

Report to Council

Report Title:	Pilot Dog Park Location Concerns		
Prepared By:	Colleen Gillis, Director of Community Services		
Department:	Recreation		
Date:	April 14, 2026		
Report Number:	REC2026-11	File Number:	C11REC, R05
Attachments:	Letter to Council – Formal Challenge to Dog Park Placement Walkerton Pilot Dog Park Project Location Vote Petition		

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number REC2026-11- Pilot Dog Park Location Concerns, prepared by Colleen Gillis, Director of Community Services, and further approves staff to continue operating Lobies Park dog park as a pilot project, implement interim mitigation measures to address neighbouring property concerns, continue public feedback and site monitoring, and report back to Council before any decision is made regarding permanent fencing, permanent infrastructure, relocation, or a final long-term dog park location.

Report:

Background:

The concept of a municipal dog park has been under consideration since 2016. Over several years, the Parks and Recreation Committee reviewed numerous municipally owned locations, including lands near the groundwater treatment area, the former energizer property, areas behind the community garden, the half-moon at Ben Park, lands near the gun club and fish ladder, Cunningham Park, Lobies Park, River Bend Park, and other municipal properties.

The project was delayed a number of times due to challenges identifying a site that could balance size, access, parking, safety, maintenance, flood risk, surrounding land uses, and servicing limitations. A dog park subcommittee was established in 2017, and funding was set aside incrementally through annual budget deliberations.

In 2023, the Parks and Recreation Committee renewed its review of possible locations and identified Lobies Park as a practical site for a trial based on available open space, municipal maintenance presence, visibility, and access to seasonal washroom and water services. In August 2023, the Committee recommended a trial dog park at Lobies Park.

On April 23, 2024, Council approved the Dog Park Pilot Project at Lobies Park through Report REC2024-06. Council's approval recognized the site as a pilot project and anticipated that public feedback and operational review would inform any future long-term decision.

The pilot opened in May 2024. On August 12, 2025, Council received an update confirming regular use of the site, generally positive survey feedback, and limited parking impacts. That report also confirmed that nearby residents were notified following Council approval and that survey results and visitor tracking were being used to evaluate the pilot.

In October 2025, staff and members of Council met with neighbouring residents to hear concerns related to the current location.

Analysis:

This report responds to concerns raised by neighbouring residents regarding the pilot dog park at Lobies Park. Staff acknowledge these concerns and recognize the importance of addressing them while also noting that the current dog park was approved by Council as a temporary pilot after many years of review and consideration of multiple locations.

The purpose of the pilot is to test community demand, site functionality, operational impacts, and compatibility before the Municipality considers any permanent investment.

Neighbour Concerns and Staff Response

1. Flood Risk and Emergency Access

Residents have raised concerns regarding flooding in the Lobies Park area and the use of park lands by some neighbouring property owners as an access or exit route during flood events. Staff understand that neighbouring residents directly contacted emergency services to raise concerns about flood-related access for emergency vehicles. Emergency services advised those residents that, under no circumstances, would emergency vehicles enter this area during a flood event. Residents were further advised that municipal parkland cannot be relied upon or considered an emergency access or emergency exit route for private properties during flood conditions. While staff recognize the practical concerns expressed by residents, this clarification confirms that the parkland is not recognized as an emergency vehicle access route in flood conditions. Staff have nevertheless taken steps to reduce potential obstructions in the area, including relocating picnic tables that neighbours identified as creating concern. The temporary fencing can also be moved if required for operational purposes. Should Council consider a permanent dog park in future, flood risk and emergency access would form part of a full site review. In the interim, staff will continue consultation with relevant internal departments and agencies regarding seasonal flooding and site operations.

2. Noise and Neighbouring Residential Impacts

Residents have identified barking, user activity, and proximity to homes as concerns. Staff acknowledge that dog parks can generate noise and that proximity to residential uses is an important land use compatibility consideration. This was one of many factors reviewed through the

site selection process. As Council is aware, identifying a municipally owned site that balances accessibility to amenities such as water and washrooms, available space, maintenance oversight, safety, parking, and separation from homes has proven difficult over many years.

The purpose of the pilot is, in part, to determine whether the site functions appropriately in practice and whether impacts on surrounding uses can be managed. Staff recognize the feedback received and will increase educating public of applicable By-Laws, hours of operation and etiquette through signage and social media. If Council proceeds with a permanent dog park in future, site-specific design measures, setbacks, landscape buffering, and other mitigation options would need to be assessed as part of a broader capital and location review.

3. Use of the Park After Hours and By-law Compliance

Concerns have also been raised regarding park use after hours and the availability of enforcement during evenings and weekends.

