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REPORT SALT SPRING ISLAND LOCAL COMMUNITY COMMISSION MEETING OF Thursday, October 09, 2025

SUBJECT SSI Off Leash Dog Park Alternative Location Assessment

ISSUE SUMMARY

To review cost and staffing implications to determine a new location and design for the Rainbow Recreation Centre off leash dog park.

BACKGROUND

Dogs are welcome on CRD trails and community parks within the Salt Spring Island Parks and Recreation system excluding those community parks with playgrounds. Dogs need to be “under control” meaning within an owner’s direct eyesight and returns immediately when called. Owners are asked to always carry a leash and leash their dog if their dog is young or has a mind of its own or when you are at a trail head or intersection or when approaching other dogs or wildlife.

The Dog Park located at the Rainbow Recreation Centre opened in April of 2011 following a number of monetary and in-kind donations. The small park was envisioned as a place for recreation and social interaction among both dogs and owners. The park features separate fenced areas for small and large dogs, two trees providing shade, a picnic table and a covered shelter. Currently the Rainbow Recreation Centre dog park is the only fenced public dog park on Salt Spring Island. This dog park is well used by some in the community but has experienced conflict with other visitors and regular users in recent months. The current location of the dog park is not ideal due to seasonal flooding and limited shade. The Rainbow Recreation Centre Site Master Plan recommends relocating the dog park to a more suitable location.

In response to recent concerns the following motion was passed at the July 10 meeting of the SSI Local Community Commission (LCC)

“That the Salt Spring Island Local Community Commission request that staff report back on cost implications associated with exploring alternative locations for the dog park located at 262 Rainbow road.”

To explore a more suitable location for a community dog park, staff would be recommending a structured, transparent, and inclusive process to ensure the site is safe, accessible, and supported by the community. To support this process the following steps should be followed (Appendix A):

1. Establish objectives and criteria
2. Conduct a preliminary site inventory
3. Evaluate sites against criteria
4. Community and stakeholder engagement
5. Detailed site analysis of preferred locations
6. Select and approve final site
7. Conceptual design and budgeting
8. Implementation, monitoring and regular maintenance

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

That the Salt Spring Island Local Community Commission requests that staff defer consideration of the Community Dog Park Designs project to the 2027 Budget Planning meeting.

Alternative 2

That the Salt Spring Island Local Community Commission requests that staff include Project (26-16) Community Dog Park Designs funded by \$11,000 of capital reserve funding in the 2026 Final Budget Parks and Recreation Five Year Financial Plan.

Alternative 3

That the Salt Spring Island Local Community Commission refers the report back to staff for additional information.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

Relocating the Rainbow Recreation Centre off leash dog park would require funding to support determining the site, community consultation, site assessments, demolition and construction.

The project could be done in two phases with the first phase identifying a site, developing detailed designs and cost estimates. The following cost estimate will allow the project to progress to the end of stage 6 (Select and approve final site). Additional considerations will be needed to execute phase 2 (stages 7 and 8).

Phase 1 – Site Determination and Design Cost Estimates		
Assessments	Environmental, geotechnical, archaeological	\$5,000
Conceptual Designs	Determine scope, separate large and small dogs, fencing, benches	\$2,500
CRD Project management and admin	Develop project plan, site criteria and assessment tools	\$1,400
Community Engagement	Stakeholder workshop / open house	\$600
Cost Estimates	Class D cost estimates	\$1,500
Total		\$11,000

Social Implications

Dog parks provide many benefits including: improving dog socialization, boosting your dog's physical health, promoting active lifestyles, providing a safe space for exercise and socialization. Dog parks also provide social interaction among both dogs and owners. Typical community guidelines have ~1 dog park per every 15-20k residents. With only 1 dog park currently established on Salt Spring Island, care will need to be taken to ensure timelines allow the community to have continuous access to a dog park during the transition.

CONCLUSION

Dogs are welcome in most CRD parks and trails on Salt Spring Island, with owners expected to keep them under control for everyone's safety and enjoyment. The Rainbow Recreation Centre dog park, established in 2011, has served the community well but has faced recent conflicts prompting a review of its location. Staff recommend exploring alternative sites through a structured, transparent process that considers safety, accessibility, and community input. This approach will help the LCC identify a long-term dog park solution that meets present and future needs.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Salt Spring Island Local Community Commission requests that staff defer consideration of the Community Dog Park Designs project to the 2027 Budget Planning meeting.

Submitted by:	Dan Ovington, BBA, Senior Manager, SSI Administration
Concurrence:	Stephen Henderson, MBA, P.G.Dip.Eng, BSc, General Manager, Electoral Area Services

ATTACHMENT:

Appendix A: Detailed Project Phases and Milestones