

Councillor Leanne Piper & Councillor Cathy Downer

Fenced Leash-Free Dog Park Bristol Street January 20, 2020

The method by which the city decided to build the 3 fenced leash-free dog parks was seriously flawed.

Relying on a survey from the city's website does not get a valid numbers representation of the residents of Guelph. As you know, only 744 people completed the survey from a city whose population is approximately 120,000. That is only 0.00666% !! Of those respondents 53% said their #1 concern was the lack of fenced leash-free parks. That is only 394 people out of approximately 120,000 whose opinions swayed council's decision to vote in favour of the dog parks. To be fair I doubt that the percentages and actual numbers were presented to council that clearly.

Not one resident who lives near the existing dog park at Peter Misersky nor any resident who will be affected by the Bristol Street dog park were canvassed for their opinion. That is deplorable!

As for the other methods of notification for the meetings and votes on the fenced leash-free dog parks a wide range of people, myself included, never saw or had any knowledge of these proceedings. Why ... because many of us are not computer or social media confident and don't access them. Therefore the city website, Twitter, FB posts, screenshapes, etc never reached us or a lot people that we asked. The residents who would be the most directly affected should have been informed either by mail or large advertising signs at the proposed sites. At least then when we are out driving or walking in our community we could have been aware. We needed to be informed/involved BEFORE the decision was made so our input could be considered.

In your Q&A document for the Peter Misersky meeting it states: "We could have informed residents of this better and for that we apologize. Further engagement would not have changed the outcome." Two problems with this statement. 1st – Knowing that there were serious issues not only with your process but also with the continued negative impact on that neighbourhood, you ploughed ahead with the Bristol Street site. 2nd -We get the impression that our input doesn't count. Your decision was already made since "no further engagement would have changed the outcome."

In your Q&A document for the Bristol Street meeting it states: "The city could have communicated how this would impact residents more directly, however there was no alternative sites that were readily constructible etc etc" We ask, if there were no other suitable sites available why was it not suspended until an appropriate site was found?

Studies have stated that fenced leash-free dog parks should not be in residential areas. Surprisingly, all 3 dog parks sites are in residential areas. Another item from

the study states that the fenced leash-free dog parks should have a minimum of 2 acres. Bristol Street dog park will only be 1.25 acres. Seems as though the guidelines are being broken to simply get it done. Unbelievable. The guidelines are there for a reason and to disregard them is ridiculous and irresponsible.

The Bristol Street soccer fields have been removed. We were told that they will be moved to the Eastview sports area. Question ... why were the dog parks not placed out there? Plenty of parking, washrooms, lots of space and most importantly – NOT in a residential area.

We attended the meeting at city hall on Nov. 20th /19 for the Bristol St. dog park. As instructed we supplied our email address so that we could receive any follow-up information from the city regarding this matter. To date we have not received any correspondence from the city. Thankfully a neighbour shared their info with us and others. How are we supposed to stay informed and engaged when the city does not hold up its end of the bargain?

Your response to “where are the residents going to play with their kids and g-kids?” leaves a lot to be desired. The very small portion of Bristol Street Park that is left over does not leave room for exuberant playing like flying kites, Frisbee and simply running. Keep in mind, all of those are activities that get dogs excited so while people are playing, the dogs will be barking. Good grief, that will certainly put a damper on the fun being experienced by families. Also, crossing Wellington Street is not for the faint of heart. After G-parents/parents with small children go up the slope to reach the traffic lights it is an overwhelming experience. The volume of traffic and its corresponding noise is an assault on the senses. Once they do get across the street there is no place to fly those kites or kick those balls. A sad suggestion on your part.

Between this past Christmas and the new year we visited the Peter Misersky dog park. What a disappointment for the neighbourhood. We are shocked at how close it is to the residents’ homes. It was unsightly with very little grass, extensive mud and a surprising number of dog feces left on the ground (both inside and outside the fence). The smell was also an unpleasant fact. This was after that dog park had only been open for less than 6 months. Can’t imagine how bad it will be during and after the spring thaw. How could this type of situation be put upon those poor neighbours? We feel so sorry for them.

Keep in mind, dog owners have a lot of choices within the city where they can have their dogs off-leash. There are 8 unfenced and a further 41 sport fields that can be used when not occupied for their off-leash time. Results from the city survey show that many dog owners will continue to use unfenced leash-free areas. So that being said ... Why are fenced dog parks being forced on neighbourhoods when they have so much impact on those residents?

