
Parks and Environment Committee

Meeting No. 7
Meeting Date Wednesday, July 4, 2007
Start Time 9:30 AM
Location Committee Room 1, City Hall

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Parks and Environment Committee		
Councillor Paula Fletcher (Chair) Councillor Raymond Cho (Vice Chair-Parks)	Councillor Gord Perks (Vice Chair-Environment) Councillor Pam McConnell	Councillor Ron Moeser Councillor Michael Walker

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Declarations of Interest under the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act

Speakers/Presentations: A complete list will be distributed at the meeting

Confirmation of Minutes: February 20, 2007 and June 6, 2007

Communications/Reports

PE7.1	Information			Ward: All
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Tree Planting

(June 14, 2007) Report from General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

Summary

The purpose of this report is to identify the resources Urban Forestry requires to accommodate the current front yard tree planting requests and park tree planting requests. In addition to updating Council on these tree planting activities, this report addresses the question of whether staff resource or budget are limiting the ability of Forestry to get more trees planted in fall of 2007.

Most of the residential planting scheduled prior to mid-January for spring 2007 planting has been planted. Requests received after mid-January have been scheduled for the next planting season. The funding that is currently available in 2007 for additional planting will be committed in purchase orders and contracts in the budget term. Delays in setting up the spring contracts may result in the need to carryover some funding to spring of 2008 for planting. If additional funds are made available for more tree planting in 2007, Forestry does not have adequate staff resources to facilitate increased plantings in this calendar year.

To increase the number of tree plantings in 2008 and beyond, Forestry requires a new planting program. Urban Forestry is proposing a Planting Partnership Program that would enhance tree planting with a goal to plant an additional 10,000 calliper trees annually on City and private or government owned lands. The implementation of this program requires an additional \$4.12 M in 2008 Urban Forestry Operating Budget and a one time capital investment for fleet of \$688,000.

With this additional funding, Forestry could plant about 5,000 calliper trees on city-owned lands, and school board lands annually. In addition there are currently opportunities to work with communities and other organizations to assist in planning for an additional 5,000 calliper tree plantings on lands not owned by the City. If additional resources were provided and staff were hired in early 2008, there could be a significant increase in planting in spring 2009 and future years. However, if the issues of tree service backlog and effective tree protection remain unresolved, the benefits of the enhanced planting program would be compromised by an inability to adequately maintain our current Urban Forest and in particular an inability to address issues that may arise during community consultations.

Background Information

Staff Report

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/pe/bgrd/backgroundfile-5161.pdf>

PE7.2	ACTION			Ward: All
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United Nations University Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development: Memorandum of Understanding

(Deferred from June 6, 2007 - PE5.7)

(May 23, 2007) Report from Deputy City Manager Richard Butts

Recommendations

The Deputy City Manager recommends that:

1. the Toronto Environment Office represent the City of Toronto on the Toronto Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development Steering Committee;
2. for a period of two years, the Toronto Environment Office provide office space and staff support for the Toronto Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development Secretariat; and
3. the Mayor, on behalf of the City of Toronto, sign the Memorandum of Understanding formally committing the City to the obligations listed above, provided such Memorandum of Understanding is in the form attached or if amended to the satisfaction of the Director of the Toronto Environment Office in consultation with the City Solicitor.

Financial Impact

The Toronto RCE will make use of existing resources within the budget for the Toronto Environment Office. The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact statement.

Summary

In March 2005, the Mayor wrote to the United Nations University requesting that the City of Toronto be included in an international network of Regional Centres of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development (see Attachment 1). Toronto received this recognition in May 2005.

Since that time, the Toronto Environment Office has worked locally to build a network of education for sustainable development (“ESD”) stakeholders to form a Steering Committee for the Toronto Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development (“Toronto RCE”). Toronto's RCE aims to strengthen communication, coordination and collaboration among ESD stakeholders in the Toronto region.

The Toronto RCE does not constitute a separate legal entity, but instead represents an alliance of institutions and organizations committed to enhancing education to secure an inclusive, healthy, prosperous and environmentally sustainable future for Toronto. The attached Memorandum of Understanding (see Attachment 2) outlines the parameters for collaboration on Toronto RCE projects, and establishes a Steering Committee to govern the activities of the Toronto RCE.

