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Item No. Info Item 1
Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee
December 1, 2022

TO: Chair and Members of Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee

SUBMITTED BY: [REDACTED] (Original Signed)

Denise Schofield, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: November 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Dog Waste Collection in Municipal Parks (Pilot Project)

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

September 17, 2019, Halifax Regional Council Motion (Item 15.3.1)

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council direct the CAO to consider a pilot project for the collection of dog waste, in select parks, as part of the business and budget planning process for implementation in 2020/21.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter

35(1) The Chief Administrative Officer shall (a) coordinate and direct the preparation of plans and programs to be submitted to the Council for the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of all municipal property and facilities; ...

70(1)(a) The Municipality may ... beautify, improve, and maintain property owned or leased by the Municipality.

79A (1) Subject to subsections (2) to (4) the Municipality may only spend money for municipal purposes if (a) the expenditure is included in the Municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the Municipality; (b) the expenditure is in respect of an emergency under the Emergency Management Act; or (c) the expenditure is legally required to be paid."

335 (e) Council may make by-laws respecting solid waste, including, but not limited to prescribing the materials that may or may not be deposited at solid-waste management facilities of the Municipality or in where the municipality participates.

BACKGROUND

All pet waste, including dog waste, is managed as garbage in HRM. As part of the 2017 Organics Management Strategy (Strategy)¹, a comprehensive review of HRM's green cart program informed key terms and considerations for the design of the new composting facility, currently being constructed in Ragged Lake. It was critical that as part of the Strategy, that the Municipality confirm any program changes as they could materially impact the design, capacity, and footprint of the new composting facility. The Strategy, approved by Regional Council, did not consider the addition of pet waste to the green cart program.

Additionally, collection of pet waste in the green cart program was considered as part of a staff report in 2019². At that time several constraints were identified, consistent with the 2017 Organics Management Strategy, identifying challenges to incorporating pet waste into the green cart program including:

- Inclusion of plastic or compostable bags and equipment required to remove this contamination.
- Perception of safety of end product (although all pathogens can be removed through processing).
- Potential odours associated with processing pet waste.

Notwithstanding these constraints, there remains public interest in diverting pet waste from landfill.

HRM Parks builds and maintains parks around the municipality where dogs are welcome both on and off-leash. Dog waste collection bags are provided in these parks. Given that promoting proper disposal of dog waste in a litter receptacle (vs littered) is an ongoing concern, the recommendation was made to conduct a pilot project in an HRM off-leash dog park.

The objectives of this pilot project were to:

- Evaluate the feasibility of diverting dog waste from landfill disposal using a source-separated waste stream generated in HRM dog parks.
- Encourage proper disposal of dog waste in parks to support mitigating environmental concerns (e.g., litter, impact to water courses).
- Evaluate impact to operations by using high-capacity receptacles, including whether operation efficiencies are achieved and whether receptacles mitigate nuisance factors (e.g., odours, flies).
- Evaluate feasibility of implementing this type of collection at other appropriate parks in HRM.

After reviewing dog waste collection programs in other jurisdictions and conducting a review of receptacle options, the decision was made to procure the Suterra³ in-ground dog-waste containment unit. This receptacle was used instead of traditional waste collection bins (i.e., carts or barrels) to limit the amount of cross contamination of dog waste from other waste materials and to allow for the evaluation of the operational impacts of the receptacle.

Installation of the receptacle was planned for Summer of 2020, however budget and operational constraints related to the COVID-19 pandemic delayed this until September 2021. In consideration of the layout, usage and existing infrastructure, the decision was made to install the receptacle at the Mainland Common Off-Leash Dog Park. In addition to the receptacles, fencing (Figure 1A below) and signage (Figure 2 below) were installed to educate park users about the project.

