

TO: CITY MANAGER DATE: 1998 SEPTEMBER 17

FROM: DIRECTOR PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL SERVICES

SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF OFF-LEASH AREAS FOR DOGS IN PARKS

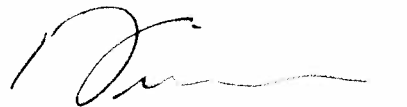
PURPOSE: To request Council to amend Burnaby Animal Control Bylaw No. 9609 and Park Regulation Bylaw 7331 to accommodate the permanent and seasonal off-leash areas in public park locations as described in the attached report.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT Burnaby Animal Control Bylaw No. 9609 and Park Regulation Bylaw 7331 be amended to accommodate the permanent and seasonal off-leash areas in public park locations as described in the attached report.

REPORT

At its meeting of 1998 September 16, the Parks and Recreation Commission received the attached staff report on the above subject and adopted the eight recommendations contained therein.



KATE FRIARS
DIRECTOR PARKS, RECREATION
AND CULTURAL SERVICES

tc

Attachment

c:\data\wp\council\ 980917

cc: Director Planning & Building
Director Finance
Director Tax & Licence
City Solicitor
Purchasing Agent
CUPE Local 23 President
Human Resources

SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF OFF-LEASH AREAS FOR DOGS IN PARKS

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT permanent designation of the off-leash area for dogs in Confederation Park described in this report be approved.
2. THAT permanent designation of the off-leash area for dogs in Robert Burnaby Park described in this report be approved.
3. THAT designation of the off-leash area for dogs in Fraser Foreshore Park described in this report be approved on a seasonal basis (October 1st through March 31st inclusive) for a six month trial period commencing 1998 October 1.
4. THAT designation of the off-leash area for dogs in Barnet Marine Park described in this report be approved on a seasonal basis (October 1st through March 31st inclusive) for a six month trial period commencing 1998 October 1.
5. THAT Council be requested to amend Burnaby Animal Control Bylaw No. 9609 and Park Regulation Bylaw 7331 to accommodate the permanent and seasonal off-leash areas in public park locations as described herein.
6. THAT the expenditure of \$15,000 from the 1998 Capital Budget be approved for trail improvements and signage for the off-leash areas as described in this report.
7. THAT the expenditure of \$25,000 for trail improvements for the west portion of Robert Burnaby Park be considered in a future Capital Budget, pending an environmental review.
8. THAT a copy of this report be forwarded to the Burnaby Canine Society and the S.P.C.A.

REPORT

1.0 SUMMARY

The following synopsis summarizes the central issues concerning this project:

- The initiative for creating off-leash areas for dogs in public parks originated with a delegation of dog owners in North Burnaby in 1995 who appeared before Council and Commission with the request that a portion of a neighborhood park be designated for off-leash use.

- The Commission instructed staff to work with the delegation whose committee recommendations resulted in a successful one year trial period in two park locations.
- Off-leash areas were proposed for portions of Confederation Park, Robert Burnaby Park and Fraser Foreshore Park. Three open house meetings introduced the notion of off-leash areas to the public whose input indicated they were in favour of the project. A one year trial period was approved by Commission for the former two sites listed above with signs posted at Fraser Foreshore Park indicating it as a future option and inviting public input.
- Public input from SPCA reports, correspondence and on-site surveys during the trial period favours the creation of permanent off-leash areas in Burnaby.
- Two permanent off-leash areas are proposed, one in Confederation Park, the other in Robert Burnaby Park.
- Two seasonal (winter use) off-leash areas are proposed for a six (6) month trial period in open lawn areas of Fraser Foreshore Park and Barnet Marine Park in response to the spatial, environmental and jurisdictional concerns regarding the formerly proposed linear segment of the Fraser Foreshore trail east of Boundary Road. Wintertime use is expected to conflict less with scheduled picnics and events and the April arrival of migratory and ground nesting birds.
- The area west of the B.C. Hydro corridor in Robert Burnaby Park currently possesses significant undesignated trail activity by the general public, including dog owners. This report recommends that trail improvements be considered in a future Capital Budget, pending an environmental study. This area, as an adjunct area to the BC Hydro corridor, could potentially be designated for off-leash use.

2.0 BACKGROUND

A delegation appeared before Council in 1995, August, and requested the establishment of an off-leash fenced enclosure in Burnaby Heights Park. Council referred the matter to the Parks and Recreation Commission who instructed staff to work with the delegation to help meet the request, if possible.