We cannot forget that there is a continual financial aspect to these parks. Construction, feces disposal, maintenance and monitoring. How can the wants of so few (744 respondents) be imposed on the rest of the 120,000 residents of Guelph?

So, one final thought from our personal experience. Though we are not current pet owners, we had dogs for 40 years. During that time even though we had a yard our dog was walked daily. This was done while keeping control of our dog on a leash. We also were consistent with stoop & scoop which we then took home to dispose of. That was our responsibility as dog owners. Since when is it the entire population's responsibility to provide both a fenced area and a waste disposal system for dog owners? Where is their responsibility?

Please STOP the Bristol Street Dog Park!!!

We wish to thank our councillors Leanne Piper and Cathy Downer for attending a community meeting on December 10, /19 at 281 Bristol Street. We appreciated your time and concern with regards to this issue. Those who attended were pleased to speak with both of you face to face.

Julie & Chris Arthey.

Can't wait for the Bristol st dog park to open so we can enjoy running a it's our friends without having to worry about cars or wild animals!!



Marty Cutting

Good Evening Mr Mayor, Ward 1 Councillors and Clerks Office,

I am a homeowner in The Ward and new to the dog owner life (2 months). Peter Misersky park was recommended to us as a nearby, safe, fun place to take our dog to meet other dogs and to enjoy the outdoors. After visiting a number of times I have heard over and over how controversial the park has been, and how it is impacting the construction of the other two fenced in areas.

I know that a committee of the whole is coming up to discuss this topic and while I will likely be unable to attend (my dog has obedience classes Monday nights) I wanted to share my thoughts and support for this park. I was not aware of the public engagement sessions on the topic nor was I survey respondent so I have thus far been unable to provide feedback but I am invested in this issue. I have read the news articles, listened to other dog owners and read the public engagement summaries.

As a young professional couple we are frequently on the go and find the dog park a wonderful way to let our puppy get his energy out and meet other dogs. We also benefit by being able to meet other dog owners and enjoy the outside. I firmly believe that a park as a whole is meant for residents and families and as anyone with pets know they are part of your family. Being able to enjoy a safe space with your dog in a community park is unbelievably beneficial to our well being and our sanity. We know that the city has many leash free areas that are available to use, however Peter Misersky is fully fenced and with young dogs who aren't always consistently obedient this peace of mind is important. I would not take my dog to an unfenced park at this point in his life but appreciate that they exist and will certainly explore them when the time is right.

Peter Misersky is very popular and I understand that some residents and dog owners are frustrated, but this is ultimately because it is unique and there are no other similar, dedicated facilities in the city. Its position in a residential area makes it part of the community - relegating dogs and their owners to facilities in industrial areas or at the edges of town separates them from that community.

There were a few comments that I thought were particularly interesting in engagement summaries and wished to provide some thoughts.

- Banning toys: Tug toys, balls and frisbees allow dogs to focus on something other than just each other which decreases the likelihood of fights and gets them moving.
- Noise: We have attended the park on many occasions during peak and off peak periods. We have never experienced prolonged barking and howling. The noise is usually coming from resident dogs who want to be out in the park playing and are instead in their homes.

- Traffic: There has always been ample parking as many owners walk to the park. We have never seen the parking lot full nor had any safety concerns. We have however frequently noticed the parking spaces being used by people visiting or living in the residences directly facing the park.
- Uncontrolled and aggressive dogs: We have never met a dog who was unleashed outside of the park and believe that the owners who go to the park understand their responsibilities. I have never felt unsafe at the dog park and have seen owners remove their dog from the park when they were acting aggressively. The fenced aspect of this park makes it safe for the community it sits in.
- Health & Hygiene: While there have been instances of owners not cleaning up after their dogs, this happens frequently in our residential, non-park area as well. This is very disrespectful behaviour but is not unique to a dog park. Our dog had kennel cough when we first got him and we did not take him to the park for a month to ensure that he was not contagious - I expect other dog owners to do the same and respect their fellow dog owners.

Simply put, this facility and more like it are an excellent investment in our city and I am so grateful that the council originally approved it. Removing it and not completing the other parks would be detrimental to the city. Fenced dog parks provide a safe space for dogs to go leash free.

Thank you for your time,

Caleah Campbell, Jack Runge & Mossberg



Pictured: Mossberg after an hour at the park playing with new and old friends.

