



Setti D. Warren
Mayor

Newton Parks & Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes
City Hall, Room 209, 7:00pm
October 17, 2011



Robert J. DeRubeis
Commissioner

Attending: Arthur Magni, *Chairman*, Kathleen Heitman, *Vice-Chair*, Bob DeRubeis, *Commissioner*, Walter Bernheimer, Andrew Stern, Bethel Charkoudian, Peter Johnson, Richard Tucker, Michael Clarke, Don Fishman, Jack Neville, Peter Kastner, Robin McLaughlin, *Secretary*

Meeting called to order at 7:05pm

Chairman Magni rearranged the agenda to accommodate the Public Hearing.

1. Off-Leash Recreation Area Proposals – Public Hearing

- Commissioner DeRubeis presented the Off-Leash Area Working Group proposal for off-leash recreation areas at Braceland Playground and Spears Park (presentation attached).
- Chairman Magni introduced the Aldermen present and asked them to comment before they had to go into another meeting.
- Alderman Crossley commented she is impressed with how far the city has come with off-leash areas. Currently there is a predominance of off-leash areas in the north side of the City. Alderman Crossley stated she lives in the Newton Highlands and believes the topography of Braceland Playground works well with an off-leash area. The off-leash areas are important to a large number of families and this process allows the areas to be open in a controlled way. Alderman Crossley supports the proposal for the off-leash area and also supports a dedicated entryway and crosswalk at Braceland Playground.
- Alderman Rice commented a few years ago there was a meeting at Emerson Community Center for the original off-leash proposal at Braceland Playground. There were issues that have been addressed since the meeting at Emerson. One issue was the fact that citizens were proposing the off-leash areas and not the City, but now the City is managing the off-leash areas and proposals. A second issue was sledding and off-leash dogs and this proposal addresses the issue by closing the off-leash area during the winter. Another issue was, not wanting to be the first off-leash area open in the City, currently there are six off-leash areas open throughout the City. Most of the issues have been addressed by the City.
- Alderman Lennon commented he has concerns with the Spears Park proposal. There are parking and traffic issues and there are already a number of off-leash parks in the area and he would like to have other parks open around the City before Spears Park is open.
- Alderman Albright thanked the Commission for their careful concern during this process, it has made a difference. There are several parks in Ward 2 and people will be against the off-leash area in Spears Park

because they are afraid the park will be overrun with dogs, but that has not happened in any of the open off-leash areas. It will be a win/win situation in Spears Park and if it does not work out the off-leash area will be closed.

- Alderman Yates stated he sees people walking their dogs on leash around the neighborhood and sees no reasons to change Braceland Playground. There are parking issues and the off-leash dogs will be disruptive to the activities in the upper level. Alderman Yates suggested the group think outside the box if they want an area in Upper Falls, look at Hemlock Gorge or the former site of the Pillar House.
- Chairman Magni announced the Commission would take public comments for the Spears Park proposal, there is a two minute limit, all comments are to be directed to the Commission, there will be no heckling and please identify who you are.
- Norman Wirtz, 38 Waban St., commented Spears Park is a wasted and unused space. His small dogs would like an off-leash area and urges the Commission to approve the proposal.
- David Frenette, 84 Walnut Park stated his issues with an off-leash area are, cleanliness, noise, dogs barking disturbing the neighbors, traffic and dog bites.
- Sister Rosemary Brennan, of the Montessori School, Sister Brennan commented the athletic field directly abuts Spears Park. Sister Brennan is not in favor of the off-leash area due to safety concerns. There are 400 students from her school that uses the athletic fields and fencing would not keep the children safe.
- Resident of 475 Washington St commented the off-leash area would disrupt the calmness and serenity of the park. There are traffic concerns and his family's acupuncture business would be disturbed.
- Mr. Best, 74 Walnut Park stated his main issue is parking.
- Shirley McKay, 88 Walnut Park, commented the park is used by small children; the off-leash area would create litter, smells and noise. There are already dogs there, keep it as it is.
- Ms. Alla Mantsur, Jaconnet Rd commented she has been attending the off-leash recreation area meetings for two years and has seen that dogs make the city beautiful. There was concern at Clafin Playground about parking, but people do not drive to Clafin it is a neighborhood park, people walk to the area. The off-leash area users are self-policing. In Old Cold Spring Park if the off-leash area users see an off-leash dog on the trails we will explain to the dog owner why it is important to keep their dog on the leash until they enter the off-leash area. This off-leash area will help to make improvements to this park and keep it from being a snow dump.
- Lisa Sampson, 698 Beacon St has recently moved from Brookline where there are many successful dog parks. Ms. Sampson supports the proposal and a small dog off-leash area. Ms. Sampson has been to several off-leash areas and there are no smells from the dogs.
- Ted Kuklinski, 84 Edge hill Rd and Off-Leash Area Working Group member addressed the closeness of a school to the off-leash area. Mr.

