

September 21, 2009

Dear Chairman Rice and Members of the Newton Parks and Recreation Committee,

Thank you for reviewing our application for legal Off-Leash Dog hours in Newton Centre Park. We are a small group, comprised of friends and neighbors who primarily live within walking distance to the park. Some of our members have been together, on a daily basis, for more than 15 years! Over those years we have established a true feeling of community. This is our neighborhood park - our kids play or have played in the park; we play tennis or soccer; and our dogs run, play and fetch balls in the park. We believe that the park can accommodate all types of activities, from sports to dogs to playgrounds and picnicking. The keys are courtesy, flexibility, and responsibility. We take a personal, hands-on interest in the park, and view it very much as our responsibility to take care of – from trash pickup to yard work. We have been flexible with hours and, to some degree, location so that there is room for all. We have tried to be respectful of others, and addressed any issues immediately as they arose. The park has been good for people - it has provided us with an opportunity to know our neighbors, and to become a community within Newton. Many parents have brought over their children to introduce them to the dogs, and we bring over the most gentle, calm dog of our group for the child to pet and meet. It has been good for the dogs – a tired, socialized dog is a happy dog! Most of our yards are small, and the park provides a space for our dogs to play and run and learn good doggie manners. Please legalize us! We have been making this space work for many years, and we don't want to be outlaws!

Thank you again for your time,  
Claudia Morris  
Newton Centre Park Dogs

## **City of Newton, MA Application for Dogs Off-Leash Site**

Please answer all questions and complete accompanying tables.  
Please use additional sheets if necessary. Thank you!

**1. Location Name**

*Newton Centre Park*

**2. Location Address**

Please include names of streets which form the perimeter of the site.

*Pleasant Street, Tyler Terrace, Centre Street, Homer Street, Bowen Street, Chapin Road*

**3. Sponsoring Group/Individuals**

A. Name of sponsor (individual or group)

*Claudia Morris*

B. Names and contact information (address, phone and email) of all individuals interested in working to support the off-leash site (Please use separate sheet.)

*See attached sheet*

C. If group, name and contact information of primary contact person

**4. Physical Description of Location and Proposed Off-Leash Site**

If proposed off-leash site encompasses only a portion of general location, please indicate exactly what part(s) of larger location you are proposing. Information requested below is for proposed off-leash site, not entire location.

