

February 29, 2024

Lynley Swain



Dear Council Members,

I am writing this letter in advance of the upcoming Council Meeting (on March 11, 2024) for the purpose of addressing the possible addition of an off-leash dog run in the town of Thornbury.

I recently received a hefty ticket for briefly having my dog off-leash in Tomahawk golf course (while it is closed), which has provided the impetus for initiating this discussion with Council. There are many intricacies involved with the sequence of events that led to this upsetting occurrence, and I will fortunately have the opportunity to discuss these in detail with Wayne Dewitt at our early resolution meeting.

Therefore, for this intent of this letter, I will try to be as succinct as possible.

I have only lived in Thornbury for a fairly short period of time, and I am a responsible dog owner who always picks up after my dog, has her leashed up on all public trails and beaches, and feels very grateful every day to be living in such a beautiful town.

I do not take my dog to the off-leash dog park in Thornbury because it is quite small, and my dog is 7 years old and doesn't really care to play with other dogs but is more in need of a good run. My friend and I have enjoyed many winter walks in Lora Bay golf course, as well as in Cranberry golf course in Collingwood over the years. I also sometimes take my dog to Memorial Park campground in Meaford during the winter months, where they allow dogs to run through the forest trails and down by the water off-season, (as well as at a specific section of the beach all year round). However, I was recently told by a friend that Tomahawk golf course could provide another place for my dog to have a little run during the winter months while it is closed for the season.

I had seen the sign in the Tomahawk parking lot that mentions that dogs must be kept on leash, however it wasn't clear to me if that meant only on the soccer fields, or the golf course as well, and if the dogs were permitted to run free on the golf course during the winter. (The signs at Memorial Park make these stipulations very clear). In addition, there is no mention on the sign about the severity of this request or that a costly fine will ensue. On a side note, someone mentioned after I was ticketed that there is usually a bylaw number on these signs, but when I went to look at it again, it seems to be covered in some duct tape which appears to have been there for a while now? Therefore, one of my requests to Council would be to please make any

signage extremely clear about what is being asked of its residents and the potential repercussions.

In addition, I have been told that there have been “multiple complaints” about dogs off-leash – but I am wondering if these complaints are coming specifically from Tomahawk golf course or other surrounding areas, and the details of the complaints. For instance, the bylaw officer I spoke to mentioned that this is more of an issue of owners not picking up after their dogs, but in my opinion those same owners will likely avoid picking up whether their dogs are on- or off-leash. Even when my dog is running free, she stays fairly close to me and I always pick up after her (which I assume the bylaw officer also witnessed that day). So with this in mind, perhaps the signs need to indicate that there will be fines for those who do not pick up after their dogs – since this appears to be the more bothersome and pressing issue.

And lastly, if the monitoring of off-leash dogs is truly a service to the community as a whole, then I would ask that residents can at least be afforded the courtesy of a warning before being slapped with a costly ticket. I honestly didn't know with any certainty if I was breaking any rules - because there were other people that seemed comfortable having their dogs off-leash, and I had walked by many white town trucks over the past five months and no one had ever said anything to me about it, and I had been permitted to do so in other aforementioned golf courses - so I went ahead with it without any issue (until now). And as the bylaw officer can attest, I kept my dog leashed up all the way from the parking lot/soccer field area to the golf course (and back) since I assumed that those were the areas that required a leash and that the golf course was a suitable place to have her off-leash since I was the only person there.

I am a very respectful and considerate dog owner, and have had many dogs in various cities over the past couple of decades. I feel that a certain amount of trust in the Thornbury residents would be appreciated, and if someone diverges from these parameters then they will face the consequences. Dogs should not be allowed to destroy public property, their poop should be picked up, and they should be able to get along with other dogs if socializing – much like the rules of behaviour at any other dog park in the area.

In summary, this letter is for the purpose of asking for the signage to be clearer - but more importantly it is to pitch the idea of Tomahawk becoming a winter locale for an off-leash dog run. If you feel this might disturb some residents, then perhaps it can be used for this purpose for only specific days and/or times of the week?

I appreciate your time, and I hope I have been able to express my intentions clearly and concisely. If you have any further questions, please feel to contact me.

Thank-you,

Lynley Swain