

**Off-Leash Area Working Group**

**Friday, January 10, 2014**

**City Hall, Room 202**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Attending:** Alderman Susan Albright, Amy Koel, Lee McIntyre, Carol Schein, Carol Stapleton, Bud Grantham, Ted Kuklinski

**Also Attending:** Alderman Danberg, Buzz Dunker, Ken Temkin, John Frezacca, Phil Paquete, Harry Sanders

1. Thompsonville Playground Discussion

- Ms. Schein reviewed the three areas proposed for a fenced off-leash area at Thompsonville Playground. Site #1 is in woods behind baseball field, the area would need to be cleared out. Mr. Dunker commented the little league has requested permission to clear the area and received permission from Dave Mandatori, Superintendent of Maintenance. Site #2 is half way down the field on the left, Site #3 is at the far end of the field.
  - Mr. Temkin, Oakmont Rd., stated he has no problem with the users; the users want the area to stay as is.
  - Alderman Albright asked if the Forestry Division is ok with removing the trees. Ms. Schein said yes, the brush and trees do act as a buffer for the neighbors. Mr. McIntyre commented the trees will limit activity in the off-leash area.
  - Mr. Ferzacca, Oakmont Rd. commented he has a dog but would like the area to stay as is. There are no guarantees the dogs would poop in the off-leash area and not the fields, we should do what's best for the kids.
  - Ms. Koel commented when an area is used by dog owners the owners self-police the area. Alderman Albright commented the fee paid by owners to use the off-leash area pays for an off-leash specialist to enforce the rules and regulations.
  - Mr. Grantham, abutter of Cabot off-leash area commented there is not a problem with the dog waste. There may be more dogs in the area because it is a defined space. There is noise occasionally in the area. The users are self-policing and it is not as bad as anticipated. There is socialization with the owners as well as the dogs. Mr. Temkin asked if it is mainly neighborhood users. Mr. Grantham said he is guessing about 50% of the users drive to the off-leash area.
  - Alderman Albright commented the choice of the area is not random, the group has looked at all the green space in the City and it is very hard to find open space on the south side of the city.
  - Mr. Ferzacca asked who will police the noise, this is a quiet, pristine area, what interest does the city have to police the noise. Ms. Schein mentioned that specific hours were proposed for the off-leash area. Mr. Temkin asked how the hours are enforced. Ms. Schein responded the off-leash specialist and the off-leash area users.
  - Mr. McIntyre commented Newton is an urban area with limited green space that is underutilized. When you think of people and recreation, most are dog owners that need a place to go.
  - Mr. Temkin stated he is not against the idea, he is looking for the best location. Ms. Stapleton commented the off-leash areas require a change in mindset and the group has worked hard at the culture change. Mr. Temkin asked if the group tests the sites. Ms. Koel stated the group has investigated the areas and addresses any issues that arise. Hours of operation can be adjusted as required.
  - Alderman Albright mentioned there is a flooding issue at the school and the kids may use the area. Alderman Danberg commented there is a flooding issue; option 3 is a good option for the off-leash area. People will park on Langley Path and walk on-leash to the off-leash area, just as they do for the other off-leash areas. People have been pretty good with the privilege of off-leash areas. Alderman Danberg stated an off-leash area is appropriate for this site.
  - Mr. Dunker, representing the little league stated he is ok with the proposal his only concern is the parking.
  - Mr. Ferzacca asked if the group had looked at Weeks Field, there is a large off-leash group using the park. Alderman Albright commented the group did look at the site, but it is heavily used by Newton Youth Soccer. The goal of OLAWG is to clean up areas with illegal off-leash activity and to do that more legal off-leash space is required.
2. Cabot Park fence, between tennis courts and off-leash area, is to be replaced.
3. Newton South High School proposal- Alderman Albright to meet with School Committee chairperson in a week or two.