

Dog lovers rally to keep off-leash park at Trout Lake

Park board wants to reduce size and possibly fence the area

BY FRANK LUBA, POSTMEDIA NEWS APRIL 27, 2014

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More than 100 dog owners and their dogs gathered at Trout Lake park to protest proposed changes to the off-leash area for dogs. Pictured here is Rob Dawson and his French bulldog.

VANCOUVER -- When Erin Filtress found out about a proposal to restrict the size of the off-leash dog park at Trout Lake and fence it off, the east Vancouver woman was, well, barking mad.

Filtress moved to the area because of the extensive doggie-friendly space and lake.

"I purchased (a home) specifically to come here," she said Sunday at the park, where she was surrounded by a big pack of dogs and their owners who had come out to show support for the status quo.

Filtress said the proposed reduction to the overall area amounts to 80 per cent.

She vowed to fight.

"They're going to know who I am," said Filtress, who works in sales but also volunteers with animal groups such as pit bull supporters Hugabull.com and the Vancouver Orphan Kitten Rescue Association.

"I'm not stopping here," she vowed.

Her position was echoed by the large crowd of supporters at Trout Lake's beach.

Steve Burnfield's little dog Nacho is 15 years old so he doesn't really need an off-leash area. But Burnfield was there to support all the other owners and their pets.

"They need to run and play hard," Burnfield said of the energetic dogs.

Rob Dawson also thought the off-leash area should remain the same size. His solution would be to eliminate the walkway that runs along the lake in the dog park.

"Then there's not going to be any conflict," said Dawson. "It will be cheaper than building a fence."

Chris Pollitt doesn't even have a dog but was there to support keeping Trout Lake's dog area intact.

"I think one of the best ways after a stressful day to come and de-stress is to watch dogs frolic and play," he said. "It's free therapy."

As for what people that don't like dogs should do, Pollitt pointed across the lake.

"They can go to that end of the beach," he said.

Park board chairman Aaron Jasper doesn't think Trout Lake's dog park will stay the same.

"I think there will be a reduction," he said Sunday. "We want to hear from dog owners and try find the middle ground."

But there have been complaints about the dogs and there will be changes.

"How are we supposed to respond to those non-dog owners who have expressed serious concerns?" Jasper said.

"Is this the final draft? I would say no," he said. "Is it subject to revisions, modifications, alterations? Yes, absolutely.

"Personally, I would be shocked if the status quo was to remain. There will be some sort of barrier. That's our policy."

But those barriers, whether they be fencing or some sort of landscaping, are unlikely to happen until the 2015.

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