

Keep the dog park

To the Editor,

Here are my thoughts on the possible sale of our accessible, leash-free dog park I call 'Zee's Acre.'

I first heard the dog park may be sold when I was asked if I was angry about it. No, I wasn't angry. I was saddened over the possible loss of such a community asset due to bad circumstances. The more I thought about it though, the more absurd it seemed. I then felt irked, then concerned about what next? Are we so bad off that provincial screw-ups and council decisions are angering citizens with the loss of such assets like quiet residential streets, our terrible roads, the possible loss of our accessible dog park and slicing parcels to sell in seeming desperation? (By the way, selling the dump is a very, very bad idea.)

From what was once an unsightly dumping ground that took an entire spring, summer and fall to clean up, we created a community asset. An accessible public park for dog guardians specifically designed for our community elderly and disabled was how I set the standard for all construction and dimensions. A corral with a wide gate to accommodate any mobile device, designed for protection and participation. Scooter-accessible, double gated entry, easily manipulated locks, poop bag dispenser and trash bins, strategically placed benches away from the gate to encourage limited interference of dog play and prevent bad behavior of people and safety. When people gather near any dog park entrance, it is proven that dogs get the idea that this is their home turf and will become aggressive to newcomers and timid dogs. I hear too often that humans 'guarding' the entry area and is causing problems. It's just a matter of time before someone loses a pet because of it. It will not be the fault of the pets. The entire park was built around dog and people's best interests to maintain the best possible experience for all. Ignoring posted rules works against keeping the park safe and will result in tragedy.

Had I not been so severely damaged in an accident one month after the park officially opened, there would be flowers growing outside the entire fence parameter and a doggy play house. Shade trees, night-lighting, monthly dog oriented vendors in warm months to support local crafters and cookie makers, even running water. It all came to a concrete stop for me. Literally.

The complete lack of signage and inclusion of our dog park is a big fail. Bancroft had one of the nicest dog parks in Ontario the last time I saw it 'except for all the feces' a park of value to the community. An attraction ignored in signage, web pages and literature. Bancroft wants money coming in yet fails to make the best of such a year-round attraction? Poor vision. Bad foresight. Had I been able, this would not have happened. Years of a good deal pissed away. Not utilizing such an asset is a shame. This season?

My friend Zee was my incentive for building the park but in her last two years we went when no other dogs were there. She had an advanced heart murmur, her eyesight and hearing were so bad, she was easily startled so she couldn't feel relaxed. Her world was dark so we went at night when it didn't matter and we were alone but she loved to run the parameter fence and zigzag every inch, nose down and intent as she has done from day one as though the sun shone for her again. We were happy there in our familiar place in our quiet times. She was content to inspect all the scents in her park. I was content to be with her so happy in her old age. Two best friends.

On Jan. 26, 2015, 4 a.m., Zee peacefully passed away in her sleep beside me. She left me as we lived, together. She was 15 years, months. I miss her as much today as in the days after her leaving. It was always Zee the charmer. Zee the comedian. Zee the Wonder Dog. That mutt had real character and many loved her. I requested by hand-delivered letter that we name the park 'ZEE'S ACRE.' No reply letter came. No email, no phone call.

I haven't been by the dog park for over two years. Too many tears.

There was a lot put into building Bancroft such a positive experience and popular draw for all dogs and all guardians no matter their level of mobility or how far they were coming from. Not making use of a prime day-trip location is a shame. Many services have not benefitted. I had promised to maintain the park but I did not for see the severe injury coming or the long years still recovering.

I have been asked if I would fight to keep the park. No. I won't. I have no dog. That fight is for the people who need their park now. How about selling a kid's playground? Get my point? If asked, I will support those who speak up to keep their accessible dog park. My fight these days is in Ottawa with no post hole digging. A different shovel is needed.

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