A. Description

Land, vegetation, existing structures, natural or developed physical boundaries

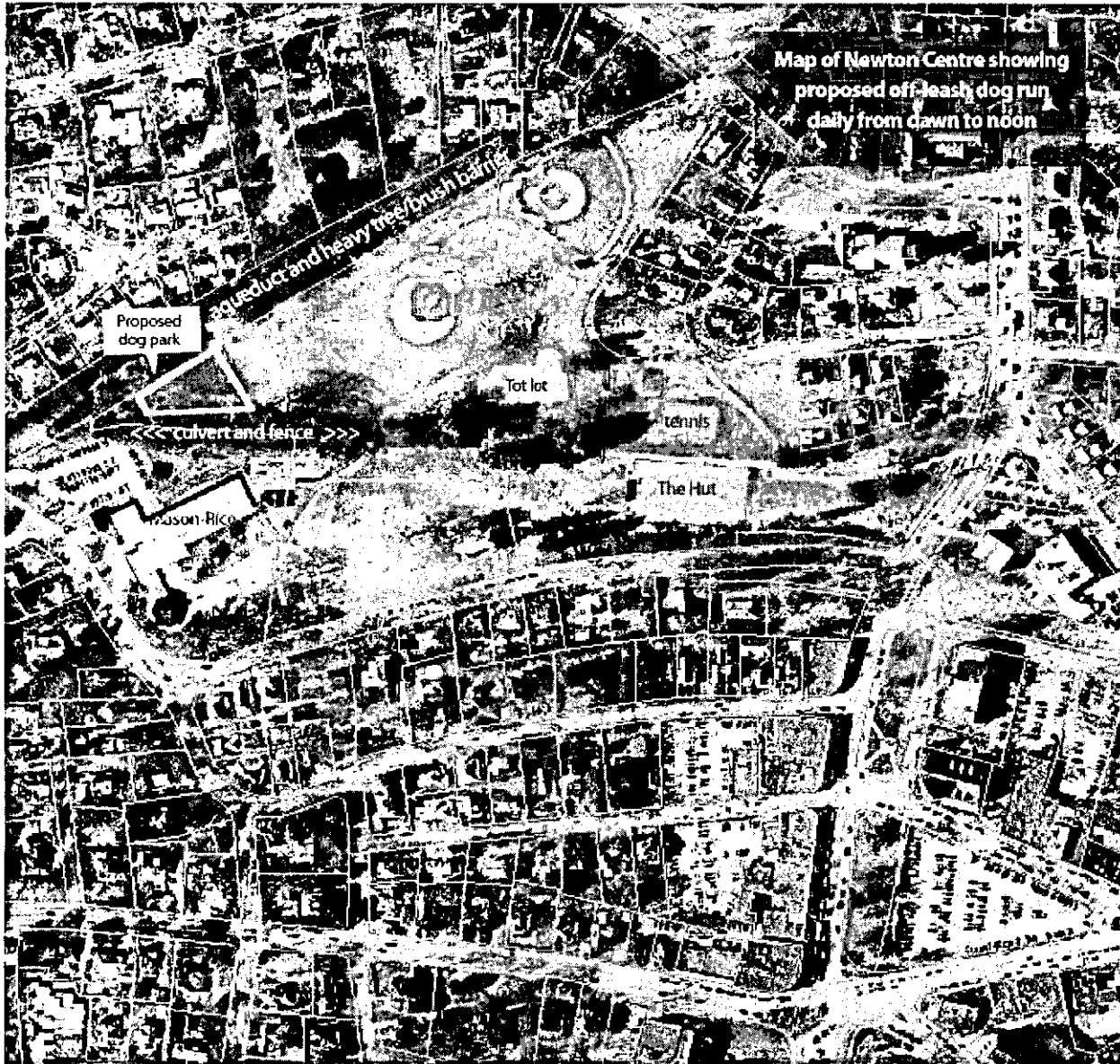
*We are proposing to use a small section on the western or Pleasant Street side of the park. That section is a triangular area that is bordered on 2 sides by shrubs, trees and a creek. The third side borders the soccer/volleyball "fields". This area is apart from the section of the park with baseball diamonds, and is separate from where kids might walk to Mason-Rice Elementary School.*