I am a dog owner and think that the idea of fenced in dog parks is like installing a pee pad in your neighborhood. It is just asking for diseases, dog fights, and irresponsible dog owners. Apparently there was an outbreak of Kennel Cough at the new dog park at Misersky Park. I do not think for one minute that all dogs get along. I cannot believe that Guelph is considering many locations for their squared fenced in areas. Then there is the leash free zones. One was placed in my neighbourhood off of Municipal. The location is unmistakably a huge mistake with no thought put into it at all. It is located near the road, next to a parking lot for the tennis club and next to the children's playground. Obviously no attention has been paid to our dogs safety or the fact that it's next to the children's playground. So frustrated by the lack of thought or education around both leash free and putting in fenced in dog areas. The city of Lindsay has a park which is sitting in a wooded area on the outskirts of town and is quite large in size and fully fenced. Feels more like walking with your dog off leash through the woods. If you must, this might be a solution. Away from peoples houses so they don't have to listen or overlook a dog park. Feel sorry for the people who are subjected to the mess created at Misersky Park. The city needs to own the mistake and remove the park completely. So frustrating.

M Gordon

Hello,

My name is Angela Evans and I would like to submit the following comments for the upcoming council meeting scheduled on February 3, 2020 at 2:00pm.

I have been a resident of Guelph since July, 2000 and have always taken my dogs to run at the Lee Street off-leash Park area since that time. This is a daily activity for me, my family and many more dog owners that I have come to know in our community.

Through the years of attending the Lee Street Park, I can honestly say that I have not had any negative interactions between people using the playground and those individuals using the off-leash park. From my experience, many of the dog owners that visit the park tend to self-regulate each other to ensure that everyone is respectful of maintaining control over their dog as well as everyone inclusively using the park.

As an experienced dog owner, I understand the need for dogs to exercise, run and play to expel their energy. Fencing off part of the off-leash field area at the Lee Street Park will take away this valuable resource of space that is essential to properly take care of our dogs needs. The open space is essential with socializing the number of dogs attending the park daily, especially in the spring, summer and

fall months where there could be up to 20 or so dogs using the park collectively at once.

Our community of dog walking owners, attending this park, daily, is not in favor of fencing in the off-leash dog park, making it smaller, and would like for it to remain Grandfathered in as Status Quo. We support the city's decision to leave Lee Street Park as is. The group has also put forward the recommendation to have the proposed waste station located at the entrance of the park to allow contracted vendors easy access to perform regular maintenance.

I look forward to attend the meeting on February 3, 2020.

Regards,

Angela Evans

Dearest Commitee members,

I would like you to know our personal experience with the Peter Misersky dog park. We moved in directly across the road from where the gate to the dog park stands now in July 2019. A big part of why we bought our condo was because it was so quiet and peaceful. When we purchased our condo there was no indication of an off leash dog park going in 30 yards from our front door.

Here are our experiences with the new off leash dog park:

- * dogs off leash exiting owners vehicles running up to our porch and then to the children's play area
- * dog owners coming to use park before dawn and after dusk, even though a sign is posted stating this rule.
- * dogs barking all day and night
- * people locking cars and honking
- * gate noises exiting and entering
- * it is an eyesore, muddy mess
- * dog owners driving quickly in and out

The number one concern is the barking!

I am at home all day and night and I invite anyone to come over and hear the barking first hand throughout my home. It is very stressful to not want to be in your own home.

Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns.
Sincerely,

Sherry Cox

The best off leash dog park is Crane Park. It is very large with lots of trails so the dogs have lots of room to run and explore. It is mostly shaded so even on a hot summer day, it is quite pleasant. It is big enough that we don't see a lot of other people and the dogs stay in the off leash area easily. I find the trails interesting for myself while I walk my dogs.

Most of the other off leash areas are too small and it is easy for the dogs to go into on leash areas.

I do not use fenced off leash areas. They are boring for me (nothing to do) and I have had bad experiences where other dogs have concerned me about the safety of my dogs.

Thanks for considering this.

Cathy Ralston

Committee of the Whole
Public Services
February 3, 2020 meeting

Subject: Leash Free Implementation Plan, Report Number PS-2020-02

As a resident of Guelph and user of the leash free area at Lee Street Park, I would like to formally support the recommendation put forth by staff to remove the proposal to fence the Lee Street off-leash dog park.

The Lee Street off-leash dog park has been used as an off-leash dog park for at least 20 years by area residents as well described in Angela Evans' submission. I believe this park falls under the protection of subsection 34(9)(a) of the *Planning Act* referred to as 'grandfathering' rights or as 'legal non-confirming use' rights for the reason mentioned above.

Thank you for your time.