Given the weight and configuration of the in-ground receptacle, collection is facilitated using a boom truck as an internal sack needs to be lifted out of the receptacle. A local waste hauling company was retained to

¹ [Halifax Regional Council. Staff Report. April 20, 2017. Organics Management Consultation and Strategy](#)

² [Halifax Regional Council. Staff Report. September 17, 2019. Options for Pet Waste Recycling](#)

³ [Sutera In-Ground Dog Waste Unit](#)

provide this style of collection service. Collected dog waste was delivered to the commercial waste transfer station at the Otter Lake Waste Processing and Disposal Facility.



Figure 1A - Suterra Dog Waste Installation at Mainland Common Off-Leash Park



Figure 1B – Suterra Dog-Waste unit, underground collection bag



The signage is a vertical rectangular panel with a dark blue background. At the top, there is a white circular icon containing a silhouette of a person walking a dog and holding a bag. Below the icon, the text "DOG WASTE COLLECTION" is written in large, bold, white capital letters, followed by "Pilot Project" in a slightly smaller font. Underneath, a message in white text reads: "Thank you for using this receptacle for bagged dog waste only." Below that, another line of white text says: "To find out more about the pilot project, or to provide feedback, email wasteless@halifax.ca". At the bottom of the panel, the word "HALIFAX" is written in white capital letters.

Figure 2 - Pilot Project Signage

DISCUSSION

Parks Operations

The 12-month project period (September 2021 to September 2022) gave staff a good opportunity to evaluate the performance of the receptacle through all seasons.

Overall, it was determined that the in-ground dog waste receptacle created operational efficiencies. Parks staff were able to reduce the number of visits to this site to empty regular litter receptacles, as they did not fill as quickly. During these visits, they also inspected the dog waste receptacle to determine if it needed to be emptied by the contractor, which typically was once every two weeks. On a couple occasions, collection was delayed causing the receptacle to over-fill and dog waste bags to be left on the ground. These were generally the only times an odour was observed coming from the receptacle.

Not every park or trail would be able to accommodate an in-ground dog waste receptacle due to the required access for a large truck to empty them, and in consideration of access during winter months where a build up of snow and ice prohibits collection. For these reasons, future installations should be evaluated by Parks staff on a case-by-case basis as new parks are developed, or existing sites re-capitalized.

The cost to purchase a full in-ground dog waste receptacle (tower, pre-cast concrete containment unit, bags and liners) was approximately \$3,500 plus shipping. Where Parks staff determine a site would be suitable to locate an in-ground, future installations can be funded under existing Parks Capital projects account during the construction or re-capitalization of the park.

Public Survey

Solid Waste staff visited the Halifax Mainland off-leash park in July and August of 2022 to engage users of the off-leash park and collect feedback about the in-ground dog waste receptacle through a brief survey. In total, 49 participants answered the survey. A summary is presented in Attachment A - Dog Waste Pilot Project Public Survey - Responses.

The results of the survey indicate that most users found the receptacle easy to use and they were generally satisfied with its location. Several users indicated they would like to see more of these receptacles around the city (i.e., trails) as they believe they could help encourage proper disposal of dog waste.

One challenge identified by owners with large dogs or multiple dogs, was that they found the hole on the top of the receptacle too small to use to dispose of their dog waste.

Composting Process

Given challenges in obtaining regulatory approval from Nova Scotia Environment & Climate Change, trials to process dog waste through one of HRM's existing composting facilities was not completed. Staff further discussed processing this material through HRM's new composting facility, planned to be commissioned in February 2024, with the operator AIM HCR. The operator indicated that given the relatively low volume of material that would potentially be source separated from HRM Parks (estimated at less than 1,000 tonnes per year), that it likely could accommodate processing this material in the future. As such, staff will review the possibility of processing this material through the new composting facility post commissioning and start-up, currently planned for the winter of 2024.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A Public Survey was conducted in August and September 2022 and is outlined in this report. No further community engagement was conducted.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Dog Waste Pilot Project Public Survey - Responses