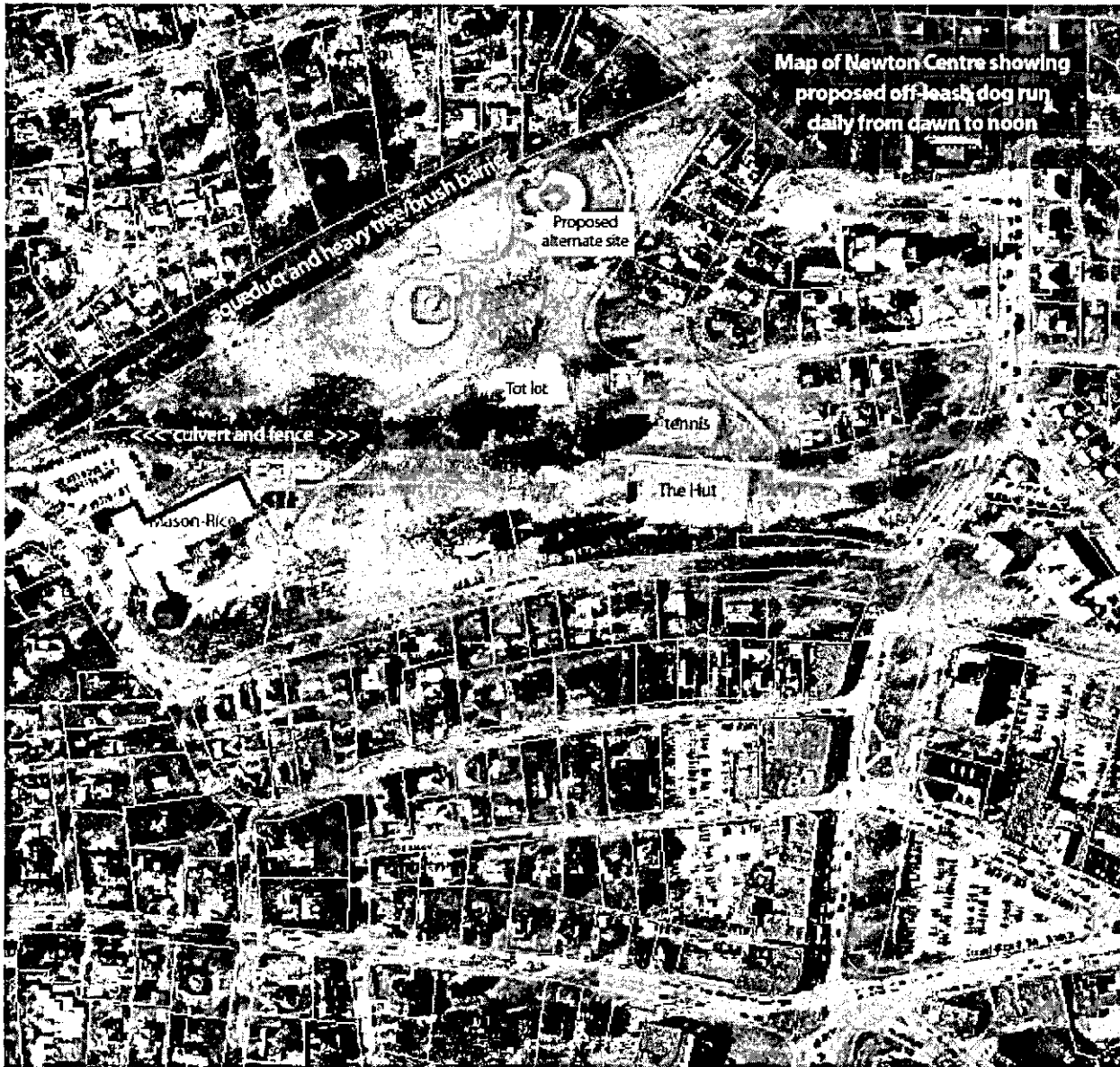
*On weekends, this space is sometimes used by volleyball. If this is the case, and there are no baseball games underway, we have been using an alternate site: the grassy area between the two baseball fields, close to the Northern edge of the park. This area is bordered by the shrubs and trees, the chain link fence surrounding the Little League field (which is completely enclosed), and the chain link fences for the senior field. If volleyball is running, and baseball games are underway, there will be no area for off-leash play on that day. This has been happening for several years, and on those high usage days we go home and walk the dogs on leash.*

B. Sketch

Please go to the City's website (<http://www.ci.newton.ma.us>) and, on the home page, look for the link

to the "Assessor's Database." Search for the property location by street address and click on "Aerial Photo" to get an overview of the site. Print the Aerial Photo and sketch the boundaries of the area proposed for the off-leash site.





C. Approximate dimensions of site

D. Proposed location of fencing

If contemplated; please note that some sites will not be suitable for fencing.

*We do not believe that fencing would be necessary at this site, as there are natural boundaries on 2 of the 3 borders. A fence would also prevent sharing the space with other groups on an as needed basis.*

## 5. **Available Parking**

Please note that some sites might have multiple entrances.