Kuklinski stated he had just attended a funeral in Philadelphia in a dense area where there is a successful off-leash area next to a school. It is possible to have an off-leash area near a school.

- Elaine Kelly, 84 Walnut Park commented Spears Park is a beautiful park and the only greenery left on Washington St and asked why you can't leave the space for the children.
- Chairman Magni asked the Commission members for their comments.
- Mr. Stern asked Commissioner DeRubeis what the height of the proposed fence will be. Commissioner DeRubeis stated the fence will be 4' the same as the fence at Coletti-Magni Park.
- Ms. Charkoudian commented Spears Park is only a 1/8th mile from the Cabot Park off-leash area; parking and Washington Street are a mess.
- Ms. Heitman agreed it is difficult to park and there are a lot of children at the school.
- Mr. Tucker suggested deferring the proposal to a later date.
- Mr. Bernheimer commented if there are a lot of sites in one area maybe we should wait until the sites are spread throughout the City.
- Mr. Johnson asked if there are other off-leash areas directly across the street from homes. Mr. Bernheimer replied yes, Claflin Playground off-leash area.

Mr. Tucker made the motion to table the Spears Park off-leash recreation area proposal for a later time. Ms. Heitman seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-2.

- Chairman Magni announced the Commission would take public comments for the Braceland Playground proposal, there is a two minute limit, all comments are to be directed to the Commission, there will be no heckling and please identify who you are.
- Jonathan Norris, 1175 Chestnut Street stated he is not for or against the off-leash area but if the City is going to spend money they should address the deplorable conditions at the park
- Resident stated he just moved from Boulder Colorado, the people tonight are speaking like dogs are the devil. He has worked with dogs who have been volunteers to assist people. Most dogs are well behaved and do not smell. Dogs bring joy to a lot of people.
- Mr. Joyce, 28 Pennsylvania Ave brings his dog Sweetie to Braceland Playground daily and the majority of the time they are the only ones in the lower level, though he has seen other people with their dogs at the park. People tonight have mentioned cleanliness as a problem when he was at the Braceland with Sweetie the other day he picked up three bottles left behind from the sports activities.
- Doug Clott, 22 Oakland Rd, Newton Girls Softball, commented he is not for or against the off-leash area. Braceland Playground lower level is underutilized, but he does use it for Newton Girls Softball. His hope is to skin the lower level of the field by the backstop to create a softball field.
- Dick Selnick commented his grandchildren play soccer at Braceland Playground and is surprised to hear there is nobody at the park. The

proposal should be that the park belongs to the dogs for part of the day and the sports activities the remainder of the day.

- Lee McIntyre, 607 Commonwealth Ave and Off-Leash Area Working Group member stated there is lots of available space in the 80 parks throughout the City. Currently over 700 off-leash medallions have been sold and there are no off-leash areas below route 9. A lot of thought went into the proposal for Braceland Playground. The other dog parks are clean and working well. The culture at Cold Spring Park has changed. The users of the off-leash area no longer walk their dog's off-leash on the trails. Mr. McIntyre has been to Braceland Playground with his dogs and has spoken with the neighbors. Mr. McIntyre believes the people would use and enjoy the off-leash area.
- Linda Camp, 1125 Chestnut St agrees with Alderman Yates. Ms. Camp is not for or against the off-leash area but Braceland Playground is for children and dogs are distracting.
- Mr. Bornstein complimented the Commission on their approach to off-leash areas; it has been fair and objective. Mr. Bornstein enjoys the park and supports the proposal. Everything has changed since the meeting at Emerson two years ago. The open off-leash areas have a good track record. The off-leash area will be no more disruptive than any other activity. The proposal can be used to improve the area such as adding a cross walk.
- Resident, the park areas must meet the needs of all residents. Braceland is a big area and the proposed off-leash site will not interfere with other activities. More off-leash areas must be added so there is less of a burden on only a few open areas.
- Ms. Alla Mantsur, Jaconnet Rd commented the off-leash area can work. Families bring their dogs with them to watch games and they can use the off-leash area. The proposed area is in the lower tier, the dogs will not see flying balls, if there is a field dogs will run in the field.
- Susan Hoffman, Highland Area Council, commented she is 100% in favor of the off-leash proposal.
- Greg Schwartz, Highlands Area Council stated he looks at the bigger picture to accommodate the desires/needs of all residents and maximize the use of the resources the City has. Mr. Schwartz commented the Commission is doing a good job and supports the off-leash area and the work done by the Off-leash Area Working Group.
- Resident of Randlett Park stated she is a dog owner, who has a dog license and has purchased an off-leash medallion. There were people with dog's off-leash in parks before there were legal off-leash recreation areas. This process opens the off-leash areas with controls. Alderman Yates said he sees people walking their dogs on leash in the neighborhood that is because there is nowhere to go off-leash in the neighborhood. There needs to be more off-leash areas spread throughout the City.
- Representative from the pre-school that uses Braceland Playground everyday commented children are afraid of dogs, owners do not clean up after their dogs. An off-leash area should be a fenced area.

