

## ***Edmands For All - Position Paper***

On a Sunday morning in April, seven Newton residents gathered to share their concerns about the proposed off-leash dog park for Edmands Park. Abutters, neighbors, and lifelong citizens were represented. The result was *Edmands for All* - a neighborhood group with a clear objective of preserving, conserving, and following the wishes of the original 1913 grant from the Edmands family as a public space for all.

*We believe* that Edmands Park should remain a place for multiple recreational uses and should not be designated as anything other than general public use. The 33 acres of Edmands Park is one of the few open, natural spaces in Newton welcoming to all. Whether on a stroll, bird watching, youngsters at play, cross country running, orienteering, teens on a nature study, dog walkers or bikers - a public park welcomes all to enjoy and feel secure.

*We believe* that Edmands Park's delicate ecology should be preserved. As one of the largest remaining wetlands in Newton, Edmands Park provides unique habitat for nesting and migratory birds. 117 bird species have been observed in the park, according to Cornell University's [eBird listing](#). That includes species which nest and/or forage at ground level--such as ovenbird, palm warbler, Virginia rail, Nashville warbler, eastern towhee, and brown thrasher. Scientific studies have [repeatedly shown](#) that allowing dogs off leash dramatically reduces the survival of nesting birds.

*We believe* that the City of Newton is dedicated to protecting water quality. Pet waste can be the single biggest contributor to elevated phosphorus levels in urban/suburban waterways, according to a [study](#) published in 2017 in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Increased pet waste in Edmands Park would not only harm water quality and reduce biodiversity in the wetland itself, but it would also raise the City of Newton's phosphorus discharge into the Charles River, which is impaired for excess phosphorus levels, according to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. The City of Newton is legally required to reduce its annual phosphorus discharge into the Charles River by 5,214 pounds by the year 2038, under the City's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Permit, administered by the federal Environmental Protection Agency. We strongly believe that designating the park off-leash will attract many more dogs.

*We believe* that the needs and security of all people in the park, as well as leashed dogs, is the absolute priority and that the immediate neighborhood should be as safe as possible for all residents and park users. Fifty-two dog bites were reported to the Newton Police in 2023 and 21 bites in the four months of 2024. Abutters of the park report dogs routinely running onto their property. We believe that essential human rights should take precedence over animal rights.

Please take a minute to sign our brief petition at [bit.ly/edmandspark](https://bit.ly/edmandspark). You can also submit comments there. ***Thank you for your time!***