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

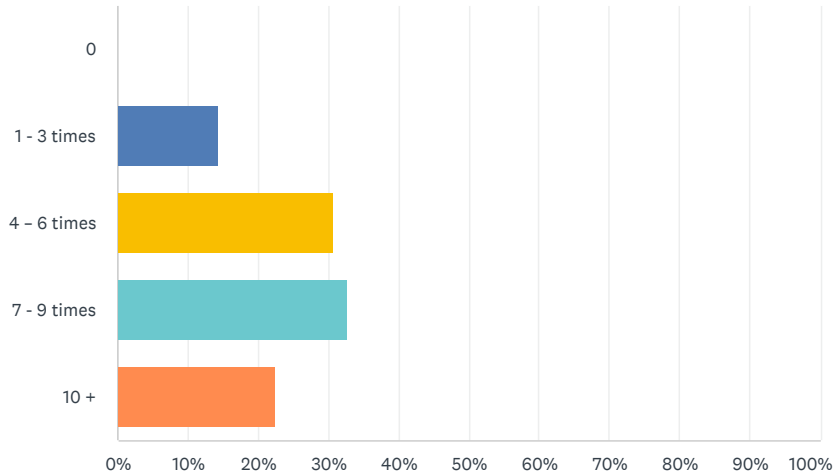
Report Prepared by: Shannon Betts, Team Lead – Policy & Enforcement. 902.476.2470

Dog Waste Pilot Project Public Survey

Q1

How often do you walk your dog in any HRM Park or Off Leash Dog area per week?

Answered: 49 Skipped: 0

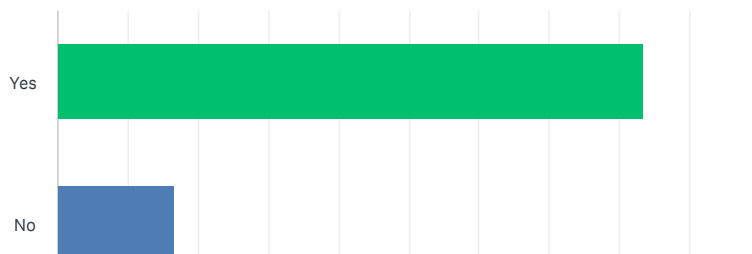


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0	0.00%	0
1 - 3 times	14.29%	7
4 - 6 times	30.61%	15
7 - 9 times	32.65%	16
10 +	22.45%	11
TOTAL		49

Q2

When approaching the in-ground bin at Mainland Common, could you tell what it was for?

Answered: 48 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES

RESPONSES

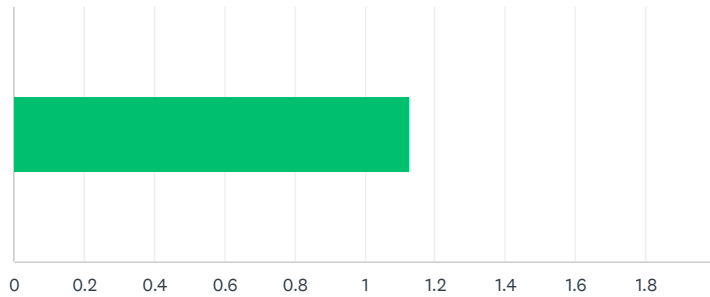
Yes	83.33%	40
No	16.67%	8
TOTAL		48

Q3



On a scale of 1-5 how difficult or easy did you find the bin to use?

Answered: 48 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES

AVERAGE NUMBER

TOTAL NUMBER

RESPONSES

Responses

1

54

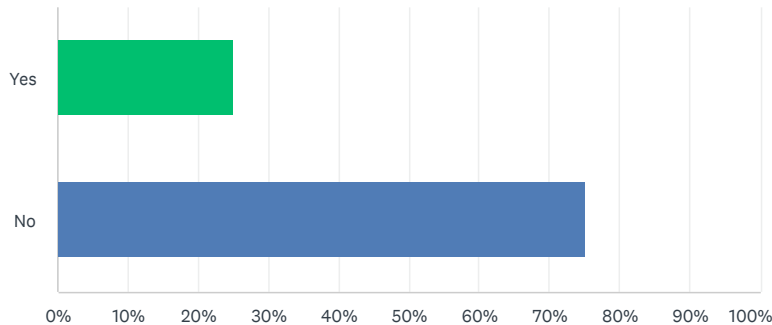
48

Total Respondents: 48

Q4

Did you observe any odours or other issues with the bin?

