

Yesterday the [CRD Board rejected the latest proposed plan for Island View Beach](#), and sent it back to the Parks Committee for reconsideration. **This will put the planning process for Island View Beach into its 7th year.**

The cause is the disconnect between the rhetoric and reality.

The rhetoric paints a picture of a pristine wilderness bursting with exotic species at risk, threatened by people and their pets. The reality is this is former farm land, evolving at its own pace with mostly non-native vegetation and only a few "at risk" species of sand based plants in the north east; no at risk birds or mammals; and no evidence of significant damage by people and their pets.

The proposed zoning map is attached. Yesterday some directors described this as becoming a "dog park", because they saw the blue shading where it was proposed dogs could run free off leash; and the green shading where dogs could be off leash but on trail.

- The reality is this is not Beacon Hill park - most of the blue shaded area is too wet to enter for 5 months a year; and in the dry period much of the area is covered in thick scrub where dogs cannot enter - so regardless of the season or the blue shading, nature dictates its own limits on the use of this area.
- In the existing park plan, the green area above Lamont Road is zoned for dogs to run free, off leash. The new proposal would have confined them to on trail, which is a substantial reduction of area where dogs could go.
- The rhetoric is that more park area was being allocated to dogs. The reality is that dogs would have been severely restricted from their current access, under the proposal.
- The rhetoric is that if this plan had proceeded there would be terrible harm to the environment. The reality is this whole area has been used by people and dogs for all the time it has been a park, and no damage has occurred.
- The rhetoric speaks of sand dunes in the north east. The reality is there have never been sand dunes in the park, only some sheet sand; and that has become so contaminated with invasive species and organic material that is is questionable if it even meets the definition of sand any more.
- The rhetoric is that dogs chase sea birds. The reality is that is not common, and also the beach is not in the park so is outside the jurisdiction of the park plan.

The planning process repeatedly collapses under the weight of the rhetoric when its veracity is challenged. And the rhetoric is often made in a way that appears to pit one user group against another.

One difficulty, is that user groups often define a process they want in order to achieve a goal, instead of identifying the goal it self, so the parties often don't know what the other really sought. Consequently, parties would be seen as opposed to each other, when it was only a lack of understanding. Similarly, thundering messages of "*the environment must be protected*" were unhelpful when no clue was given of "*protected from what?*".

With the planning now entering its 7th year, it is obvious the process must change. Although many were disappointed when the draft plan was rejected by the Board yesterday, we, at FOIVB, see this as an opportunity to create a plan that all can be proud of:

- the key is to have informal, respectful meetings with the user groups and CRD staff, to agree on a realistic description of the present park environment
- for each user group to explain its reasonable goals
- for the groups to work collaboratively to achieve those reasonable goals, or find suitable compromises.

We believe the parties are not far apart, and that when the rhetoric matches reality we will have a new park plan.

Sincerely,

The Friends of Island View Beach

PS A link is given in the first line above to the directors deliberations. It is worth watching to see the various positions different directors took.

The rejected draft plan itself can be [seen here](#)