The purpose of this report is to recommend that the City of Toronto sign the Memorandum of Understanding, and continue to play a leadership role in the activities of the Toronto RCE. Staff in the City Solicitor's Office have reviewed the attached Memorandum of Understanding, and do not have any concerns about the content of the document.

Background Information

Staff Report

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/pe/bgrd/backgroundfile-5195.pdf>

PE7.3	ACTION			Ward: All
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People, Dogs and Parks Strategy - Off-Leash Areas

Presentation – 10:00 a.m.

(June 19, 2007) Report from General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

Recommendations

The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that:

1. City Council adopt the People, Dogs and Parks – Off Leash Policy, in accordance with the report recommendations and Attachment 1 of this report;
2. Prior to the implementation the People, Dogs and Parks – Off Leash Policy, the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation be directed to develop a communication plan, in order to promote public education, awareness and compliance with the Policy;
3. The People, Dogs and Parks – Off Leash Policy come into effect in the fall of 2007;
4. The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation be directed to report back on the effectiveness of the People, Dogs and Parks Off-Leash Policy in one year's time to the Parks and Environment Committee.

Financial Impact

Increased enforcement and parks improvements to fully implement the People, Dogs, and Parks Strategy will require additional Operating funding of \$1,163,200 on an annualized basis and additional Capital funding of \$580,000 in 2008 and \$405,000 annually from 2009 onwards.

These requests will be submitted for consideration during the 2008 Budget process.

The 2008 request for ten new By-Law Enforcement Officers, including supplies and space rental costs for 6 months in 2008 will require \$666,600 of Operating Budget funding and an additional \$175,000 of Capital Budget funding for five new vehicles. For 2009, an annualization of \$496,600 will bring the total annual Operating Budget funding to \$1,163,200. In addition, approximately \$405,000 per year of Parkland Capital improvements will be requested to support the installation of off-leash amenities in parks.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

Summary

Parks, Forestry and Recreation recently conducted a series of public consultation sessions to assist in the development of a comprehensive strategy to address the provision of off-leash areas for dogs in City parks, greenspaces and waterfront areas. Competing demands on the park system has created conflict amongst various user groups. How, when, where and under what circumstances off-leash areas are integrated into the equation of balancing the needs and finding common ground amongst all park users is a difficult issue and one that must be addressed.

Establishment of a comprehensive strategy will provide a consistent approach to the provision of off-leash areas within the parks system, taking into consideration the interests of dog owners, commercial dog walkers, other park users and the protection of our assets. Additional capital and operating funds will be required to fulfill the recommendations in this strategy.

As population growth and density of development increases across the City, the competing demands on existing parks, greenspaces and waterfront areas are becoming more pronounced. Currently Toronto Public Health, Animal Services estimates there are 250,000 dogs residing in the city. As stewards of Toronto's parks, greenspaces and waterfront areas, it is prudent of the Division to take a leadership role in integrating off-leash areas into the equation of balancing needs and finding common ground amongst our many park users.

Background Information

Staff Report

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/pe/bgrd/backgroundfile-5226.pdf>

PE7.4	ACTION			Ward: All
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Commercial Dog Walker Permit Policy

Presentation – 1:30 p.m.

(June 19, 2007) Report from General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division

Recommendations

The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that:

1. City Council adopt the Commercial Dog Walker Permit Policy, generally in accordance with the report recommendations and Attachment 1 of this report, subject to any necessary minor substantive or stylistic refinements as may be identified by the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation and the City Solicitor;
2. City Council approve the Commercial Dog Walker Permit annual fee schedule as outlined below, which pertains to individual dog walkers and larger dog walking businesses who employ numerous dog walkers:

Number of Commercial Dog Walkers				
1	2	3	4	5 +
\$200	\$300	\$400	\$500	\$1000

Such fee schedule to be reviewed in 2008 and reviewed annually thereafter;

