

WINNIPEG NETWORK OF DOG OWNER GROUPS INC. (WINDOG)
June 6, 2017 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
ANNUAL REPORT

The Annual Report provides an overview of WINDOG's activities in 2016/17.

A Dog-Friendly City Council

In 2016 WINDOG continued to see the results of its successful campaign to elect a dog-friendly City Council.

As Council's awareness and understanding of the value of off-leash green space grew, WINDOG recognized two more "dog-friendly" Councillors - Janice Lukes (St. Norbert) and Ross Eadie (Mynarski). They joined Mayor Bowman and Councillors Allard, Browaty, Mayes, Morantz, Orlikow, Pagtahan, Sharma, and Wyatt who had declared themselves as dog-friendly during the election and had publicly endorsed WINDOG's model for off-leash dog parks.

A New Role for WINDOG

The change at City Hall had a ripple effect throughout the administration. The significant positive shift in the City's public consultation practices that WINDOG first observed in 2015 continued in 2016. The newly-established Office of Public Engagement (OPE) coordinated public consultations on the creation of a downtown dog park.

In May 2017 the Office of Public Engagement's invited Winnipeggers to consult on the proposed off-leash area master plan. The invitation reflects a significant change in attitude and practice, if not in public policy. OPE's press release states, "The City of Winnipeg is developing an off-leash dog areas master plan to respond to growing interest and demand for off-leash dog areas in Winnipeg...It's estimated that off-leash dog areas may be one of the most popular activities in Winnipeg parks. Off-leash dog parks build stronger community ties by fostering social opportunities for dogs and people.

As attitudes changed, WINDOG role as advocate/lobbyist expanded; City officials called upon to consult on off-leash area matters, specifically with dog parks in the Core Area, the North End, Transcona and St. Norbert.

Bonnycastle Dog Park

In 2015 WINDOG was invited to participate as a stakeholder subject matter expert for the downtown dog park. In February 2016 WINDOG was invited to attend an open house to help select the best of seven proposed sites. WINDOG also provided feedback on a variety of options for amenities and features for the park.

In July 2016 Mayor Brian Bowman fulfilled his campaign promise to dog loving voters, holding a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Bonnycastle Dog Park. It was the city's first new off-leash area since 2008.

Devonshire Dog Park

In April 2016 WINDOG was invited to meet with Transcona Councillor Russ Wyatt, Parks and Open Space planners, and NADI Design consultants to review a draft conceptual plan for a new 1.2 acre dog park in Devonshire Village.

Devonshire is the first dog park to be built in a new subdivision – a joint venture between the City of Winnipeg and Genstar, the developer of Devonshire Village.

The fully fenced, double-gated off-leash area was designed with the safety and comfort of dogs and dog owners in mind. There's an area for dogs over thirty pounds and a separate area for smaller dogs.

WINDOG was concerned about the lack of shade in the small dog enclosure, noting that there was very little in the main off-leash area. WINDOG recommended more trees and benches be included in the concept plan. The coalition supported Councillor Wyatt's call for a dog waste bag dispenser and an underground bin at the entrance to the park with additional bins throughout.

The concept plan was modified to include all of WINDOG'S recommendations. Devonshire will open in September.

King's Park

On April 4, 2017 St. Norbert City Councillor Janice Lukes held a public meeting to solicit feedback from dog owners on proposed upgrades to King's Park's off-leash area. The Councillor invited WINDOG to speak to the group to share information on best practices in dog park management and provide an update Winnipeg's off-leash area management plan.

St. John's Park

In February 2017 Mynarski Councillor Ross Eadie informed WINDOG that the City would be creating a redevelopment plan for St. John's Park's in Winnipeg's North End. The Councillor expressed interest in designating part of St. John's Park as an off-leash area and requested that WINDOG consult with the City on the master plan. WINDOG agreed to do that.

Advocacy

In 2016 WINDOG continued to focus on its original mandate - advocating for high-quality off-leash green space.

As WINDOG's reputation as the "go to" group for dog park guidance grew, so did the demand for our services. We responded to requests from Winnipeg dog owners who wanted to know how to establish an off-leash dog park in their neighbourhood. The coalition offered its support to groups in Winnipeg's North End, St. Boniface, and St. Vital.

Old Exhibition Grounds Dog Park

On March 1, 2016 WINDOG Directors met with the "Friends of a North End Dog Park" organizer, Nicole Passalis, to discuss a proposal to designate a partially fenced, unused parcel of land at the Old Exhibition Grounds as a dog park. Over the next three months WINDOG worked closely with the organizer and helped Friends launch and execute a campaign to persuade City Council to designate a portion of the green space as an off-leash area.