A. Parking location(s) relative to off-leash site, approximate number of spaces

*Currently most people using this area are from the neighborhood and walk to the park with their dog(s). There is parking available on Tyler Terrace, Centre Street (metered) and Homer Street. On the weekend, parking is also available in the Mason-Rice parking lot.*

B. Please indicate available parking in attached sketch

C. Route between parking and proposed site

*If parked on Tyler Terrace, leashed dogs would be walked down the current walkway behind Mason-Rice School, cross over the walking bridge and turn left to enter the off-leash area. If parked on Centre Street, leashed dogs would enter the park via the Centre Street entrance, and continue on park walkways to the off-leash area. Entering on Homer Street, leashed dogs would walk down the northern edge of the park until they reached the off-leash area.*

**6. Current Usage Information of Location and Proposed Off-Leash Site**

To ensure reasonable accuracy of this information, sampling of several weekdays/weekends might be necessary. Include seasonal variation, if known. Please answer the questions below and summarize the information on the Current Use Table as well.

A. Description of unofficial use of this location for off-leash dogs

Please indicate current activities on this site, e.g., dogs and handlers/on- and off-leash, sports, use of site as shortcut for pedestrians, etc.

Please include times these activities occur and approximate numbers of people and dogs.

*During the week, there is limited usage other than the dogs during the morning hours. There may be parents and children in the tot lot, and parents and children walking to Mason-Rice, but these are in areas apart from the proposed dog area. Afternoons have more activities, with sports practices and games. During the weekend, there are frequent games and practices in the park. In winter, we are typically the only park visitors during the morning hours.*

B. Dog walkers

Please indicate whether professional dog walkers currently utilize the park and if so, please describe: number of dog walkers, number of dogs/walker and times of use.

*Currently there is one Dog Walker and her assistant that frequent the park. It should be noted that a large percentage of our group use this Dog Walker for both vacation stays and doggie day care. This means that the group of dogs is consistent to the neighborhood and group.*

**7. Proposed Usage of Off-Leash Site**

Please answer the questions below and summarize the information on the Proposed Use Table as well.

A. Indicate any proposed restrictions/regulations\*

Numbers of dogs allowed at once, number of dogs/person, etc.

*We believe that the site can handle 20 dogs. Current usage is below that number, and will vary seasonally. Many our our group visit the park after dropping off their child at school or the school bus stop. During the proposed hours, people come and go as their personal schedule dictates. We propose to self monitor the maximum dog limit, and will encourage people to wait or leave if the maximum number of dogs is reached. Occasionally an untrained or aggressive dog has come to the park, and we have discouraged them from returning, until the dog has been properly trained. We will suggest trainers or classes that we have taken. When puppies attend, we have monitored the puppy/older dog interaction and leashed or removed dogs if problems occurred. This has been working at the park so far, and we have not had a situation that remained a problem.*

B. Potential on-site conflict

How would on-site conflicts between dogs and between owners be handled?

*Conflicts between dogs have been handled by leashing the dogs, and removing them from the park.*

C. Proposed maintenance/enhancement of proposed site/location by volunteers

Please include any additional equipment (trash barrels, pick-up bags, informational sheets, etc.) that you think is necessary. Please include proposed process for ensuring that dog waste is addressed in an environmentally sound fashion.

*Currently our group provides daily supervision of the field: trash pickup, notification of Parks and Recreation Department of overflowing trash cans, broken equipment, hazards on the field, including remnants of campfires and overturned porta-potties. We hold a yearly NewtonServes cleanup as well. We have undertaken a pruning project to eradicate the bittersweet, Japanese knotweed and other invasive plants that have overtaken the surrounding trees and shrubs. We provide extra "poop bags" in our area, and make sure that the park and walkways into the parks used by leashed dogs remain clean.*

*We do request, however, that a trash barrel be placed close to the dog area, ideally near the current placement of the porta-potty just west of the walking bridge, near the "heritage" tree. Currently we either deposit waste in other park barrels on the way home, or bring the waste home. Especially after weekends, these other barrels can be full, and many are removed after the sports seasons are finished. We would really appreciate a 4 season barrel close to the dog area!*

#### **8. Abutters**

Number and location of abutters (properties bordering the site)

#### **9. Potential conflicts with non-owners**

##### **A. Existing Problems**

Please describe in as much detail as possible any and all historical or ongoing problems related to use of the park by dogs/owners. Include complaints by neighbors and between dogs/owners and other park users. If historical, describe how the problem(s) were resolved, if at all.