Lise Rodgers

This is my reflection on the leash-free fenced-in dog park in Peter Misersky Park. About three years ago, I moved to Guelph with my dog, looking for a place to call home. A quiet place, away from Mississauga and Oakville, the two cities I've lived in for over 40 years. Throughout my lifetime, I've had many dogs and regularly frequented several dog parks in the GTA. None of those were anywhere near residential homes, community gardens, or children's playgrounds.

In July 2017, I purchased a house on Leacock Avenue because it backed onto a quiet park with a beautiful community garden and children's playground. I would have an extended view of park and forest, with the added bonus of not having neighbours directly behind me. Privacy at its best. Living on the edge of the park

has been uneventful, except for calling 911 after spotting a bonfire in the forest just beyond my yard.

Life has changed in my neighbourhood since this dog park opened in the fall of 2019. There's unreasonable and never-ending noise. Dogs who live on my street and are in their own backyards are barking constantly now, too. People passing through the park along my fence-line with their dogs are telling our dogs to be quiet....in not-to-nice ways. I hear the constant barking from the dogs in the park at all times of the day and this sets my dog – and my neighbours' dogs – off. People are in the dog park early! I'm up everyday between 5-6am and they are there. I can see them from my bedroom window. My dog is barking at them from the backyard that early when I let her out in the backyard for her morning routine. They are there. I hear the loud clanging of the metal gates, I see the cars parked on my street on the weekends, I see owners walking their dogs to the leash-free area and NOT picking up their dog's poop in the park AND in the leash-free area. Yes, I've seen this time and time again.

I am a strong advocate for leash-free, fenced-in dog parks. My dog has grown up visiting leash-free parks all over Mississauga, Oakville, Burlington, and Etobicoke like: Jack Darling, Etobicoke Creek, Meadowvale East, and Appleby. All of these parks are AWAY FROM RESIDENTIAL areas and do not disturb residences, or pose a threat to children in parks, or take away from a quiet environment.

I am disappointed that the City of Guelph built a park based on such a small representation of residents. In a city of over 130,000, how is it so urgent to build a dog park based on the low number of people answering the survey? Which, by the way, I am a little confused by the surveys the City is referring to because they make it appear that SO MANY PEOPLE ANSWERED SO MANY SURVEYS. I answered a survey, but never in a million years would I think a leash-free park would be built around me without actually telling me (a resident that lives beside PM Park) that it might happen. I am even more disappointed with the City's answer to the question around direct neighbours NOT being consulted. Here's the written answer in the document posted by the City:

13. Why weren't neighbours consulted?

The City used a combination of municipal comparators, knowledge and inventory of our own parks and open spaces and consultation from our Leash-Free Policy to inform site selection. Engagement was completed as a part of the Leash-Free Policy development. Site selection for these amenities was ultimately determined by evaluating sites within the current park inventory. These sites are the best-suited spots for fenced leash-free areas that meet the leash free policy and site selection criteria and stay within the City's implementation budget. **We could have informed residents of this better and for that, we apologize. Further engagement would not have changed that outcome.**

In consultation with internal stakeholders, Peter Misersky Park was selected because it was one of only two sites that met all the criteria for access, parking, good site lines, and no negative impact to the natural environment or engineering infrastructure. It was constructible and fit the approved budget to construct since there minimal improvements required for the site to accommodate the fence. Based on the information at the time, the decision to proceed was based on input that the city received from over 3,000 people that participated in both the Animal Control Bylaw review and the Leash-Free Policy. The City communicated broadly about the Leash-

Free Policy, the Council decision and construction of the site using media releases, public notices, the City's website and social media feeds and screenshapes in City facilities. Staff are making themselves available to listen and document resident concerns and staff are committed to addressing them and....

And then a similar response for the Bristol Street dog park:

3. Why was decision made prior to having an open consultation with residents in each of the designated areas? Transparent governance?? No!!!

The City used a combination of municipal comparators, knowledge and inventory of our own parks and open spaces and consultation from our Leash-Free Policy to inform site selection. Site selection for these amenities was ultimately determined by evaluating sites within the current park inventory. These sites are the best-suited spots for fenced leash-free areas that meet the leash free policy and site selection criteria and stay within the City's implementation budget. **We could have informed residents of this better and for that, we apologize. Further engagement would not have changed that outcome.**

THIS IS SHAMEFUL!