WINDOG's support included:

- Providing technical advice on lobbying processes and strategies.
- Providing technical advice on creating a Facebook page and strategies for communicating through social media.
- Preparing a draft petition.
- Creating posters, maps and a letter of support template for the organizer to hand out to local organizations, vets, etc.
- Contacting the local MLA, MP, and community leaders to ask for their support.
- Creating a PowerPoint presentation to deliver to community groups, elected officials, etc.
- Contacting Animal Services COO to request the number of dogs living in the North End to support the initiative.
- Publishing material to raise awareness of the campaign including the article, "A Community Working Together for a North End Dog Park", for WINDOG's website.
- Attended a number of key community events to speak in support of a North End dog park and gather signatures for the Friend's petition. We attended Ma Mawi Cha Itata Centre's 16th Annual Pow Wow, weekly "Meet Me at the Watchtower" events the opening of MLA Kevin Chief's campaign office.
- Attending meetings and making presentations to the following community groups: William White Residents Association, Dufferin Residents Association, the Bear

Clan, the Aboriginal Family Centre, the Aboriginal Youth Organization and AYO Politix at Neechi Commons,.

- Meeting with the President of Ralph Brown Community Centre and securing a commitment from Graffiti Art Programming artists to create a North End dog park logo.
- Arranging individual meetings with City Councillors to lobby for the off-leash area.
- Developing written submissions and PowerPoint presentations for meetings with Councillors and the Lord Selkirk-West Kildonan Community Committee.

As a result of WINDOG's collaboration Friends, the group collected 1200 signatures from residents of Point Douglas and Mynarski wards and secured ten letters of support from community organizations in less than 6 weeks.

On May 17, 2016 WINDOG and Friends appeared in delegation at the Lord Selkirk-West Kildonan Community Committee. The Friends presented their petition and letters of support and asked Councillors Pagtakhan, Eadie and Sharma to support their proposal.

The committee declined to endorse the Old Exhibition Grounds or any location as a dog park, preferring to wait until the off-leash area master plan is complete. However, WINDOG's and the Friends' efforts were effective in raising the Councillors' awareness of the need for off-leash space in the North End. There is little doubt that our work influenced Councillor Eadie's interest in designating an off-leash area in nearby St. John's Park in 2018.

East Norwood

On March 6, 2017 WINDOG appeared in delegation at a meeting of the Standing Policy Committee on Protection, Community Services and Parks. WINDOG made a presentation in support of the Riel Community Committee's motion to establish an off-leash dog park on an unused parcel of green space next to the Heather Curling Rink in St. Boniface.

The Committee referred the matter to the administration for consideration when the off-leash area master plan is complete.

King George V Dog Park

On April 6, 2017 WINDOG Directors met with Rene Bisson, the champion of a dog park for King George V, to discuss a proposal to have the City designate a partially fenced, otherwise unused parcel of land as an off-leash area. The space has been used as an "unofficial" off-leash park for many years.

Over the next month WINDOG worked closely with the organizer and helped "Friends of King George V Dog Park" launch and execute a campaign to persuade City Council to approve the proposal.

WINDOG's support included:

- Providing technical advice on lobbying processes and strategies.
- Providing technical advice on creating a Facebook page and strategies for communicating through social media.
- Preparing a draft petition for the group to circulate to dog owners, other park users and neighbours.
- Creating a template for a letter of support that the organizer could hand out to local organizations, vets, etc.
- Arranging a meeting with the Riel Community Committee.
- Developing WINDOG's written submission and creating PowerPoint presentations for WINDOG and the Friends of King George V Dog Park.

On May 1, 2017 WINDOG and Friends appeared in delegation at the Riel Community Committee meeting and made presentations in support of designating an off-leash area at King George V Park. The committee declined to endorse the location as a dog park, preferring to wait until the off-leash area master plan is complete.

WINDOG successfully lobbied the City to have Friends of King George V Dog Park included in the off-leash area master plan stakeholder consultations.

Government Relations

- As City Council's awareness and understanding of the value of off-leash green space grew, Councillors increasingly reached out to WINDOG for information and advice.
- In February 2017 Mynarski Councillor Ross Eadie informed WINDOG of his proposal to designate a new off-leash area in St. John's Park in the North End. The proposed designation is likely to happen in 2018, in honour of the 125th anniversary of Winnipeg parks. WINDOG agreed to the Councillor's request to act as a consultant for the project.
- In March 2017 St. Norbert Councillor Janice Lukes asked WINDOG to coordinate surveys of Maple Grove and Kilcona Park users to help identify dog owners who use King's Park's off-leash area so she could invite them to a public consultation.
- In March 2017 WINDOG met with St. Boniface Councillor Matt Allard to discuss his view that citizens rather than elected officials champion the creation of dog parks, and his proposal for an off-leash area in East Norwood site.