A Committee composed of the delegation, the SPCA and staff from the Planning, Licence and Parks and Recreation Departments conducted research into off-leash facilities in other municipalities and derived criteria by which to locate and design off-leash areas in Burnaby. This resulted in a preliminary concept for an off-leash enclosure to be managed by the Burnaby Canine Society and three limited off-leash areas in portions of Confederation Park, Robert Burnaby Park and Fraser Foreshore Park, all District Level public parks.

The above concept was approved in principle at the 1996 June 19 Commission meeting, pending public input. Three public open house meetings were conducted in the Fall of 1996 at which time it was determined that support for the project was high among those citizens who attended and completed questionnaires. A trial period of one year commencing 1997 July 01 was approved for the Confederation Park and Robert Burnaby Park sites at the 1997 March 19 meeting. It was recommended that signs be posted at the Fraser Foreshore site advising the public that the site was a proposed future off-leash area.

Public input on this project was encouraged during the trial period and all correspondence was compiled in a separate file for review. Since the trial period has drawn to a close, the public commentary was evaluated and further on site surveys were conducted and reviewed by the citizen/staff committee which led to the recommendations contained in this report.

3.0 PUBLIC INPUT

A Community Needs and Preferences survey was conducted in 1996 prior to the commencement of the one year trial period for off-leash areas in which 1,426 respondents were asked to gauge their preference, amongst a range of topics, for the provision of off-leash areas for dogs in Burnaby. The response was almost evenly balanced between those who thought the issue was "important" or "very important," and those who determined the issue was "unimportant" or "very unimportant" (35 percent versus 37 percent respectively). Twenty-eight percent ranked the issue as neutral. It was concluded that the off-leash project was appropriately scaled in relation to the high rate of non-committal responses.

The three public open house meetings conducted in the Fall of 1996 were attended by a total of 120 citizens, over 90 percent of whom were residents of Burnaby and the majority of whom completed a questionnaire at the meetings. There was 94 percent support for the establishment of unenclosed off-leash areas in Confederation Park, Robert Burnaby Park and the Fraser Foreshore among respondents. Ninety-one percent of respondents supported the establishment of an off-leash enclosure in Confederation Park, with 83 percent supporting the establishment of an additional enclosure at Robert Burnaby Park if managed by a private non-profit society.

The central issues identified by respondents concerning this project were the provision of a dog waste disposal system, safety through surveillance, visibility and distance from traffic, the ability of dog owners to keep their dogs under control at all times and the provision of amenities such as lighting, parking, drinking fountains for people and dogs, and seating. The results of the above questionnaire responses were presented to Commission at the 1997 March 19 Commission meeting.

Citizen commentary on this project during the one year trial period was obtained from a summary provided by the SPCA, from citizen correspondence in response to site signage and several newspaper advertisements that encouraged the public to write, and from on-site interviews of park patrons conducted by staff in the two trial off-leash areas.

The SPCA summarized the public input they received in a letter that stated that the positive reports outweighed the negative by a ratio of three-to-one (Attachment #1). The SPCA also reported fewer impounded dogs where off-leash parks were available and many letters from dog owners who were pleased to have local off-leash areas. Some citizens requested an off-leash area in south Burnaby. Areas of concern that require follow up, according to the SPCA, included the issue of dog waste receptacles and potential conflicts between dogs and joggers on narrow trails. During the trial period the SPCA recorded one incident where a dog attack required veterinary care and four complaints from non-dog owners using the off-leash areas.

Of 30 letters received from citizens over the course of the trial period, 18 were in favour of the proposed off-leash areas, 10 letters were against the project, and 2 letters were against the proposed Fraser Foreshore Park location without expressing an opinion about the remaining two sites. Many letters had specific comments and suggestions, both positive and negative, some of which would be helpful in the management of off-leash areas should they be permanently designated.

On-site surveys were conducted at Confederation Park and Robert Burnaby Park, the two officially sanctioned off-leash areas during the trial period. Of a total of 89 persons interviewed, 82 percent supported the off-leash areas in the above locations, 12.4 percent did not favour the off-leash areas and 5.6 percent did not have a strong opinion either way. It should be noted that almost 60 percent of people surveyed were not dog owners. Five owners of small dogs were not in favour of off-leash activity in the park sites because of a fear of larger dogs. On a separate occasion, an elderly citizen approached a Parks employee and commented that she has noticed a marked increase in use and social interaction in Robert Burnaby Park where the off-leash area is located and feels that the park is safer during evenings and weekends.

