

Sibelius Square Working Group
January 10, 2007
Room 114 Royal St. George's College
Meeting Commenced @ 7pm
Chair: Patrick Kennedy

Also Present: Sandy Straw, Chris Ronson, Paul Martel, Gillian Morton, Kristina Renders, Julie Markle, Ginny Brett, David Mills, Tom Friedland, Adam Vaughan, Fred Freeman, Premika Ratnam, Mike Coleman, Christine Elser, Geoff Reyes.

1. **Agenda** approved
2. **Minutes** approved from previous meeting
3. **Next SSWG meeting** on January 31, February 21 with agenda setting meeting on the Saturday 10 days prior.
4. Most of the meeting was spent discussing whether the SSWG should make a **Recommendation regarding Dogs off Leash** in Jean Sibelius Square:
 - Patrick comments that after the March 2006 Community Meeting the WG was sent away to research solutions, and to find common ground among diverging interests. If possible, the WG should share the fruits of its work by reporting on the solution it believes will serve the broadest interests in the community over the long term.
 - Gillian suggests we still look to the community for input and discussion; we might shape a recommendation from STS and ADO rather than the entire WG
 - Ginny concerned that we not repeat the first community meeting
 - Tom suggests that a recommendation from the WG is confirmation that the issue has been discussed extensively
 - Adam Vaughan explains that at the City level there is significant restructuring happening and that no difficult or controversial decisions being made by staff. Because of the risk aversion at city hall, consensus in the WG is important.
 - Sandy Straw supports comments made by Adam. For the new Dogs in Parks Strategy, extended consultation is taking place before any decisions are made.
 - Questions to Sandy Straw regarding Dogs in Parks Strategy (DIPS) and its implications for Jean Sibelius Square; response from Sandy it is still at the consultation stage and no new off-leash areas are being considered and none are being revoked; though modifications to existing area might be considered (eg, changing hours, adding enclosures). Tom pressed Sandy for a more precise definition of what changes could be made to existing off-leash regulations, and under what authority those changes could be made.
 - Paul Martel encourages the WG to make a visit to the enclosure at the Don Valley Brickworks as an example of a functioning dog enclosure.

-Premika Ratnam (Play at the Park) comments on alternate spaces for dogs off leash in the neighbourhood, and the need for further investigation; suggests that in looking at an enclosure PATP and its concerns are being marginalized; puts forth a request to co-chair the SSWG; feels that a dog enclosure in a small park is a public health issue and is not appropriate; concern about numerous incidents of dogs bites. Fred agrees that it is the work of the WG to make a recommendation to the community regarding dogs off leash; does not agree that this is a public health issue; citing his experience as a family doctor

-Gillian makes an apology to Premika for not consulting her before sending a communication to the WG regarding possible formats for the community meeting

-Adam Vaughan comments that his assistant Stephanie Lord is putting together an inventory of public space in Ward 20

Kristina asks that **each person present explain their position** regarding an enclosure at JSS. The solutions supported are as follows:

- Gillian Morton (ADO) supports modified enclosure or status quo
- Kristina Renders- no enclosure for aesthetic reasons; supports modified status quo
- Mike Coleman- supports modified status quo or preferably an enclosure
- Julie Markle- supports dogs on leash or enclosure
- Ginny Brett- supports an enclosure
- David Mills-dogs on leash at all times; enclosure sets bad precedent
- Christine (Annex resident) –feels insecure with dogs off leash on the way to the park; dogs should be on leash; would prefer not to have an enclosure, but would prefer an enclosure to having dogs off-leash in the open areas. Asks WG group what research had been completed on soft-enclosures, and how they would work.

- Premika-enclosures are meant for large parks; JSS is too small; an enclosure in JSS will not serve the needs of dogs
- Tom Friedland does not support the status quo or modified status quo. Explains his preference for a “soft” enclosure as opposed to wrought iron fencing
- Julie comments that the playground committee will not necessarily propose an enclosure for the playarea(s).
- Patrick is not optimistic about modified status quo because of the associated burden of enforcement, the physical impact on the turf, and widespread unhappiness in the community with the number of free-running dogs. Finding alternate spaces for dogs sounds good, but there is no evidence that any space will be available soon. Prefers a solution that allows diverse uses to coexist, but contains the impact of off leash dogs on other park uses – an enclosure seems the best option so far. Would

like to see a solution that intensifies and diversifies people's use of the space that is the heart of our community.

-Fred expresses concerns over dogs in gangs as opposed to a few dogs off leash here and there; prefers no dogs off leash over an enclosure

-Gillian suggests that there are habits of dog owners that will be difficult to change; enclosure will encourage self government; more responsibility on the part of dog owners

-Premika stresses the importance of research in making decisions

-Christine would prefer to wait for the DIPS to come from the City before making decision

-Tom suggests a temporary enclosure as a way of seeing whether an enclosure will work in JSS

-Sandy says this is a possibility

-Gillian observes that there could be no trial around an off-leash ban based on earlier discussion

-David requests October 4th minutes; Ginny will write a summary of the Oct 4th mtg. with notes from David

5. Structure and Content of **Community Meeting** – Gillian agrees to defer this discussion until the next meeting.

6. **Committee Reports**

Julie reports on a research plan for play areas in the square, which will be supported by a research professional from BBDO. It will include a survey, and in depth focus group research with parents and children. This work should be completed before community meeting

7. A **Budget Committee** was discussed briefly, but none was struck.

8. Ginny has agreed to draft **minutes for the October 4th meeting**, as minutes have not been submitted by the secretary of that meeting. The chair and David agreed that notes for a presentation made by David on October 4th would be added to the minutes as an appendix.

Meeting adjourned @ 9:15pm