Community Relations

- In April 2016 WINDOG met Winnipeg Humane Society CEO, Javier Schwersensky. WINDOG made a formal presentation, providing information on the coalition's formation, structure, mandate, activities and results achieved. We discussed our mutual desire to work together and opportunities to further our

interests, including offering the Humane Society's CEO a seat on WINDOG's Board of Directors.

- WINDOG worked with Animal Services COO, Leland Gordon on the publication of "Winnipeg Animal Services – a Dog's Best Friend". The article, which was published on WINDOG's website, was well-received by the target audience and was re-posted by dog park clubs and several other advocacy groups.
- In July 2016 WINDOG Directors visited Niverville Dog Park, bringing congratulations on opening day to the project's volunteer coordinator and Niverville's CAO. We also and discussed details of how the project was managed and learned that Scatliff, Miller and Murray, the consultants for Winnipeg's downtown dog park, visited the dog park and incorporated many of its design features and amenities into Bonnycastle Park.
- In December 2016 WINDOG's President was appointed to the Winnipeg Animal Services Advisory Board.

The role of the Advisory Board is to provide advice on the Agency's strategic operations and on changes to its mandate, structure, business practices and finances. The Board reviews and comments on the Agency's proposed business plans, quarterly and annual reports, and operating charter revisions.

Members of the Board are:

Civic Government

- CoW Chief Corporate Officer - Michael Jack
- CoW Finance and Administrative Services Manager - Kelly Lemoine
- Animal Services Agency Chief Operating Officer - Leland Gordon
- Animal Services Field Operations /Court Coordinator - Jennifer Harrower

Non –government - (appointed by City Council)

- President WINDOG and KPDC - Donna Henry
- MB Chief Veterinary Officer - Dr. Megan Bergman
- Pet Land Canada Director of Marketing - Roger Salem
- Winnipeg Humane Society CEO Javier Schwersensky
- MB Veterinarian Association - Dr. Lynn Webster
- Canadian Union of Public Employees Executive - Mike Wakefield

Communications - Print, Broadcast, and Social Media

In 2016 WINDOG's website and Facebook page continued to play important roles in communicating matters of importance to the dog park community and city officials; educating the general public about the value of off-leash green space; raising awareness of off-leash area issues; informing the public about the WINDOG; and winning the support of dog loving voters.

WINDOG's excellent working relationships with local print and broadcast media paid off with universally favorable coverage of the coalition and support for the

issues raised, particularly the erosion of off-leash green space. Reporters from major media outlets invited WINDOG to comment on virtually every “dog park” story and they frequently used WINDOG as a resource when researching a story.

Major 2016 WINDOG Website and Facebook News Coverage

- News - “The Erosion of Winnipeg’s Off-leash Recreational Greenspace”
- News - “A Community Working Together for a North End Dog Park”
- News - “Dog Parks Encourage Community Interaction”. (Winnipeg Free Press)
- News - Niverville Dog Park opening
- News - King’s Park public consultation
- News - Bonnycastle Dog Park ribbon cutting ceremony. (CBC, CTV, Free Press)
- News - Devonshire Dog Park construction begins, design details.
- News - “City Council Approves Funding for an Off-leash Area Master Plan”.
- News - “City Moves Forward on Off-leash Area Management Plan”
- News – “Engaging the Public – Winnipeg’s Off-leash Dog Park Master Plan”.
- Editorial - “A Point Of View on the Pawshest Dog Park in Town”.

Print and Broadcast Media

- Interviews with CTV News, CBC News and their public information programs re loss of off-leash space.
- Interviews with CTV New and CBC News and their public affairs program re opening of Bonnycastle Park.
- Helped CTV locate a dog owner re news that a condo developer objected to creation of Bonnycastle Dog Park.
- Contacted animal welfare groups, dog-friendly city officials and others on behalf of CBC Radio-Canada for interviews and filming for the Voyage de chiens documentary.

Off-leash Area Master Plan

On May 31 and June 1, 2017 approximately forty individuals, including six from WINDOG, attended the stakeholder meetings at the South Winnipeg and East Elmwood Community Centres to share ideas on the plans mission and value statements, criteria for establishing off-leash areas, and levels of service for neighbourhood, community and regional dog parks. WINDOG was there to provide subject matter expertise. The meetings were welcome signal that after a year of delays, work had finally begun on Winnipeg’s long-awaited off-leash dog park master plan.

In March 2016, City Council approved \$100,000 in funding to develop the plan and in April the Standing Policy Committee on Protection, Community Services and Parks became the plan’s steering committee. Winnipeg’s dog community was pleased to learn

that the Councillors wanted the plan in place as quickly as possible. However, by late fall it was apparent that whatever process was in place had stalled.