Answered: 48 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES

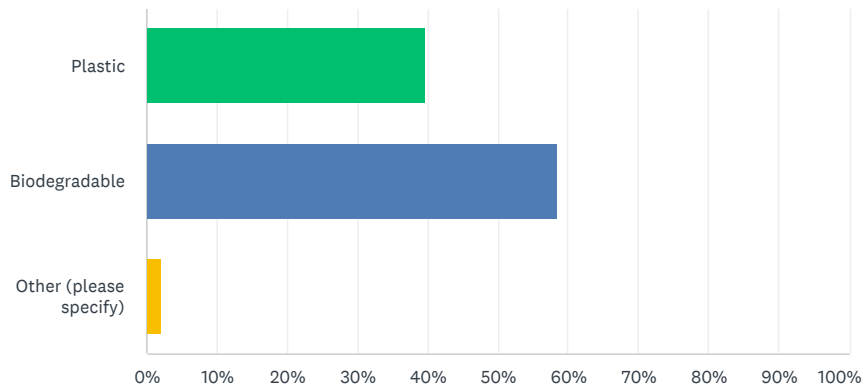
RESPONSES

Yes	25.00%	12
No	75.00%	36
TOTAL		48

Q5

What kind of doggie waste bags do you generally use?

Answered: 48 Skipped: 1

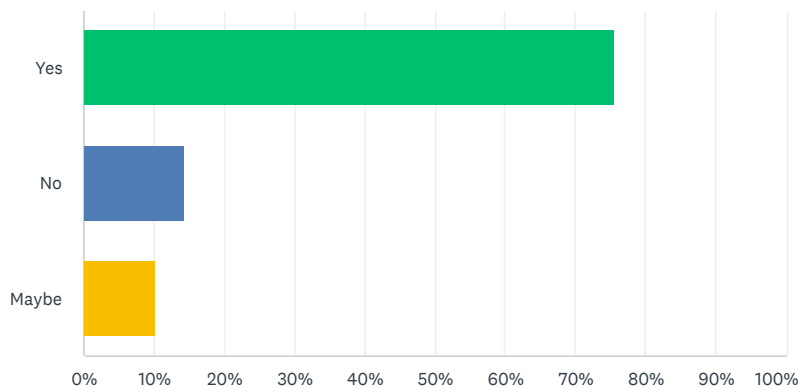


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Plastic	39.58%	19
Biodegradable	58.33%	28
Other (please specify)	Responses 2.08%	1
TOTAL		48

Q6

Do you think that the use of in-ground bins could help increase proper disposal of dog waste in other HRM Parks or Off Leash Dog areas?

Answered: 49 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	75.51%	37
No	14.29%	7
Maybe	10.20%	5
TOTAL		49

Is there any additional feedback you would like to provide about the in-ground waste bin system?

Answered: 18 Skipped: 31

- love it
- need water setup
- having more then one bin
- more dog waste bag stations
- add another one for more convenience
- I think people who pick it up will do no matter what. And those who don't don't
- I applaud efforts to deal with dog waste in an environmentally friendly manner.
- More frequent emptying and offer biodegradable bags, provide at least two systems in the park
- It's excellent
- Just so glad we have a pet friendly park close by.
- We need more of them
- Need to put them around the city
- More bins placed around dog park.
- needs to be emptied frequently
- should be in common area not behind gates
- maybe produce compostable bags
- The focus should be on park maintenance, not waste disposal. There are always deep holes, broken tables/benches, lacking waste bags, lacking water barrels, etc