black mesh at a height of 4 feet. There will be a paddock area where the dogs will transition from the outside to the Park. The paddock is 10 feet by 10 feet. There will be a bench located in the paddock area. Staff is looking at the option of installing a swipe card access that will only allow registered service dogs, and their owners, access to the Park.

There will be a service vehicle gate. This will allow maintenance crews to gain access for mowing the grass and cleaning up after the dogs. There will be a bag dispenser provided. One existing spruce tree will be incorporated into the Park. The lower branches of the spruce tree will be trimmed to a height of 4 feet to allow for maintenance and visibility into the park. A large existing bush near the entrance to the Park will be trimmed back or removed to allow a safe, clear entrance to the Park. There will be a crusher dust path leading from the bus stop on Oxford Street to the paddock area. The Park will not be maintained in the Winter as per HRM Park Operations guidelines.

Feedback / Questions from Discussion (from flip chart notes recorded)

- Appreciate swipe card
- Concern with height of fence – too low
- Others could lift a dog over the fence and not clean up after their dog
- 4ft fence – people throw garbage, including glass, over the fence. Dangerous for dogs
- Do not want the area to look institutional (fence will be black to blend into the park and not be standard height but four feet)
- Other non-service dogs dig holes which is dangerous for users. Safety concerns
- Have been attacks from dogs
- Swipe cards – municipality should look after this (distribution)
- Guide dogs who live in apartments need this space to exercise
- Underused area of park
- Parking lot issue – slope up to service dog area
- Service dog park good location and reason to 'Save the #1 bus route'
- There are also parking spots on Oxford Street
- Parking lot is not plowed in the winter
- Need for designated handicap parking spots
- More support for 'Save the #1' bus route
- One garbage can for whole park. Need additional cans.
- Safety – winter use issues
- Crusher dust vs pavement for snow clearing
- 4ft fence in the winter with 3ft of snow could be an issue
- Lighting – should be well lit
- Hours? Same as standard park hours

- Certification is important for the service dogs
- In response to a question, a representative from CNIB indicated there were approximately 12 service dogs; but there are many more that may not be certified that work with people with autism and other disabilities
- Proposed change to #1 bus route goes up Oxford and then turns west onto Chebucto
- Lighting – comment that there is already plenty of lighting
- Dozens of people currently using the space for their pet dogs
- Lights should go off at 9pm, but are currently on until midnight
- Maybe accommodate other dogs in lower areas
- Currently have issues at existing dog park. Holes, garbage, attacks.
- Halifax might be only city around with service dog park
- Great proposed location
- Opportunities/suggestions for other areas of park:
 - Benches/table with checker board
 - No gazebo
 - When there is seating, people hangout at night – noise etc
 - Winter sliding
 - When was bench near bus stop removed? Bench should be put back.
- Large number of people who use guide dogs in Halifax and Dartmouth, but many won't use this. Maybe we can eventually have one in Dartmouth
- Gazebo area was not safe
- Winter maintenance very important. Generally, other parks have no winter maintenance.
- Seating on old gazebo pad may not be a good idea
- Suggestion for an outdoor ping pong table, not supported by crowd
- Have seating inside the dog park
- Monitoring – would people be fined for not picking up after their dog? Same rules apply as they do in other parks
- Swipe card (reader) – is it battery operated? Answer (from HRM): Wired in
- Will there be bags provided? Answer (from HRM): Yes
- Easy place to get to
- Park needs regular maintenance as service dog users are not always able to clean up after their dogs
- How does #1 bus route issue affect park?
 - Proposed Route #24 will stop close to the park, but less frequently than #1
 - Distance from transit stop to park for users is different need for each person
- Panic Button? Idea.
- There are currently about twelve service dogs that use the Park. These dogs are quite expensive to train and must be exercised separately from other dogs. There have been attacks from other people's pet dogs. Guide dogs are the eyes for those who use them and are therefore very important in an owner's life.

Written Feedback / Questions (verbatim)

- We live in the neighbourhood and we always thought the park was under utilized. We feel a service dog park is a great idea; the neighbourhood is secure and dog friendly and we hope that the project will be approved.