

City ponders more dog parks

HALIFAX

By Marilyn Souders - The Daily News

Toronto has 29. Vancouver has 31. Calgary has more than 100. And Halifax?

There are only two off-leash parks in HRM where dogs can frolic, nuzzle ears and sniff canine kiesters. But soon there's bound to be more.

HRM council is asking staff to develop a plan for creating more off-leash areas for dogs. Peter Bigelow, manager with HRM's real property department, says they'll look at existing municipal properties that could be used for off-leash or multi-use parks and examine any costs involved.

At Seaview Park, news of possibly more off-leash dog parks wasn't greeted with tail wagging. Maddy, a young golden retriever, Buddy, a black lab, and Daisy and Riley, two basset hounds, were too busy running, jumping and snuffling.

Their owners, on the other paw, were quite delighted. Harold Eastwood drives from Lower Sackville to the Halifax park three or four times a week. The chance to take boisterous Buddy somewhere closer to home "would be fantastic," says Eastwood.

"Gosh, you see him here, just running, running, running, and you know he needs it," says Eastwood, who, because of his bad knees, would rather take his dog to Seaview to run freely than walk him in the neighbourhood.

"He just can't get this kind of exercise at home."

Seaview Park, under the MacKay Bridge, and Point Pleasant Park, in Halifax's south end, are the



GIT ALONG LITTLE DOGGIE: Joan Sinden and her four dogs in Seaview Park, one of metro's two off-leash areas.

only two designated off-leash parks in HRM. Owners can also bring their dogs to sports fields in HRM, but only from Nov. 1 to May 1, and then only from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. Dogs are not allowed off their leashes in provincial parks because of concerns for wildlife.

"Dog owners are humongously underserved," says Joan Sinden, who brings Charlie, Teddy, Daisy and Buttercup — strays she's rescued — to Seaview Park from her Spryfield home almost daily.

She also takes them for romps along deserted stretches of beaches

such as Crystal Crescent, "which is technically against the rules, I know ... but dogs need to get out. They need to be socialized, to wrestle, to play, to pee on trees and have fun."

"I know people who drive here every day from Dartmouth and Sackville and Bedford. Dog owners really need that Point Pleasant Park, Seaview Park-kind of experience for their dogs in their own neighbourhoods."

HRM's plans include talking to dog owners and dog professionals and doing an online survey Bigelow says staff hope to incorporate all

feedback into a draft plan within the next few months and present it to the public at an open house in the spring. There may be costs for parking, lighting and fencing.

"This has been promised by city hall since before amalgamation," says Janet Chernin, who owns three dogs — Oreo, Ursa and Pickle — and takes in six more to her doggie daycare Canine Casbah. She walks dogs at Point Pleasant Park twice daily. "Kudos to HRM. Dare I say they're finally looking at this issue seriously."

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