REQUEST FOR DECISION

Subject: Hawk Avenue Dog Park Options

Presented to: Council

Date: September 11, 2023

Submitted by: Amanda Arbuckle, Manager of Recreation

Item #: 7.3

ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATION

That Council provide direction to Administration on the preferred approach to manage the Hawk Avenue dog park debris issue.

BACKGROUND

Reason for Report

The Hawk Avenue Dog Park was relocated in 2020 to accommodate the new Roam Transit building. As the dog park was moved just a short distance beside the Roam Transit building it was anticipated that site conditions would be similar to the original. However, during the preliminary stages of the project, a small, isolated pit of waste from human activity dating back to the 1960's was discovered. The waste hole that was approximately 2.0 x 2.0 x 1.4 m contained a few items (cans, bottles, garden hose, cutlery) was excavated by hand by a team of archaeologists with oversight from the Town of Banff and Parks Canada.

Additionally, a third-party Environmental Site Assessment was completed to see if there were any other similar features on the site and none were found. A third-party archaeological survey was also completed, including 10 test pits around the exterior of the site, which again saw nothing found.



Figure 58: North view of the midden after the top boards had been removed.



Figure 42: Map of project area showing site area, shovel tests, surface finds, and surface feature.

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Source: A. Hamza Archaeology Limited, November 2020

During construction of the dog park, an additional ~100 holes were excavated to a depth of 4 feet to support the fence posts along the perimeter of the site. No waste/garbage or hazardous materials were encountered.

Because no materials were found during these assessments, the dog park in its new location on Hawk Ave, was opened in June of 2020.

Summary of Issue

In the Town of Banff there are currently 525 licenced dogs. This does not account for visitors to the Town that are also traveling with dogs and staying in hotels or surrounding campgrounds, many of which permit dog stays. Below is a summary of the counters at each dog park in 2022 which supports a high level of use by both visitors and residents. Recognizing that dog park visitors would enter and exit with their dog on each visit, the adjusted totals better represent each unique visit. Based on the adjusted totals, the Hawk Avenue dog park averages 48 visits per day and the Recreation Grounds, 37.

2022 Dog Park Counter Numbers (Hawk Avenue and Rec Grounds Locations)

Month	Hawk Avenue	Rec Grounds
Jan	710 – installed January 20	501 – installed January 20
Feb	3,413	2,517
Mar	1,860	2,742
Apr	5,324	329 – Closed April 8
May	4,376	Closed
Jun	3,758	Closed
Jul	3,261	917 – Reopened July 14
Aug	1,140	2,210
Sep	1,824	3,524
Oct	2,091	2,345
Nov	2,492	1,733
Dec	2,990	1,534
Total	**33,237**	**18,351**
Adjusted Total (Total counter number divided by 2)	**16,618**	**9175**

Since the opening of the Hawk Avenue dog park in June of 2020 there have been reports of hazardous debris resurfacing at the site. Debris has included glass, wire, bottles, etc. that date back to the 1960s. In response to these reports, the Town hired a landscape contractor to undertake shallow excavation and raking to remove debris in both August 2020 and May 2021. Municipal Parks also undertook weekly site inspections and removed any materials in the summer months since 2020.

Unfortunately, the hazard debris continues to surface, contrary to expectations that through a few years of freeze/thaw cycles and removals it would be remediated. This is most likely due to the high level of use the park has and the use patterns (i.e. dogs digging). In efforts to keep dog park users safe, Administration closed the Hawk Avenue dog park after more debris was identified in May 2023. Since that time Administration has engaged with area landscape professionals and environmental engineering and monitoring specialists on potential remediation options for the site.

Suggested approaches from the specialists are summarized in options 1 and 2 being presented to Council in this Report. Administration has been advised that some type of remediation will need to occur to address the ongoing debris issue. If the site intends to continue to be used as a dog park, a shovel testing exercise of the entire site is a minimum requirement. The outcome of that shovel test could recommend a less invasive solution such as a shallow excavation exercise throughout the site (at a cost of up to $80,000), or it may recommend a much more invasive and costly solution (such as capping). However, until a shovel testing exercise is undertaken, the appropriate solution cannot be recommended.

Based on recommendations and debris findings to date, the Town cannot reopen the dog park until further remediation has been undertaken. Prior to proposing the closure, Administration sought legal option on the matter and were advised that, "the Town needs to take reasonable steps to investigate

and respond to the issue if it wants to keep the facility open, as it has knowledge of potential harm to users of the facility."

Response Options
Council could direct Administration to:

1. Proceed with shovel testing at a cost of $25,000 to be funded through the budget stabilization reserve, and return to Council for further direction with a summary report of findings and proposed mitigations by no later than the end of Q4 2023;
2. Proceed with shovel testing at a cost of $25,000 and proceed with a shallow excavation exercise (up to $80,000), to be funded through the budget stabilization reserve, should the shovel tests confirm the contamination is isolated. (i.e. If remediation measures are greater than $80,000, return to council for further direction.);
3. Return to the 2024 Service review process with a New Service Level Request related to the shovel testing and associated remediation work recommended for the Hawk Avenue Dog Park (non budget stabilization funding option); or
4. Not proceed with any site testing at this time, keep the Hawk Avenue Dog Park closed, and engage with Parks Canada to identify an alternative site for a dog park, and return to Council with potential locations and proposed costing.

OTHER INFORMATION

Budget
The undedicated budget stabilization reserve balance is $469,192 (as of September 1, 2023).

Internal Resources
A team from Engineering, Planning & Environment, Operations, and Community Services continue to work collaboratively on the Hawk Avenue dog park issues.

Communication
A webpage on the Town's site has information on the dog park closure www.banff.ca/1030/Off-Leash-Dog-Parks.

Banff Community Plan
Access to recreation is listed in the Banff Community Plan under "Fostering a Healthy Community" as follows:

- Increase the use of Banff's parks and trails
- Build a system of open spaces, trails and parks that reinforce connections to the natural environment.

Council Strategic Priorities
Better Banff for Residents:

- Enhance individual, family and community safety and wellbeing through the provision and support of high-quality programs, services and amenities.

Lead Climate Action – Nurturing a Model Environment Community:

- Demonstrate leadership by making decisions on Town policies, bylaws and operations based on the greatest feasible benefit to environmental protection and resilience. (As noted in the Human Wildlife Co-existence Report (2019) dog parks can act as a passive management tool for pet control.)

ATTACHMENTS

None

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