4.0 RECOMMENDED PERMANENT AND SEASONAL OFF-LEASH AREAS

Attributed to the public support documented above, it is recommended that the limited sites listed below be approved for designation as off-leash areas for dogs, two of them permanently year round. To address concerns over wildlife habitat (predominantly migratory and ground nesting birds arriving in April) and conflicts with other park users, two of the sites are proposed as seasonal off-leash areas. Seasonal use for dogs was a successful program used in Witty's Lagoon Park in Metchosisin, a Capitol Regional District park where bird habitat predominates in a salt water marsh that accommodates dogs during the winter months when nesting activity is minimal. Witty's Lagoon Park is closed to dogs from April 01 to September 30. It was felt this suggestion was a reasonable compromise to year round designation. Further benefits to the public are expected to include a decrease in dog activity in Burnaby parks with higher environmental values and an increase in the winter use of parks with seasonal off-leash areas.

Since research was conducted to determine the off-leash criteria for dogs in public areas in other Lower Mainland, Vancouver Island and Seattle area municipalities, seven off-leash areas in Seattle public parks have been permanently designated so by Seattle Council after a one year trial period. The Vancouver Parks Board allowed off-leash activity in several parks during certain hours of the day over the past few months with undetermined results. The Vancouver Parks and Recreation Department decided that further data should be collected and evaluated prior to a final recommendation on the matter. The Burnaby delegation and staff committee felt that the issue of off-leash areas is best addressed through location rather than by hours of the day.

In all cases, the onus continues to be placed on dog owners to ensure their dog is under their control at all times and to be responsible for their pet's behavior. The leash requirement would be active at all times immediately outside of all off-leash areas. Larger signs are planned for all sites that will detail the above criteria.

Dog waste must be removed from the areas in order to maintain a safe, clean and healthy setting. The most effective means is to provide dog owners with small disposable bags through a dispenser system and require owners to pick up and dispose of the waste in standard park garbage receptacles. The waste would then be emptied weekly by park staff and disposed at the GVRD incinerator.

CUPE Local 23 President has reviewed the proposal and has concurred that City employees will undertake this new job responsibility if compensated through a "dirty pay" premium. A similar agreement is in place for employees who are required to work in raw sewage.

4.1 Confederation Park (Attachment #2)

Year round off-leash designation is proposed for the area approved for the one year trial period, which includes the forested area and the designated trail loop north of Penzance Drive. It is intended to erect signs that demarcate the trail route and indicate that off-leash activity does not extend beyond the park and onto private property, and that access to the waterfront is not allowed. Additional signs will be posted at the trail heads so as to clearly indicate the entry points to the off-leash zone.

The Burnaby Canine Society informed the committee that they have not been able to obtain registration as a non-profit society under the Societies Act to date nor obtain adequate liability insurance to enable them to honour an agreement with the Department to manage an off-leash enclosure at Confederation Park. However, they requested that the option for a managed enclosure be kept open for two more years to enable them to attempt further membership drives and fund raising.

4.2 Robert Burnaby Park (Attachment #3)

Year round off-leash designation is proposed for the area approved for the one year trial period which includes the B.C. Hydro corridor and a clearing near the Hill Avenue parking lot. The currently proposed area is predominantly of an open lawn character and is naturally separated from other park users by understorey growth and existing fencing. The installation of additional cedar rail fence segments and a revision to the existing signs will form part of this proposal and are included in the budget.

It is proposed that the forested area west of the Hydro corridor, which possesses a well-worn undesignated trail, be considered for future official trail improvements to help mitigate pedestrian and bicycle impacts. The area may be recommended for off-leash area expansion in future as demand increases and a demonstrated need for more space becomes more evident. The future study and park improvements are expected to cost approximately \$25,000.

4.3 Fraser Foreshore Park (Attachment #4)

It was determined that the most relevant location for an off-leash area for dogs in South Burnaby was the large open lawn spaces within Fraser Foreshore Park. Alternative sites considered include Patterson Trail, Willard Park, Taylor Park, Byrne Creek Ravine Park, and Central Park, none of which were adequate due to concerns over safety, lack of surveillance, presence of significant wildlife habitat, inappropriate spatial configuration or constraints, conflicts with existing programmed uses, conflicts with nearby residential development and inadequate support amenities.

