

Off-Leash Dog Task Force Meeting Report

Thursday, October 20, 2005

Present: Susan Albright, Mitch Fishman, Amy Koel, Fran Rice, Leslie McGregor, Paula Polumbo, Norm Richardson, J. O'Connell

Brenda Loew spoke about numerous problems with off-leash dogs including enforcement, maintenance, overuse of the land, and big vs. little dog-potential problems. She wondered if we should not consider private dog parks.

Fran Rice described dog parks he was aware of in Clearwater, Florida. These have been very successful and have separated little and big dogs.

The group then referred to the list of rules in the pamphlet put out by the American Kennel Club called, "Establishing a Dog Park in Your Community," which had been distributed by Charlotte McGowan at an earlier meeting.

The following were the rules that seemed reasonable for a Newton park proposal:

1. Owners are legally responsible for their dogs and any injuries caused by them
2. Puppies and dogs must be properly licensed, inoculated and healthy.
3. Animals should wear a collar and ID tags at all times
4. Dogs showing aggression toward people or other animals will be removed from the park. Animals who exhibit a history of aggressive behavior will not be permitted to enter.
5. Owners must have voice control of their dogs.
6. Puppies using the park must be at least four months old
7. The number of dogs permitted with one owner is limited to three dogs. (Need to discuss this with Brookline and see how their system is working.
8. Owners should not leave their dogs unattended or allowed out of sight. If young children are permitted in a dog park, they too should be under constant supervision.
9. Dogs in heat will not be allowed in the park.
10. Owners should carry a leash at all times. Dogs should be leashed before entering and prior to leaving the park.
11. Violators will be subject to removal from the park and suspension of park privileges.

Discussion followed regarding criteria for park selection:

1. There should be citizen involvement - would this mitigate the inability for city to provide staffing for the project?
2. Fencing?
3. There should be at least 4 or 5 parks in Newton for a trial -any less would not work
4. Could we split time in park use - i.e. some hours for dogs others not - and if so would this mitigate the need for fencing.
5. Areas of parks used for kid cut through (i.e. across the park to access the Cabot school) should not be used for dog parks

6. Parks used for summer camp should not be dog parks.
7. There should be no parks in sand lots, tot lots or little league fields.
8. Consideration for wild life who use the park

The next meeting will be a discussion of potential sites.