

To: Safety and Facilities Services Committee

From: Adam Grant, Commissioner,
Safety and Facilities Services Department

Report Number: SF-25-36

Date of Report: June 4, 2025

Date of Meeting: June 9, 2025

Subject: Potential Renaming of the Harmony Valley Off-Leash Dog Park

Ward: Ward 3

File: 03-05

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide options for the potential renaming of Harmony Valley Off-Leash Dog Park.

2.0 Recommendation

That the Safety and Facilities Services Committee recommend to City Council:

That based on Report SF-25-36 dated June 9, 2025 concerning the potential renaming of the Harmony Valley Off-Leash Dog Park, the Safety and Facilities Committee select an appropriate option from Section 4.3.

3.0 Input From Other Sources

1. Legislative Services
2. Parks and Roads Operations Services

4.0 Analysis

The Harmony Valley Off-Leash Dog Park, situated in Ward 3, is a cherished off-leash area that spans over a natural open space landscape. The dog park is part of the larger Harmony Valley Park, which encompasses 28 hectares of passive recreational space and usable table land, offering unique natural landscapes and a recreational trail network.

The inception of Harmony Valley Off-Leash Dog Park is attributed to the dedicated efforts of the Oshawa/Durham Area Walkers Group (ODAWG). Established in 2001, ODAWG lobbied for a designated off-leash area within the former Harmony Creek Conservation Authority Property. The Harmony Valley Off-Leash Dog Park officially opened in 2007. Image below shows the location of the off-leash dog park.



4.1 Request to Rename

Debi Foster submitted Correspondence SF-23-08 dated January 9, 2023, requesting consideration to rename the Harmony Valley Off-Leash Dog Park to the Clare Ford Off-Leash Dog Park. At that time, Council referred the correspondence to staff to update the Naming of Parks, Natural Areas and Facilities Procedure to include conditions to be considered for the purposes of renaming a City Park, Natural Area or Facility.

Ms. Foster's request proposes that the renaming recognizes Clare Ford's substantial contributions as a community leader, advocate, and chair of the Oshawa Durham Area Walkers Group (ODAWG). Over the past 16 years, Ms. Ford has played an instrumental role in advocating for, developing, and maintaining the off-leash dog park, working closely with City officials, community members, and various stakeholders.

Highlights of Ms. Ford's contributions include:

- Advocacy for the establishment of the off-leash dog park as part of the focus group in 2004-2005.
- Ongoing leadership as the chair of ODAWG, collaborating with the City to ensure the park's enhancement and responsible use.
- Organization of annual clean-up events, membership drives, and fundraising through activities like calendar sales.

- Collaboration with Scouts Canada to plant trees as part of the Scoutrees program, promoting environmental sustainability within the park.

Given her longstanding commitment and efforts to foster a welcoming and well-maintained off-leash dog park, Ms. Foster proposes that renaming the park would be a fitting tribute to Ms. Ford's legacy.

4.2 Policy Consideration

As directed, staff reviewed existing procedures and presented the Naming/Re-naming Policy which was approved in April 2024 ("Policy"). The Policy outlines criteria for the naming or renaming of City Facilities, including parks, and sets forth a process to ensure that naming decisions align with the City's goals, values, and strategic objectives.

The Policy permits the renaming of a City park in honor of individuals who have made significant contributions to the community's public life and well-being, especially when there is a demonstrated association between the individual and the park. Clare Ford's role in advocating for the establishment of the off-leash dog park and her active leadership in the park's ongoing development align closely with these criteria.

Furthermore, the Policy stipulates that public consultation should be undertaken, and feedback from the community gathered, as part of the renaming process. It also requires that the proposed renaming be presented to City Council for final approval. Given these requirements, should Council wish to proceed, a public notification period of 30 days would be initiated to gather community input on the proposed renaming of Harmony Valley Off-Leash Dog Park.

This Report affirms that the request submitted by Ms. Foster meets the established Policy criteria, allowing Council to deliberate on whether to proceed with the renaming process as proposed.

4.3 Options

Option 1 - Keep Existing Name

As the Harmony Valley Off-Leash Dog Park already has an existing identity, keeping the existing name may avoid any potential confusion among residents, emergency services and map users.

Should Option 1 be selected, the following motion should be passed:

"That the Safety and Facilities Services Committee recommend to City Council:

That based on Report SF-25-36 dated June 4, 2025, the request to rename Harmony Valley Off-Leash Dog Park be denied."

Option 2 – Rename to “Clare Ford Off-Leash Dog Park”

As outlined in Section 4.2, renaming the dog park after Clare Ford recognizes her contributions as leader and advocate for the dog walking community. The option to rename this park also complies with the City’s Naming/Renaming Policy.

Should Option 2 be selected, the following motion should be passed:

“That the Safety and Facilities Services Committee recommend to City Council:

That based on Report SF-25-36 dated June 9, 2025, staff initiate the process as set out in the City Facility Naming/Re-naming Policy to rename the Harmony Valley Off-Leash Dog Park to the Clare Ford Off-Leash Dog Park.”

Option 3 – Install Commemorative Plaque or Signage in Honour of Clare Ford

As an alternative to renaming the park, a commemorative plaque or sign could be installed in a prominent location within the Harmony Valley Off-Leash Dog Park. This option allows the City to recognize Clare Ford’s contributions as a leader and advocate for the dog-walking community, while maintaining the park’s existing name. Staff would determine a suitable and visible location for the installation, ensuring it is appropriately integrated into the park environment.

Should Option 3 be selected, the following motion should be passed:

“That the Safety and Facilities Services Committee recommend to City Council:

That based on Report SF-25-36 dated June 9, 2025, staff be directed to install a commemorative plaque or signage at Harmony Valley Off-Leash Dog Park in recognition of Clare Ford’s contributions to the dog-walking community, with the location and design to be determined by staff.”

5.0 Financial Implications

At the time of this Report there are no financial implications.

As the signage for the off-leash dog park is being updated and replaced as a result of a vehicular accident in 2025, the selected park name would be incorporated into the replacement signage design.

6.0 Relationship to the Oshawa Strategic Plan

This report responds to the Oshawa Strategic Plan Priority Area “Lead: Governance and Service Excellence” with the goal to enhance effective communication and encourage all community members to actively participate and learn about City services, programs, and spaces.



Randy Garey, Director,
Facilities Management Services



Adam Grant, Commissioner,
Safety and Facilities Services Department