3. City Council direct the City Solicitor to make the necessary amendments to Chapter 441 of the Toronto Municipal Code, Fees, to include the annual fee schedule, as outlined above, for the issuance of a Commercial Dog Walker Permit(s);
4. City Council direct the City Solicitor to make the necessary amendments to Chapter 608 of the Toronto Municipal Code, Parks, generally in accordance with Attachment 2 of this report, subject to any necessary minor substantive or stylistic refinements as may be identified by the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation and the City Solicitor;
5. The Commercial Dog Walker Permit Policy be implemented effective as of the later of September 4th, 2007 and the day after the set fine order is issued by the province;
6. Prior to the implementation of the Commercial Dog Walker Permit Policy, the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation be directed to develop a communication plan, in order to promote public education, awareness and compliance with the Policy;

7. The revenues generated from the Commercial Dog Walker Permit system be directed to Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division's operating budget to recover costs associated with administration of the system, as well as, for park maintenance costs of off leash areas; and
8. The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation be directed to conduct a review of the Commercial Dog Walker Permit Policy in one year's time and report back to the Parks and Environment Committee on its effectiveness.

Financial Impact

Anticipated annual revenue from the sale of Commercial Dog Walker Permits is \$240,000.00. This is based on an annual fee of \$200.00 and a preliminary estimate of 1,200 Commercial Dog Walker Permits issued to individual commercial dog walkers. Currently Parks, Forestry and Recreation has no means of identifying company requests and will report back on this component in 2008 based on actual permits issued. These revenues would be used to partially offset anticipated annual divisional expenditures for administration of the permit system, new signage and park maintenance (e.g., maintenance of leash-free zones and turf repair). This program is intended to have no net impact on the Parks, Forestry and Recreation operating budget. There are no capital budget requirements arising from the implementation of the Commercial Dog Walker Permit Policy.

Assuming that City Council adopts the report recommendations for a Commercial Dog Walker Permit Policy, staff intends to begin implementation as soon as possible. In order to ensure that all of the necessary administrative systems are in place prior to implementation, the effective implementation date recommended is the later of September 4, 2007 and the day after the set fine order is issued by the province. Accordingly, adjustments to the Parks, Forestry and Recreation operating budget for implementation of this policy will be deferred until the 2008 operating budget cycle. Estimated revenues and expenditures will be reviewed annually, once the program is in operation.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agree with the financial impact information.

Summary

The proposed Commercial Dog Walker Permit Policy is linked to the Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) Division's People, Dogs and Parks Strategy, which pertains to the provision of off-leash areas in City parks, greenspaces and waterfront areas. Managing the activities of commercial dog walkers will help ensure the safety and enjoyment of all park users and contribute to the overall success of the People, Dogs and Parks Strategy. The issues surrounding people, dogs, and parks have had a long history and need to be addressed through policy development and collaborative partnerships with all park users.

The objective of the proposed Commercial Dog Walker Permit Policy and the associated amendments to the Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 608, Parks, is to enable City staff to better manage and monitor the activities of commercial dog walkers to ensure that the number of dogs under their control at any one time is manageable and their activities do not interfere with the

safety and enjoyment of other park users. Additionally, the Commercial Dog Walker Permit Policy and revised Municipal Code requirements include enforcement mechanisms to ensure that all dogs being walked by commercial dog walkers are licensed and that these individuals and or companies obtain and carry a visible Commercial Dog Walker Permit when utilizing City Parks, greenspaces and waterfront areas for their activities.

The Commercial Dog Walker Permit will require all individual dog walkers and companies who walk from four to six dogs at any one time to obtain a permit issued by Parks, Forestry and Recreation. An annual permit payment fee of \$200.00 is being recommended for individual commercial dog walkers and an incremental fee range for larger dog walking companies as outlined in Attachment 1. The permit revenue will be allocated to Parks, Forestry and Recreation. The Commercial Dog Walker Permit Policy, fee and system will be evaluated by staff in one year's time to determine its effectiveness.

At a public consultation session held on June 13, 2007 the commercial dog walkers in attendance reinforced the value of their presence as the eyes and ears of Toronto parks, greenspaces and waterfront areas. This group of responsible commercial dog walkers contribute to the safety of our parks and provide public education by promoting responsible dog ownership and appropriate dog etiquette.

The report recommends adoption of the proposed Commercial Dog Walker Permit Policy, for commercial dog walkers using City of Toronto parks, greenspaces or waterfront areas, as outlined in Attachment 1.

Background Information

Staff

(<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/pe/bgrd/backgroundfile-5227.pdf>)