- Mrs. Larson-Dill, Ward 5, supports the off-leash area and believes in mixed use.
- Jan Bornstein, Ward 5, stated she would be walking to the park from Pennsylvania Ave but having a park with plenty of parking is important. The park should be shared. Develop areas for kids, sports and dogs.
- Barry & Stephanie Siroka, 1159 Chestnut St commented they have lived in their house for 25 years. There is no way to control dogs in an off-leash area. There is a lot more athletic activity than just leagues, there is also cricket and volleyball. The Siroka's agree with Alderman Yates.
- Claudia Morris, 227 Pleasant St uses the Newton Centre Off-leash area. Newton Centre is not fenced, it is shared usage. Because Newton Centre is legal there is motivation to follow the rules. If sports teams set up in the area, the off-leash users go home. It can work.
- Dan Cuphone, 529 Auburn St commented he has been involved with the Braceland proposal since the beginning. Mr. Cuphone is impressed with how the off-leash program is working. Issues have been addressed. Braceland Playground would be a great addition to the program.
- Myra Jackson, Spring St stated she is terrified of dogs, but she is ok with having an off-leash area in Braceland Playground because then she would know where the off-leash dogs would be and she would not go to that area of the park. Ms. Jackson supports the proposal.
- Ms. Richer does not believe the drop off to the lower level will stop dogs from running out of the off-leash area. If it does not work without a fence, a fence can be added.
- Resident, a user of Cabot Park off-leash area stated the off-leash area at Cabot Park is working, a community is developing. Dogs are smart, once they learn they are going to the off-leash area they do not stop in other areas in the park they go directly to the off-leash area.
- Chairman Magni asked the Commission members for their comments.
- Mr. Bernheimer commented this proposal makes sense and it is important to have an off-leash area on the South side of the City, but it should not be open until there is traffic control such as a crosswalk and it should wait to open until March 16. If the area opens now it will close for the winter in a few weeks.
- Ms. Charkoudian agreed with Mr. Bernheimer and asked if a light could also be added to the crosswalk.
- Commissioner DeRubeis stated he could meet with traffic about the crosswalk but a light would take years to have approved.
- Mr. Stern asked how users will be notified if the area is permitted.
- Commissioner DeRubeis replied advanced notice would be posted at the site.
- Mr. Neville commented his personal opinion is that dogs and kids do not mix well and does not approve of this proposal.

Mr. Bernheimer made the motion to accept the Braceland Playground off-leash proposal leaving the timing of opening the off-leash area and other safety concerns to the discretion of the Commissioner with subsequent reporting to the Commission. Mr. Tucker seconded the motion. Motion passed 7-1.

2. Meeting Minutes –September 19, 2011- accepted 8-0

3. Commissioner's Reports on Programs, Forestry and Maintenance

- Department Snapshot-(report attached)
- October 16th – Paddy's Road Race. There were 2,039 entrants in the race. Commissioner DeRubeis thanks, Mark Kelly for a job well done.
- October 15-16th- Harvest fair- another successful weekend by Linda Plaut.

