

## Tamara Pierson

CRD Parks Committee Meeting

RE Commercial Dog Walkers

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Thank you for your time and consideration today. I'm here as a commercial dog walker, having operated in the Greater Victoria Area since 2004. I do consider myself a professional commercial dog walker, having had an inter municipal business licence for fourteen years, commercial business and liability insurance for fourteen years, and having been a member of the Victoria Chamber of Commerce for nine years.

My company provides full time work for five individuals, part time work for an additional person, as well as myself and my husband. We pay taxes, provide medical and dental benefits for our staff, and partner with other locally owned businesses for mutual support. We have had several permitted gatherings in the Filter Beds CRD Picnic Shelter at Beaver Elk Lake, and left our contact information with Jeanette Mollin, who approved those permits for us, in the event that CRD Parks ever have interest in collaborating with commercial dog walkers.

We serve approximately three hundred families in the Greater Victoria area, providing a service that is high in demand. We continually have a wait list for new dogs, which is a significant indication that commercial dog walking services are in high demand in Greater Victoria. Our community has more than twenty thousand dogs, and their families look to professional dog walkers for support with care, socialization, and exercise.

Earlier this year, several of the commercial dog walking companies came together in response to the complaints being heard in the community. We have since met monthly, collaborated to create a Professional Code of Conduct, and are in the midst of

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registering as a Professional Collective of Commercial Dog Walkers. We have also met with CRD Staff and generated possibilities for our businesses to exist peacefully amongst other park users, support the monitoring of parks by paying permit fees, and become a responsible, recognized profession in the CRD. Our intention is to work alongside the CRD to promote responsible dog socialization in CRD Parks and we have the knowledge, resources, and access to dog owners to assist in facilitating responsible dog socialization in our community.

Why distinguish between individuals walking dogs and professional commercial dog walkers?

1. Professional, commercial dog walkers are hold businesses licences, commercial liability insurance, and abide by a professional code of conduct
2. Professional, commercial dog walkers are experienced ~ this is not work for the faint of heart, and professionals are experienced in dog handling; my company alone has done more than 15,000 hikes with groups of dogs, or the equivalent of more than 120,000 dog walks. This level of experience far exceeds that of an individual dog owner.
3. Professionals carry professional equipment to manage groups of dogs.
4. Professionals consistently work with dogs to promote good social behaviours.

I'd like to provide you an example of the difference between an individual and a professional dog walker. Just last week I had a dog owner phone to complain that there dog was being kept on leash during her hike, and that the owner never does that. I took the opportunity to explain to the dog owner that her dog fails to come back directly when called, and for that reason, we would be working with her dog to teach appropriate recall skills. The owner expressed that she, for the past five years, assumed that ranging away was the dogs nature, and the owner just trusted the dog would come back. I explained the techniques we would be using to train her five year old dog to stay with

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her dog walker, and that her dog would not be off leash until she displayed consistent and reliable recall skills.

This type of situation where professional, commercial dog walkers are an asset to the CRD, and provide education for dog owners, and training for dogs, to exhibit appropriate social behaviour in CRD Parks.

What I envision here in our community is that Professional Commercial Dog Walkers become a valued asset in the CRD. In liaison with CRD Staff to promote responsible dog ownership and socialization, we model responsible dog socialization in the parks and on the trails, and become a resource for staff, and for the community. As a Professional Commercial Dog Walker, my intention here today is to express a willingness to collaborate with the CRD for the mutual benefit of commercial dog walkers, dog owners and the greater public to create a welcoming experience for all.

Thank you for your time.