This is my interpretation of what the City is saying:

Ahem, we think we sent out what was needed to the residents. We got 3,000 (a very low representation of the people who live in this city) to respond. We have a few places that fit THE CITY'S criteria for a park that won't take much money or effort on our part, and it will appease the small amount of dog owners who are screaming for a fenced-in leash-free park. Plus, even though we have some residents close to the park who are opposed to this park that's ALREADY been put in, it really doesn't matter because had we done more surveys, community engagement, and residential meetings, it WOULD NOT HAVE CHANGED A THING. Am I reading the answer to these two questions correctly? Was the city going to put this park in no matter what?

Here is what I think:

The Peter Misersky dog park needs to be removed. We are in the winter season and many people don't venture out in the cold as often. What happens when it warms up? What happens when the park is full of dogs barking until about 10pm on a hot summer night when I'm trying to enjoy a quiet evening on my deck? What happens when the families are coming out with their kids on bikes, in strollers, running to the playground?

What happens when the stench of the urine and feces gets amplified by the heat and humidity? It already smells now in the dead of winter.

The dogs are too close to the playground and community garden. If you know anything about dogs, you know that if they want to, dogs will jump over a chainlink fence. Easy-peasy. I've watched a dog somehow jump over a six-foot solid wooden fence and attack my dog for no reason whatsoever except it wanted to get at my dog or me. I suffered from post traumatic stress disorder from that attack, missed work, had nightmares, and sought counselling. Luckily, my dog only suffered puncture wounds and is now only afraid of most big white dogs. She's still alive. Yay! Can you imagine if that was a child sitting in the playground eating a snack?

Dogs CAN jump fences easily. With small children in the playground, people in the garden, parents bringing food close to the site on a summer afternoon, there is

potential for injury. I could go on and on about how this is an unsafe scenario. Why do you think it's a good idea to have the dogs so close to children?

And here's another question from residents and answer from the City:

18. Assurance dogs are licensed and vaccinated?

Blitzes by bylaw, contractor to enforce This is a rule of the facility, stated clearly on the sign. Bylaw conducts regular patrolling of existing unfenced and fenced leash-free areas and enforces bylaws applicable to the leashfree facility, including the Animal Control Bylaw, Stoop and Scoop Bylaw, Noise Bylaw, etc. Dog licenses fall under the Animal Control Bylaw. If this becomes an issue, staff can investigate solutions further.

Let's talk about dogs being licensed and vaccinated. There's a major outbreak of Kennel Cough in Guelph and yet there is a vaccination to control that. I can only assume this is happening because owners HAVE NOT VACCINATED their dogs. Also, I have yet to hear of any By-Law officer coming to the site to check for dog licenses and vaccination tags. What dates/times have they been there? Do they go during busy times, like the weekends?

And here's another question from residents and answer from the City:

20. How many people have called/contacted city about park? The City received 744 responses to the online survey, 600 telephone survey responses, 28 attendees at the Peter Misersky Park meeting and at least 50 attendees at the Bristol Street Park meeting. Many different staff and councilors have received multiple emails and calls outlining issues and concerns as well as support for the site which is much more difficult to quantify. One of the reasons we wanted to host a meeting was to hear from all local residents to better understand issues and concerns.

It was so easy for the City to deliver the invitation to "the meeting" to local PM Park residents after the park was built. What stopped the City from delivering an invitation to the same residents before building it to hear from the residents how they would be affected directly? One of the reasons they could have hosted a meeting before building the dog park was to HEAR FROM THE LOCAL RESIDENTS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND ISSUES AND CONCERNS.

I read somewhere that there is a recommendation to move the fence-line of the leash-free park. What exactly does that mean? Would it bring it further away from the Mountford Road townhouses and closer to the residents that have backyards on the park? Yikes, that would be even more disrespectful to homeowners.

As I finish up this letter to you, the Council, its is 9:30am on Friday, January 31, and there are eight humans and many more dogs than that in the dog park. The barking is endless. So much for my quiet time.

Here are my issues:

- 1. It's super noisy from before sunrise to way after sunset.**
- 2. It's unsafe because it is too close to children's playground and community garden.**
- 3. It's too small a space for so many dogs.**
- 4. There's not enough parking. People park in front of my house on Leacock to go there.**

5. It's dirty and will get really smelly come the warmer, hotter months.

I beg you to remove the dog park in Peter Misersky as soon as possible. I believe keeping it will only increase the restlessness in the community. Find another place that is much bigger and where people can wander with their dogs. Please do not let this be a pat on the back to the City for fulfilling one single person's personal objective in their role in the City. It's just not right!

Respectfully,
Lili Ziobakas & Chiquita (the Rescue)