The recent popularity of Warren Park’s Leash free zone is just a testament to the needs of the community. It is proof we need more leash free parks not less. I’ve heard the points brought forward in the first meeting regarding the designation of this park. I also read the article that appeared some months ago in the Dundas Star, written by Craig Campbell. I find both to be somewhat one sided and over exaggerated. I’ve been walking my dog in Warren park on a daily basis for the past 2.5 years and I can honestly say I have never seen anyone get attacked, I’ve never noticed any change in the environment due to dogs. The pond is still the dirty “swamp” that it has always been. There are big bull frogs that I hear almost every morning. There is a beautiful blue heron that hangs out at the pond occasionally, the grass and weeds grow wild, the raspberries and wild flowers don’t seem to be any worse for wear because dogs run off leash. I have, however, seen signs of bonfires with garbage & broken beer bottles strewn around them. This is not a result of dogs running off leash, nor is it their owners. Dog walkers (myself included) actually pick up all that garbage and bring it out of the park and place it in the trash.

To be fair there have been some irresponsible dog owners who don’t pick up after their dogs, and allow them to run loose out of the park, however they are the minority. These people would be irresponsible whether their dog is on or off leash. It is no different than the people I’ve seen throw their coffee cup out or their fast food garbage. Do we shut down all the Tim Hortons and fast food chains – of course not.

Warren Park’s designation as leash free is removed from June – September. The select few who wish to see this designation be removed permanently have argued that they can’t go, or are afraid to use the park when it is leash-free. Well they’ve had all summer to enjoy it. As I’ve said I use this park twice a day, every day and I’ve encountered a couple more dog walkers and met up with one runner and one cyclist on their way through the park to the rail trail. So where are all these people who want to use it? The area is completely overgrown and filled with weeds. It is now hardly ever used by anyone other than a few dog walkers who still find it an ideal spot to exercise their dogs.

Instead of using the park these people have been making calls to Animal Control almost daily since the designation was lifted. Animal Control obviously has to respond so they are there almost daily, sometimes twice a day. I don’t even want to think what this has cost the tax payers for a mere 4 months. If the designation is permanently removed it is going to be an ongoing expense that I’m not sure the general tax-paying public would be too happy to support. Animal Control Officers should be saving animals in distress, or abused animals, closing down puppy mills etc.

Existing leash free parks:

West Entrance to Sanctuary Park – contains playground equipment, manicured turf and 2 soccer fields that take up the other part of the park. The area designated as leash free has the playground right there and no fenced in or confined area. It is all open.

Little John Park – contains playground equipment and manicured turf
Just off Dundurn St. in Hamilton - contains playground equipment and manicured turf

No one seems to mind that these parks exist and are used regularly. There are clearly children, seniors, others and dogs off leash all coexisting without too much complaint.

Warren Park is an isolated, secluded area, no playground equipment, grass areas are not maintained. It is essentially a walk-through to the conservation area and the rail trail.

Clearly these people don’t want to use the park themselves – something they claimed to want as part of their presentation for removing the leash free designation originally. As a democratic society we need to look at the total needs of the neighbourhood.

All these other leash free parks co-exist with playgrounds, etc and don’t seem to have any real issues so it makes me wonder why Warren Park, a park that very rarely ever gets used except as a pathway to another destination, can appear to be such a “hot bed” of dispute.

I hope you will consider all the facts, not exaggerated opinions and revise Warren Parks Leash Free zoning to be in effect year round.

Thank you for your time.

Gayle Zaunscherb