Staff acknowledge that after-hours use has been raised by residents as an operational concern. To address this, staff recommend continued interim management measures, including:

- improved signage clearly identifying park hours and that the site is closed at dusk;
- inclusion of a contact number for urgent municipal concerns;
- continued monitoring by staff during regular operations; and
- review of scheduling and operational practices to improve evening oversight where feasible.
- Educating public through social media posts.

As with other municipal parks, compliance is supported through signage, education, visibility, and available enforcement resources.

4. Accessibility Considerations

Residents have questioned whether the current pilot meets accessibility expectations.

Staff note that the existing dog park is a temporary, lower-cost pilot installation with limited infrastructure. A permanent dog park would require a more detailed accessibility review, including site access, surfacing, gates, circulation, parking, and amenities. These matters would be addressed through future design and budget review if Council wishes to consider a permanent facility.

5. Public Consultation and Notification

Residents have expressed concern regarding consultation and notification for the pilot project.

Staff recognize the importance of public engagement. The dog park project was discussed publicly for a number of years through Parks and Recreation Committee and Council meetings, and the pilot itself was approved by Council in open session. Following Council approval, notification letters were sent to nearby residents, and public feedback was collected through survey responses and visitor tracking.

Staff also acknowledge that neighbouring residents would have preferred earlier and more direct consultation. As the pilot continues, staff will ensure that feedback from nearby residents, dog park

users, the Parks and Recreation Committee, and the broader public is documented and considered. More formal consultation processes should also be established at the outset of any future permanent recreational facility project.

6. Site Selection and Alternative Locations

Questions have been raised regarding why Lobies Park was selected and why the municipality's own documented standards (from Recreation Committee Minutes 2019-2020) were not followed.

The history of this project demonstrates that staff and the Parks and Recreation Committee considered numerous locations over many years. Each site presented challenges. Dog Park guidelines noted at Recreation Committee meeting were researched by a committee member and provided for information and discussion purposes. Staff followed Intact Insurance "Risk Management Considerations for Off-Leash Dog Park" guidelines for design of pilot project as noted in Report REC2024-06.

Lobies Park was advanced as the preferred pilot location because it offered open space, an area already maintained by municipal staff, visibility, access to water and washrooms, and a location where the Municipality could practically evaluate actual use.

Staff remain open to reviewing alternative sites before bringing forward any recommendation for a permanent dog park although they are very limited in the community of Walkerton. If Council wishes to consider a permanent location, staff will provide a comparative review of feasible options, including costs, operational impacts, accessibility, flood risk, servicing, and proximity to residential areas.

Staff submit that the pilot has value precisely because it has highlighted both community demand and site-specific limitations. It has been confirmed that:

- there is longstanding public interest in a dog park in Brockton
- site selection is complex due to competing land uses and physical constraints
- neighbour concerns regarding compatibility and operations must be taken seriously

It is also important to distinguish between a pilot project and a permanent municipal facility. The current site includes temporary fencing and limited amenities so that the Municipality can test usage and identify issues before investing significant capital dollars. Matters such as accessibility enhancements, permanent fencing and gate system, noise buffering, expanded consultation, and more detailed technical review would be expected components of a permanent project and associated budget request.

For this reason, staff do not recommend treating the pilot as though it were the final permanent design standard. Instead, staff recommend that Council continue to use the pilot period to gather information, address reasonable interim concerns, and require a further report before making any decision regarding permanence, relocation, or permanent fencing.

To respond to concerns while the pilot continues, staff propose the following interim measures:

- maintain the use of temporary fencing that can be adjusted or removed if required
- continue consultation with relevant internal departments and agencies respecting seasonal flooding and operational response

- maintain the relocation of picnic tables and other movable items from areas identified as creating concern
- improve signage to clearly identify hours of operation, closure at dusk, and provide municipal after hours/emergency contact number
- continue to monitor user behaviour, parking, noise complaints, and after-hours use
- continue public feedback collection through survey and committee discussion
- return to Council with a further report before any permanent fencing or permanent capital investment is considered.

Staff recognize and appreciate the concerns raised by neighbouring residents. Those concerns are valid and should inform Council's future decision-making. At the same time, the dog park at Lobies Park was approved by Council as a pilot project after many years of review and consideration of multiple locations. The pilot is serving its intended purpose by identifying both benefits and challenges before the Municipality commits to a permanent solution.

Brockton's Community Goals:

The content and recommendations in this report support advancing the priorities to **Build a Better Brockton** in one or more of the following areas: **Heritage, Culture, and Community, Quality of Life, Municipal Governance, Land Use Planning and the Natural Environment, and/or Economic Development.**

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding:

- Do the recommendations represent a sound financial investment from a sustainability perspective?
N/A

Interim mitigation measures can be addressed within existing operational resources. Any recommendation related to permanent fencing, infrastructure, accessibility upgrades, or relocation would be brought forward through a future report and budget process.

Reviewed By:



Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

Respectfully Submitted by:



Colleen Gillis, Director of Community Services

Reviewed By:



Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer