

Subject: [Fwd: Commercial Dog Walkers (Wed 5Apr06)]
From: Brian Platts <bplatts@shaw.ca>
Date: Sun, 09 Apr 2006 16:35:49 -0700
To: Corrie@kost.ca

Subject: Commercial Dog Walkers (Wed 5Apr06)
From: Lyle Craver <lcraver@shaw.ca>
Date: Sat, 08 Apr 2006 18:11:49 -0700
To: editor@nsnews.com
CC: FONVCA <fonvca@fonvca.org>

Dear Editor,

People throughout love their dogs and have less and less time to properly exercise them. Pacific Spirit park used to be the primary haven of commercial dog walkers but many of them dislike the regulations adopted by the GVRD and have headed over to the less regulated North Shore which has lots of parks and trails.

Increasingly District staff got complaints from the public about garbage, out of control dogs acting in packs and generally wrecking havok on District parks and trails. Basically the bulk of Vancouver's dog walkers have taken up using our parks and trails as their stomping grounds. Until recently most have been unlicensed and unregistered and the volume of complaints has caused District to act in concert with West Vancouver.

Under the proposed bylaw we have for the first time a definition of what a "dog under control" actually is. This is important since without a legal definition little can be done in the way of enforcement.

I could say a great deal more but essentially what it comes down to is a desire by the walkers - who are mostly not DNV residents - to go on profitting financially in District parks while engaging in behaviour that creates hazards and environmental degradation for District and West Van residents. Many District residents feel commercial dog walking should be banned altogether in District parks and trails but the proposed bylaw is supposed to be a compromise. When District staff reported to Council in April 2005 the compromise was for a maximum of 4 dogs per walker (with a maximum of 2 off-leash). The dog walkers continued to push for 8 dogs per handler all off leash. The 2006 proposed bylaw is for a maximum of 5 dogs (2 off-leash) while Councillor Mike Little is proposing no fewer than 6 dogs per handler (all 6 off-leash). In addition it restricts walkers to 4 large but well defined areas but there is no provision for signage for residents who wish to avoid these areas - there are literally hundreds of us who have had dangerous encounters with off-leash dogs who would wish to avoid future encounters of this sort.

As reported by Councillor Lisa Muri at the Monday Council meeting even ONE dog off-leash can create a serious safety hazard for children and adults so clearly it's time to take action.

I feel even two dogs at a time off leash presents a safety hazard to District residents but the proposed bylaw is a big step forward to ensuring public safety. As such while I think the proposed bylaw gives the Dog Walkers more than our Council should be giving them, it's an improvement on the present "anything goes" situation. Councillor Little's proposed amendments give them even more so District residents should come out and make sure these amendments are not passed.

I support passage of the proposed bylaw (unamended) as quickly as possible so that District residents can get some sanity back in our parks and trails.

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