4. New Business

- No new business

5. Other Business

- **911 Memorial Update-** Commissioner DeRubeis commented he attended a meeting with the 911 Committee on October 12th, along with Ms. Heitman and Mr. Tucker. The 911 Committee members felt they were attacked at the September Commission meeting. Ms. Heitman commented the October 12th meeting helped to diffuse the situation.
- Mr. Stern stated the message from the September meeting was accurate but it did come across as an attack rather than a discussion.
- Commissioner DeRubeis stated the 911 Committee has agreed to slow down the process, look at alternative sites and propose criteria for the memorial site.
- Mr. Bernheimer recommended the group read the book, "The Submission". The book is about a 911 memorial submission in New York, it is similar to this situation. The P & R Commission should be in control of the process.
- Mr. Stern commented this situation will continue to occur if the Commission does not create a policy for public art.
- Ms. Charkoudian stated the 911 Memorial Committee is a private group.
- Mr. Fishman stated most projects are started from private groups, we need a process.
- Ms. Charkoudian commented the committee thought because Commissioner DeRubeis and P & R Open Space coordinator, Carol Schein were included at the meetings they were doing the right thing. There was a misunderstanding. A policy is a good idea.
- Commissioner DeRubeis stated he had met with the Committee members in the Recreation office before the September Commission Meeting and explained the City Hall location may be problematic and Ms. Schein commented the process seemed to be rushed.
- Mr. Stern recommended a sub-committee be formed to create a policy.
- Mr. Bernheimer recommended involving the Planning Department.
- Mr. Clarke commented a draft policy created by Ms. Schein and the City Hall Memorial policy has been circulated by e-mail. The Open Space Committee has already started to meet.
- Mr. Fishman commented the Commissions responsibility is to take out the politics and emotion from the process.

- Commissioner DeRubeis requested the Commission bring in the 911 memorial Committee and explain what is going on. Ms. Heitman agreed the Committee should be informed right away.
- Mr. Tucker commented if the Commission does not want the memorial on the City Hall grounds we must decide and notify the 911 Memorial Committee. If the Commission is given the responsibility to approve the memorial site we must approve the appropriateness of design, the funding and must require costs to cover the care and maintenance.
- Mr. Stern asked if the Commission should take a vote on the site. The memorial would not qualify for CPA funding; the Historic Commission recommended an alternate site.
- Mr. Bernheimer asked how the Commission will proceed. Chairman Magni recommended forming a sub-committee to create a memorial policy.
- Mr. Bernheimer commented the committee should look at what other cities do. Mr. Stern suggested Concord & Lexington. Mr. Fishman recommended a fact gathering committee.
- The Sub-Committee to create a memorial policy will include, Michael Clarke, Wally Bernheimer, Don Fishman and Carol Schein, P & R Open Space Coordinator.
- Mr. Stern recommended including the Historic Commission. Mr. Bernheimer stated the Committee should learn something first and then include others.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:45 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Robin McLaughlin, Secretary



Off-Leash Area Working Group

October 17, 2011
Parks & Recreation Commission Presentation

24 Green Space Areas for Phase 2 Evaluation

	Ward	Area		Ward	Area
1	1	Park Park	12	4 Conav	Norumbega
2	1	Hunnoid Playground - Open (forested area)	14	5	Old Cold Spring Park - Open
3	1	Spars Park (a.k.a. Walnut Park)	15	5	Broadland Playground
4	2	Halloran Sports Complex	16	5	Richardson Playground
5	2	Cliffin Playground - Open	17	6	Newton Centre - Open
6	2	Calist Park - Open (forested area)	18	6	Newton Highlands Playground (Whitman)
7	2	Edmonds Park	19	6	Thompsonville Playground
8	3	McGrath Park - Open (forested area)	20	6	Wesley Park
9	3	West Newton Commons	21	7	Sun Park
10	4	Aubundale Cove	22	8	Brown & Oak Middle School Playground
11	4 Conav	Mered Meadow	23	8	NSHS - area near tennis courts only
12	4	Hamilton Playground	24	8	Nahant Park

Open Off-Leash Recreation Areas

1. [Old Cold Spring Park](#)
2. [Newton Centre Playground](#)
3. [Cabot Park](#)
4. [Claffin Playground](#)
5. [McGrath Park](#)
6. [Hunnewell Park](#)



Proposed



*Braceland Playground
Spears Park*

Fees

- Resident: \$50.00/dog
- Non-Resident: \$100.00/dog
- [Professional Dog Walkers](#)