*To our knowledge, there are no ongoing problems, nor have there been any recent conflicts that have escalated into harsh words. We have tried very hard to be flexible, and adjust our hours to work around any space overlaps that have occurred. We have moved when asked, moved and leashed dogs when told that a child nearby is afraid. The only conflict within the past 6 years occurred approximately 5 years ago, and involved a runner that insisted on running through our small group. He would do this on a weekly basis, with no pattern that we could recognize. In response to our requests to let us leash the dogs before he ran through them, he became irate, verbally abusive, and threatening to several of our group (all women). We called the dog officer after the worst incident to report what had happened. We have not seen this individual in several years.*

##### **B. Potential problems**

Do you foresee any potential conflicts between off-leash dog use and other park users?

No.

##### **C. Mitigation of problems**

Please describe how the proposed restrictions/regulations (above 7A\*) might mitigate any historical/ongoing/potential problems.

#### **10. Additional information**

Please supply any additional information you think might be helpful to the Off-Leash Advisory Committee, the Conservation Commission or the Parks and Recreation Commission.

*We are a small group, with some members that have been together for more than 15 years. We believe that the Park can accommodate all types of activities, from sports to dogs to playgrounds and picnicking. The keys are courtesy, flexibility, and responsibility. We take a personal, hands-on interest in the park, and view it very*

*much as our responsibility to take care of – from trash pickup to yard work. We have been flexible with hours and, to some degree, location so that there is room for all. We have tried to be respectful of others, and addressed any issues immediately as they arose. The park has provided us with an opportunity to know our neighbors, and to become a community within Newton.. It has been good for the dogs – a tired, socialized dog is a happy dog! Most of our yards are small, and the park provides a space for our dogs to play and run. Please legalize us! We don't want to be outlaws!*

**Thank you very much!**

**Tables for Site Applications**

**Current Use Table**

To the extent you can, please indicate number of dogs and handlers present at each time period observed. Please alter times listed if these are not reflective of current use patterns.

Times of use	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
5 am – 8 am	2 people/ 2dogs	3 people/ 3dogs		2 people / 2 dogs	3 people/ 2 dogs	1 person/ 1 dog	1 person/ 1 dog
8 am – 9 am	6 people/ 8dogs	7 people / 7 dogs	4 people/ 4 dogs	4 people/ 4 dogs	8 people/ 8dogs	1 person/ 1 dog	2 person/ 2 dogs
9 am – 10 am	7 people/ 10 dogs	6 people/ 12 dogs	6 people/ 11 dogs	6 people/ 6 dogs	6 people/ 6 dogs	3 people/ 5 dogs	4 people/ 6 dogs
10 am - 12 pm	3 people/ 9 dogs		5 people/ 13 dogs	3 people/ 6 dogs			2 people/ 2 dogs
12 pm - 5pm							
Seasonal*							

\* To the extent known, please indicate seasonal variation in current use. E.g., if the area is not useable when there is snow, etc.

*Current off-leash dog usage is primarily between dawn and noon, and varies from 2-3 dogs to approximately 20. The peak hours are 8:30 - 10am, aligning with the Mason-Rice Elementary start time. Typically there are higher attendance numbers during the week, with less on the weekend. Sunday peak hours run about 1/2 hour later than the rest of the week.*

**Proposed Use Table**

Please indicate times of proposed off-leash hours.  
If seasonal variation is anticipated, please specify.

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Dog Park Application

Times of use	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
5 am – 8 am							
8 am – 10 am							
10 am – 12 pm							
2 pm – 6 pm	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
6 pm – 10 pm	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Seasonal*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

*We are proposing hours of Dawn to Noon, 7 days a week.*