Due to further concerns about the narrowness of the previously proposed segment of Fraser Foreshore Park immediately east of Boundary Road, the close proximity of the river and light industry and the lack of City jurisdiction below the river's high water mark, it is recommended to relocate the off-leash area to the large open lawn adjacent to the picnic area west of Byrne Road on a seasonal basis (October through March inclusive) for a six month trial period commencing 1998 October 01. The lawn is separated from the nearby businesses and sufficient support amenities, such as parking and washrooms, are located nearby.

The lawn is approximately 2.7 hectares (6.7 acres) in size, large enough to absorb wintertime dog activity. Seasonal use within large open lawn areas would preclude most conflicts with migratory and ground nesting birds, group picnics and other users and would help increase the use of the park during a time of year when it is underutilized. The installation of signage and limited segments of fencing and riparian understorey planting to create boundary zone awareness form part of this recommendation and would help discourage access to the river.

4.4 Barnet Marine Park (Attachment #5)

The philosophy of seasonal use was seen as a viable concept for other parks with large expanses of open lawn that are underused in winter, such as Barnet Marine Park. There is a possibility that the opening of Confederation Park to permanent year round off-leash activity combined with the use of Barnet on a seasonal basis may result in a decrease in off-leash activity in Burnaby Mountain Park and other North Burnaby conservation areas. The central portion of Barnet north of the CPR right-of-way is approximately 10 hectares (25 acres) in size, at least half of which is lawn. It is recommended that seasonal off-leash activity (October through March inclusive) be approved for the open lawn areas for a six month trial period commencing 1998 October 01. Appropriate signage will be erected at that time.

5.0 BYLAW AMENDMENTS

Bylaw No. 9609 (a Bylaw to Regulate the Keeping of Dogs and Other Animals) and the Parks Regulation Bylaw 7331 contain provisions that prohibit off-leash dog activity in the City. The bylaws were amended in 1997 to reflect the one-year trial off-leash program in Confederation Park and Robert Burnaby Park. Further designation would require additional amendments to the bylaws by legal staff under the authority of Council.

6.0 FINANCING

The total cost of the signage, fencing and stream side barrier planting specified for this project is \$15,000. Sufficient General Revenue funds are available and these works are included under the 1998 General Development portion of the 1998-2002 Annual Capital Program. All works occur on park land with all maintenance costs to be included in future operational budgets.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Due to the documented majority positive public reaction resulting from the one year trial period regarding the creation of off-leash areas for dogs in public parks, it is recommended to permanently designate the defined areas within Confederation Park and Robert Burnaby Park as off-leash as described herein. It is also recommended to consider future trail improvements in the forested area of Robert Burnaby Park west of the B.C. Hydro corridor, pending an independent environmental study.

With respect to the environmental, jurisdictional and spatial concerns specifically about the previously proposed off-leash area in Fraser Foreshore Park east of Boundary Road, it is recommended to relocate the off-leash area to the large open lawn portion of the park west of Byrne Road and limit off-leash activity to the winter months (October through March inclusive) for a six month trial period commencing 1998 October 01 as described in this report. It was determined that there are no other adequate park sites available for South Burnaby residents for this use.

Similarly, it is recommended to designate the open lawn areas of Barnet Marine Park for off-leash use on a seasonal basis (October through March inclusive) for a six month trial period commencing 1998 October 1 as described herein. If approved, both seasonal off-leash areas will be evaluated during their trial periods and the results presented to Commission in 1999.

It is estimated that project costs that include the provision of fencing, planting, disposable bag dispensers and signage will be \$15,000.

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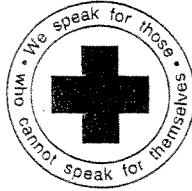
Attachments (5)

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cc: SPCA
Director Planning and Building
Director Finance
Director Tax & Licence
City Solicitor
Purchasing Agent
CUPE Local 23 President
Human Resources

BRITISH COLUMBIA SOCIETY FOR
THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

ATTACHMENT #1



Meredith Botta, BCSLA
Park Designer
City of Burnaby.

June 27, 1998

Re: Off-Leash areas in Confederation and Robert Burnaby parks.

