

Dog park to be permanent

By FRANCIS BAKER

News Express Staff

The Glengarry Crescent off-leash dog area is being made a permanent park.

Councillors endorsed the move at Monday afternoon's committee of the whole meeting.

"This is a great success story," parks and recreation director Andy Goldie told councillors.

The roots of the park lie with interested dog owners, who've been talking about the idea to council for years. A group of enthusiastic volunteers called the Centre Wellington Off-Leash Park Association put together a pilot project, working with township staff to find land and set up an area where dogs could run without leashes.

The pilot park area was a big hit with dog owners, and has been used by hundreds of dogs since it was officially opened in September 2009.

"Staff has received many positive comments about the provision of the space and the managing of the area by the volunteer group," Goldie's written report states.

Located on industrial land in the east end of Fergus, the park is bordered by trees and wetlands, doesn't need fencing, and doesn't

infringe on another park or a residential area.

"This is a location that only pet owners go to," Goldie said. "If you go, you know what you're getting into."

That not only cuts down on costs like fencing, but also means there's no need to educate nearby residents about the park, or buffer it from children's areas, he said.

That was one reason why staff, looking at other possible locations, decided to keep the one being used by the pilot project.

Ward 2 Coun. Kirk McElwain wondered about using up some of the township's valuable industrial land.

But the parcel of land where the park is located wouldn't be easy to develop, councillors heard.

COSTS

Servicing costs that would include building a turnaround for traffic might be more than \$250,000, and because the property is adjacent to a wetland, it wouldn't be a very large lot for development.

"Staff have met to discuss the loss of this small industrial land parcel and feel that it would not significantly impact industrial land needs currently or in the future," Goldie's report states.