On January 16, 2017 WINDOG appeared in delegation before the Standing Policy Committee to inquire about the status of the master plan. The Manager of Parks and Open Space reported that the City had received a consultant's proposal and work was expected to begin in February.

On March 6, 2017 WINDOG appeared before committee for a second time to inquire about the status of the plan. Parks and Open Space reported that a consultant has been hired and a timeline developed. Internal stakeholders (WASA, Parks, etc.) were scheduled to meet in April, external stakeholders in May, and public consultations were scheduled for June. The plan was expected to be completed and presented to Council in the fall.

On March 29, 2017 WINDOG the Master Plan Project Manager, Rob Zanewich, advised WINDOG that the City was ready to start stakeholder consultations and that a long list of external stakeholders had been compiled.

In May WSP/MMM Group, the project consultants, sent invitations to external stakeholders. WINDOG immediately identified that the list of invitees was heavily weighted to non-dog park stakeholders.

The City invited approximately 80 sports organizations, community groups, other park users groups, individuals "with more than average interest in dog parks", and agencies like Manitoba Hydro and Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA) to participate. Sport Manitoba and the WRHA were invited to send two representatives.

Only WINDOG, Kilcona Park Dog Club, and Maple Grove Park Dog Owners Association were invited to represent thousands of dog park users; each was allowed to send one representative. Little Mountain Park Dog Club, the official park steward was not invited; Little Mountain Park Pet Owners Association, which had no official status, was invited. Shelters, rescues, and other dog park and animal welfare groups were excluded.

WINDOG contacted the master plan project manager and the consultants, protesting the biased representation. WINDOG provided a comprehensive list of dog park stakeholders and requested that they be invited. WINDOG also negotiated an agreement that the coalition would send six representatives instead of one.

Membership

In February 2016 Brenda Leipsic Dog Parkers (BLDP) withdrew from WINDOG, citing a "misalignment of values" between the two organizations. WINDOG agreed with that assessment. Whereas WINDOG's view is that Winnipeg has a serious shortage of high-quality off-leash green space and its mission is to advocate for more, this was not a priority for BLDP Board.

The catalyst that prompted Brenda Leipsic's withdrawal was WINDOG public opposition to the loss of 20 acres of off-leash green space that was being re-purposed for bus rapid transit through the Parker Wetlands.

When Brenda Leipsic re-opens in 2019 it will have gone from being Winnipeg's second largest off-leash areas to one of the smallest. However Brenda Leipsic's Board was satisfied that dog owners would be well-compensated for the loss of half of the green space with fencing and other amenities the City had offered. WINDOG did not support the "land for amenities swap".

WINDOG's position is that off-leash area stewardship groups that do not support the mandate of securing more – not less – quality off-leash green space cannot be WINDOG members.

Board Administration

In 2016 WINDOG's Board strengthened its structure by creating Conflict of Interest Guidelines for Directors, an Oath of Office, and Code of Conduct. The Board also developed a job descriptions for each Director, and a policy governing the appointment Emeritus Directors.

The Future – 2017/18

Off-leash Dog Park Master Plan

WINDOG will work to influence the development of an appropriate off-leash area city-wide master plan through the City of Winnipeg's stakeholder and public consultation processes.

WINDOG will continue to:

- urge the City to adopt its 3-tier model of neighbourhood, community and regional dog parks.
- propose that dog parks be reserved for the exclusive use of dogs and dog owners, in the same way that Winnipeg's skateboard parks, toboggan hills, soccer fields, and golf courses are reserved for those activities.
- propose, in the interest of safety, that Winnipeg follow the lead of many North American cities in passing legislation that would prevent unsupervised children from entering an off-leash area.
- advocate the creation of neighbourhood dog parks in established areas of Winnipeg and new residential developments as priorities.

Awareness and Promotion

WINDOG will continue to market and promote itself as Winnipeg's "go to subject matter expert" regarding the city's off-leash area green space.

Community Relations

WINDOG will:

- continue to provide logistical and technical support to the champions of emerging off-leash dog parks and champions of emerging off-leash area stewardship groups. This is a change in policy; WINDOG will not actively attempt to organize dog park clubs.
- raise public awareness of the importance of dog parks by speaking to the media and having a presence in the community.

Lobbying

A municipal election provides an ideal opportunity to raise awareness and lobby for change. Winnipeg's next municipal election is just a year and a half year away.

WINDOG will continue to build on its success in electing a dog-friendly City Council in 2014. There are several wards in the City without dog parks and there are still Councillors for whom off-leash dog parks are a very low priority.

WINDOG will:

- prepare for the 2018 municipal election as required.
- continue to influence elected officials to create and fund dog parks at the levels they do for other park user groups.

Board Development Training

WINDOG will strengthen the Board by:

- participating in "Roles and Responsibilities of the Board" training.
- participating in CRA tax return training.