Confederation and Robert Burnaby Parks were designated as temporary "Off-Leash dog areas" by the City of Burnaby. During this trial period the Burnaby SPCA is pleased to report that the positive feedback from this experiment has by far outweighed any negative occurrences.

Upon compiling various reports received during this time, Burnaby SPCA has concluded the following:

- Negative reports were minimal
 - Many of the negative reports were of a trivial nature
 - Three areas of concern required further follow-up
 1. One, dog on dog attack requiring veterinary care
 2. Four complaints from joggers who were sharing the same area as the dogs, no bites occurred but the joggers felt intimidated by the presence of the dogs running at them.
 3. Several complaints were received about dog owners not abiding to the poop and scoop by-law. Some owners were observed scooping but discarding the waste material into the bushes.
- Positive reports outweighed the negatives by a 3:1 ratio.
 - Many Burnaby dog-owning residents were pleased to have a local off-leash area.
 - There were requests from south Burnaby residents for an off-leash area in the south.
 - There were no reports of vicious dog attacks.
 - There was a decrease in the number of impounded dogs in areas where off-leash parks were available.

It is the opinion of the Burnaby SPCA, from the reports received to date, this would appear to be a very positive and worthwhile program. It is suggested that more waste receptacles be placed within the designated areas to aid in the enforcement of the poop-scoop by-law.

Sincerely,

Carson J. Wilson (Superintendent Burnaby SPCA)