Newton

\$250.00/1st medallion

\$75.00 each additional medallion

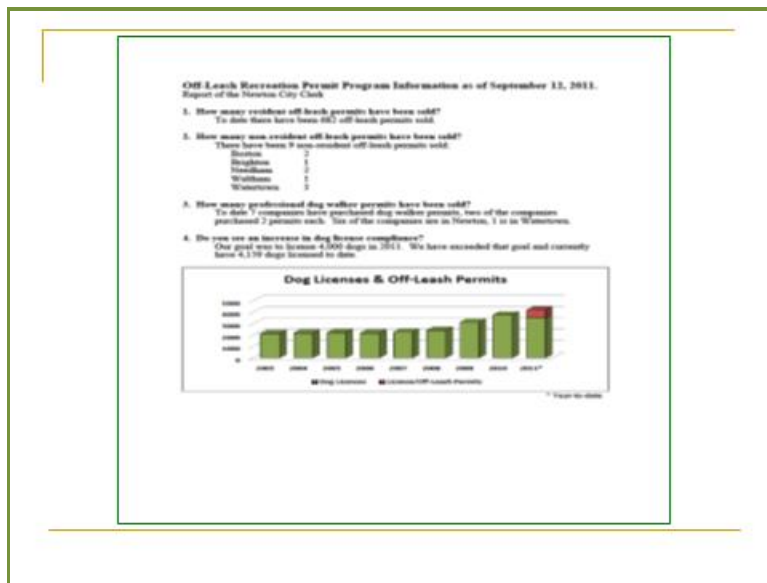
Non-Newton

\$350.00/1st medallion

\$100.00 each additional medallion

Permits Update (September 2011)

- 682 – Resident medallions purchased
- 9 - Non-resident medallions
- 9 - Professional Dog Walking Company Permits purchased
- The 2011 Goal for dog license compliance was 4,000. Currently there are 4,159 dogs licensed.
- 42 % increase from 2008



Enforcement

- Animal Control Officer, Ralph Torres
- Part-Time Animal Control Specialist
- Education
- Self Policing

Each off-leash recreation area will have...

- Signs with a map & rules and regulations
- Educational materials
- Mutt-Mitt –dog waste disposal system



Spears Park

- Ward 1 – Ms. Elizabeth Spears left the gift of land at 89 Walnut Park to the City of Newton in her will. In 1936 the gift was accepted by the City of Newton and named Spears Park.
- Currently an unprogrammed recreation space
- Used only as a snow dump by the City
- Fenced area – currently fenced on two sides - install ornamental fence
- Hours: dawn-dusk
- Small dog area- dogs under 25 lbs.
- Memorial bench for Ms. Spears to be donated and to be placed in the park



Braceland Playground

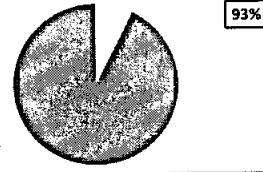


- Ward 5
- Lower tier, bottom of hill- bounded east by hill.
- No fence proposed on hill.
- Existing fence along river bank
- Fits with the existing Master Plan
- Ample parking
- Off-leash area is closed from December 15th - March 15th for sledding
- Dogs must remain on-leash until they enter the off-leash recreation area

Parks and Recreation Department Snapshot September 2011

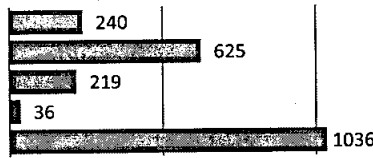
Employee Attendance

	Worker Days	Days Missed		Power Indicator
		Leave	Vacation	
Administration (5)	120	2	11	89%
Program (8)	192	2	14	92%
Grounds Maintenance (15)	345	21.5	8	91%
Urban Forestry (2)	48	0	1	98%
Totals	585	21.5	22	93%



Customer Service Measures

	Phone Calls	FAQ's Viewed	Total Inquires
Administration	183	57	240
Program	259	366	625
Facilities	22	197	219
Grounds Maintenance	36	0	36
Urban Forestry	226	810	1036
Totals	726	1430	2156

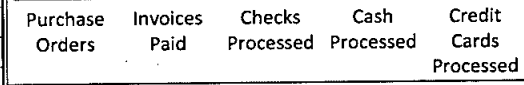


Service Requests

Grounds Maintenance				Urban Forestry			
	Rcv'd	closed	Avg. Age of Comp. (days)		Rcv'd	Closed	Avg. Age of Comp. (days)
School Dude	31	12	na	Pruning	34	6	157
				Removals	40	60	128
				Dn tr, lb, hngr	159	205	2.59
WebQA	11	12	1.68				
					Num.	Days till Complete	
				Removal back	184	335	
				Prune backlog	617	4015 (11 years)	

Financial Measures

	Quant.	\$ Amount					
Purchase Orders	16	\$ (22,850.75)	-\$11,808	-\$31,220	\$20,826	\$436	\$16,468
Invoices Paid	198	\$ (249,227.46)					
Checks Processed	270	\$ 36,276.54					
Cash Processed	6	\$ 926.00					
Credit Cards Processed	248	\$ 35,944.80					
Totals	738	\$ (198,930.87)					



Program Attendance

TOTAL ATTENDANCE	9030
UNIQUE PROGRAM PART'S	506