CC: Bill Pegler

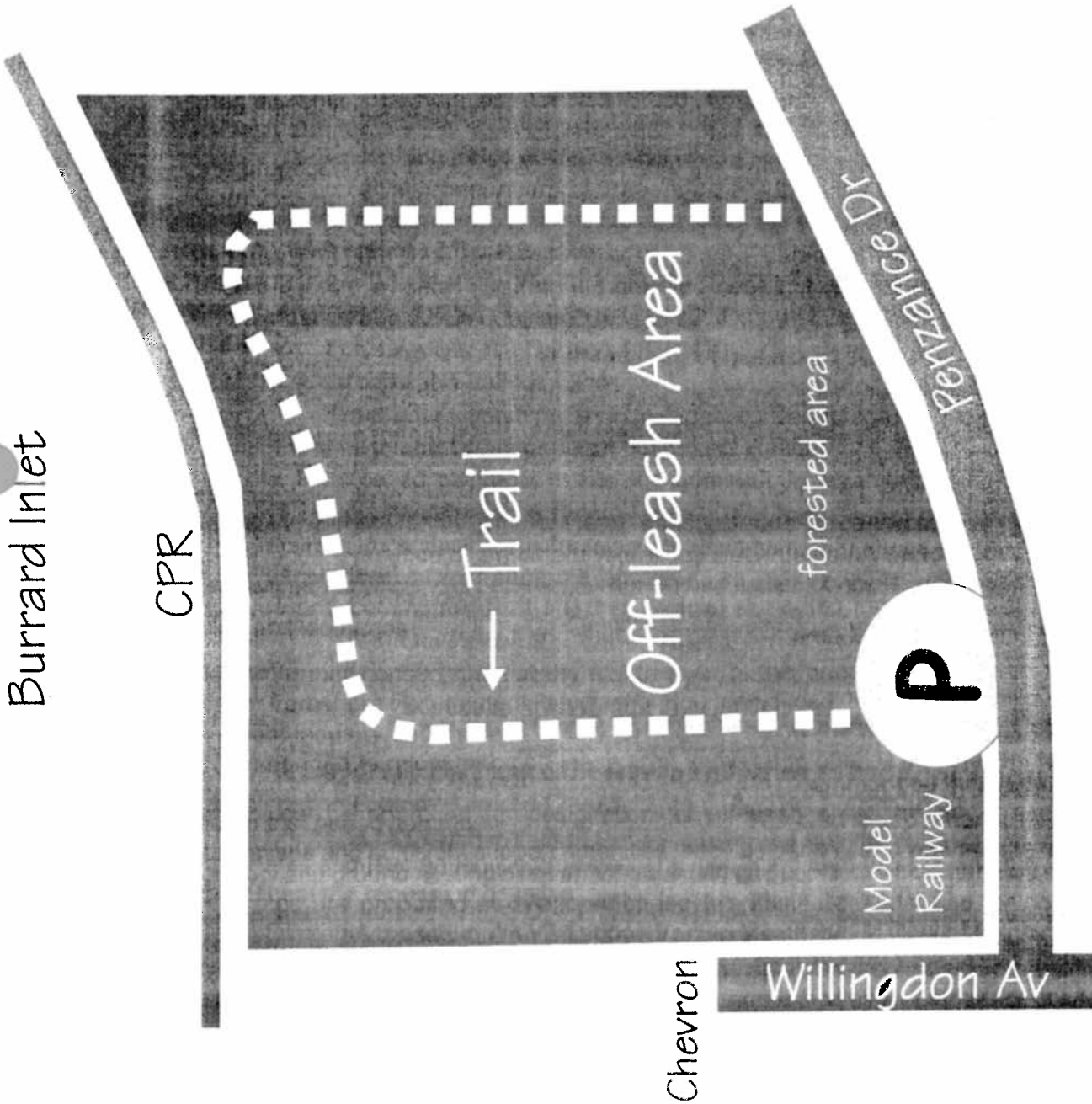
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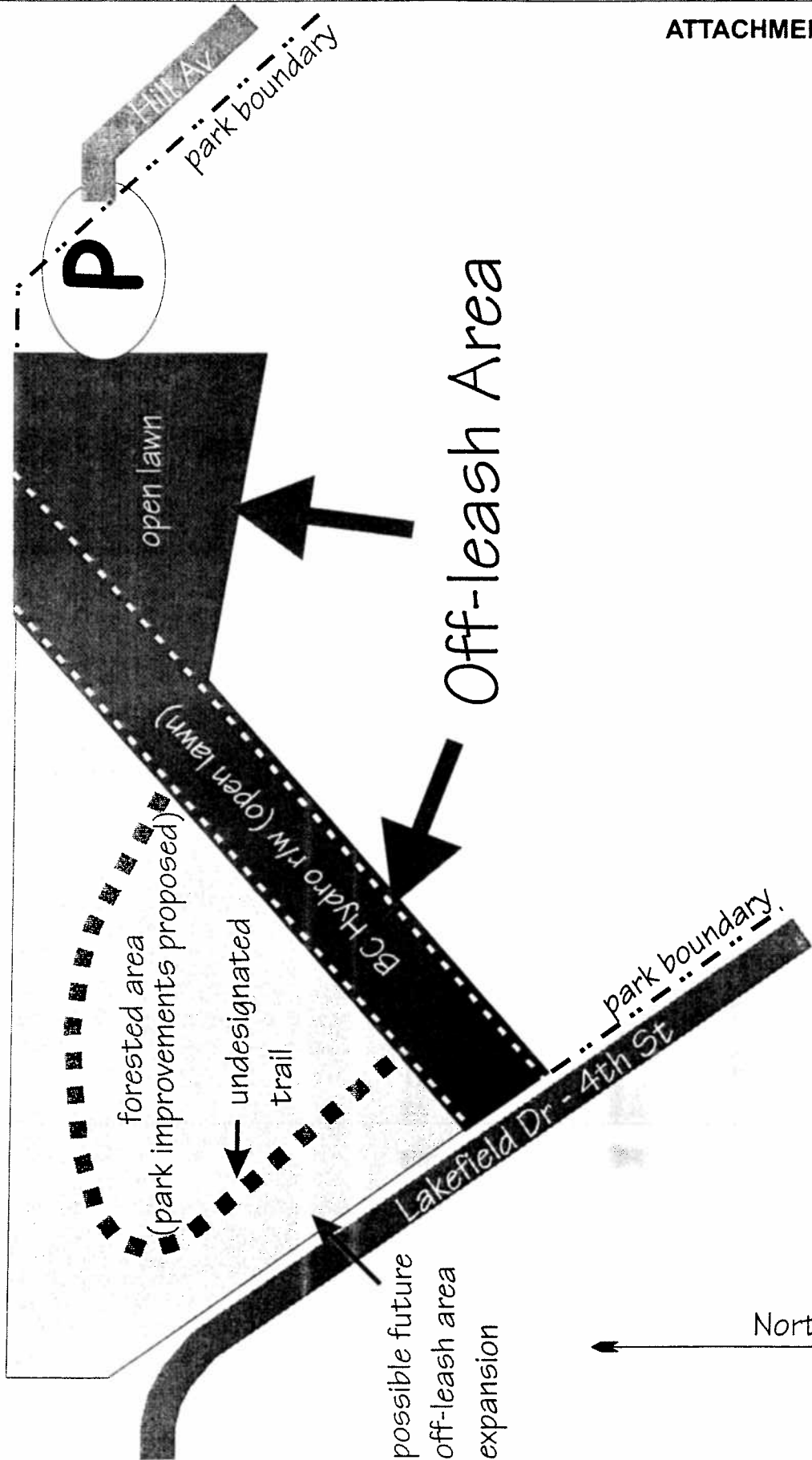
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Dwg. # O.P. 6-1-137s
Date: July 16, 1998
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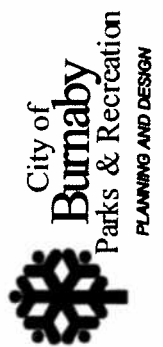
PROPOSED OFF-LEASH AREA FOR DOGS
CONFEDERATION PARK

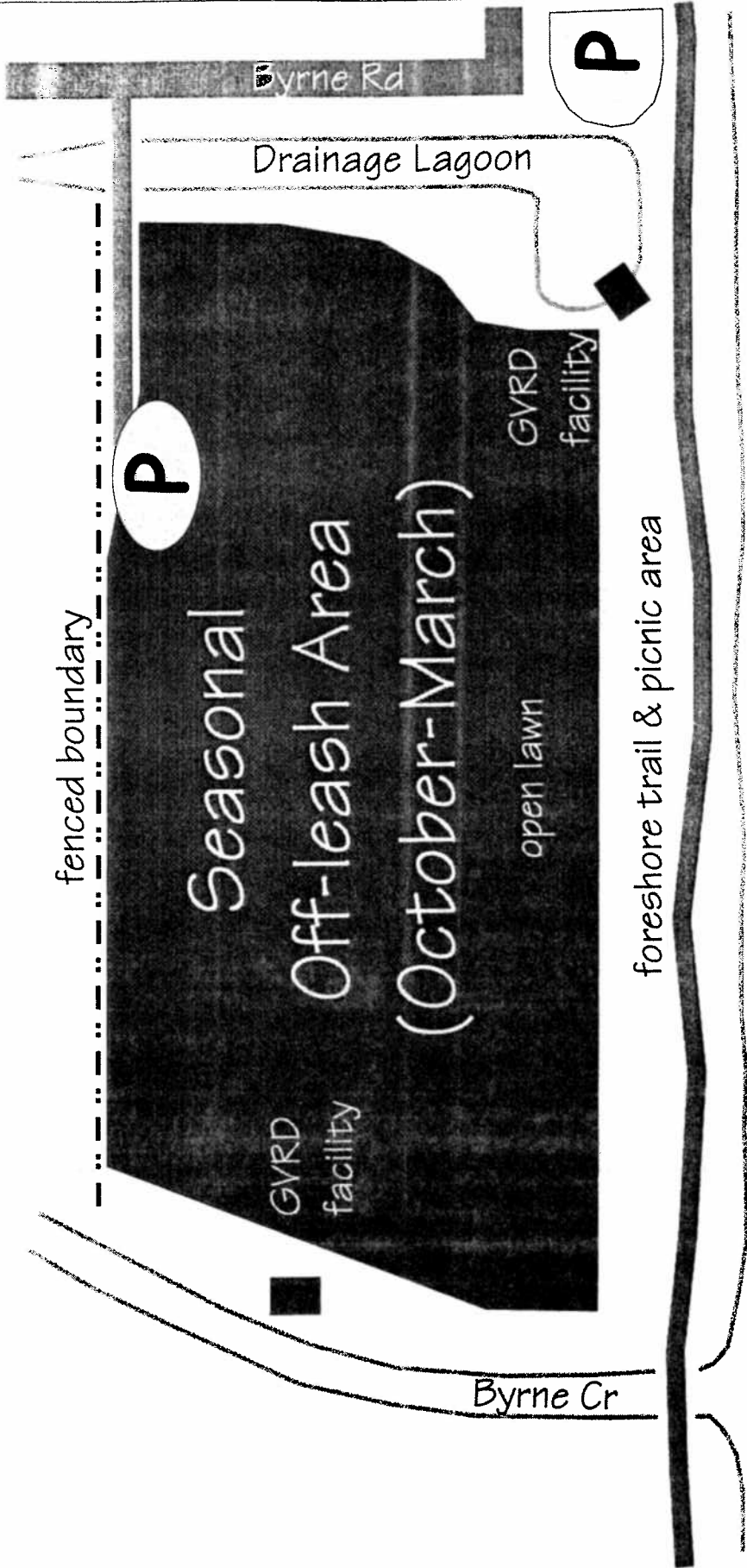


ATTACHMENT #3

Dwg. # O.P. 36-2-47s
 Date: July 16, 1998
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PROPOSED OFF-LEASH AREA FOR DOGS
ROBERT BURNABY PARK



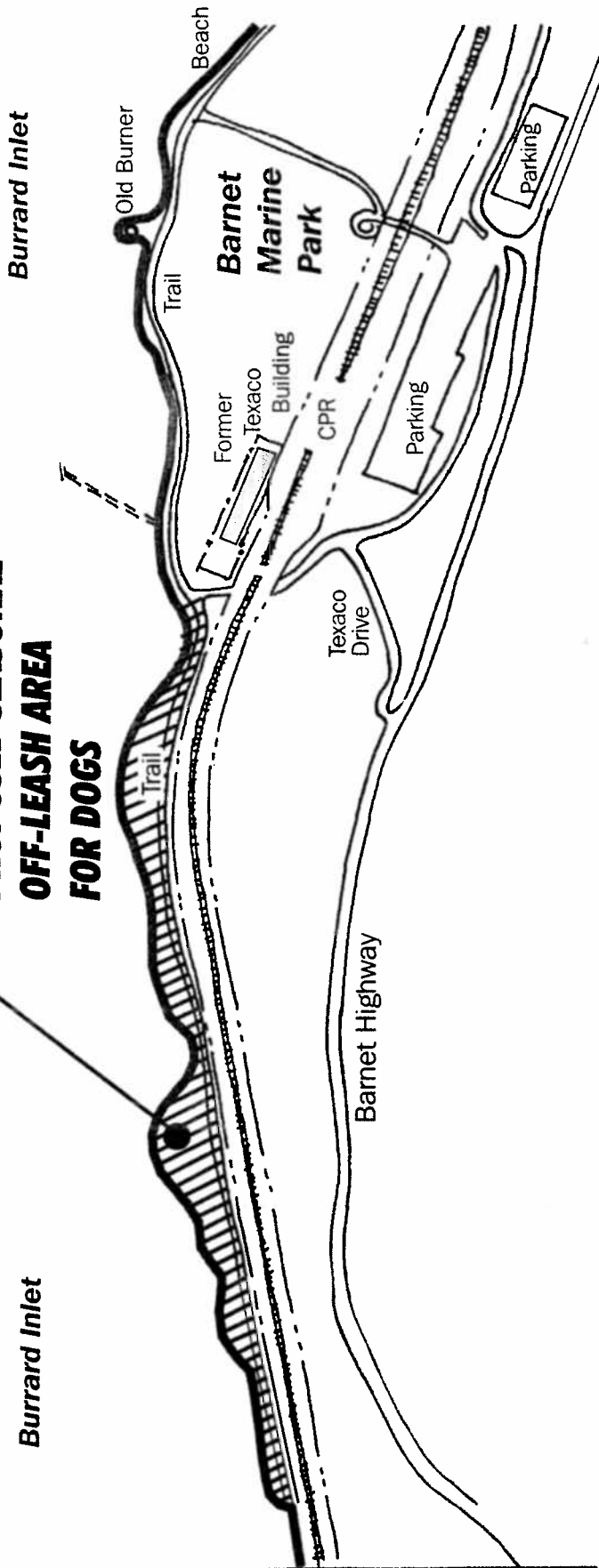


ATTACHMENT #4

Dwg. # O.P. 23-4-62s
 Date: July 16, 1998
 Scale: NTS
 Drawn by: MB

PROPOSED OFF-LEASH AREA FOR DOGS
FRASER FORESHORE PARK

**PROPOSED SEASONAL
OFF-LEASH AREA
FOR DOGS**



ATTACHMENT #5

Dwg. # O.P. 15-2-24s
Date: September, 1998
Scale: nts
Prepared by: HD

**BARNET MARINE PARK:
Proposed Seasonal Off-Leash Area For Dogs**

