



Robert J. DeRubeis  
Commissioner

## Off-Leash Area Working Group

Friday, March 7, 2014

City Hall, Room 202

### Meeting Minutes

**Attending:** Commissioner DeRubeis, Susan Albright, Amy Koel, Carol Stapleton, Lee McIntyre, Bud Grantham, Ted Kuklinski. Minutes recorded by Carol Schein.

**Also Attending:** Jennifer Steel, Sr. Environmental Planner

Carol Schein opened the meeting. After being called out briefly for another meeting, Commissioner DeRubeis took over.

- **Norumbega:** Sr. Environmental Planner Jennifer Steel had been invited to discuss the fenced, paved area of Norumbega Park, a conservation area located on Comm. Ave. next to the Marriott's parking lot, as a potential OLA site. Jennifer mentioned she has been approached by others regarding naturalizing this paved area and re-integrating it into the park as a whole. Susan then asked if the conversation couldn't be re-directed to re-starting OLAWG's conversation with the Conservation Commission. She explained that the City is looking for a more comprehensive approach to OLAs, city-wide. Jennifer stated that the foundation of concern in conservation areas is ecological health. At the same time, in public conservation areas, all user groups need to be considered and parameters need to be set (i.e., how big a parking area bicycles or not, etc.). The Conservation Commission currently has an overall management plan for their areas; their next step is to develop a specific management plan for each conservation area. The first one on the list to be planned is the Deer Park, Webster Conservation Area. Lee mentioned that Lexington allowed off-leash dogs in one of their conservation areas and that an ecological study had been done by a professional proving no harm done by the dogs. Lee will forward the report to Jennifer. Jennifer thought that some common ground could be found in the future, once the individual management plans are completed -- perhaps a land swap. Jennifer asked for an overview map of all current and proposed OLAs.
- **Cabot:** The Commissioner stated that Jewett Landscape was the low bidder out of 6 bidders for the Cabot Off-Leash Area renovation project. Carol Schein explained that a decision was made in-house to delay the project start from April 30 until August 1. A spring project start would have required closing the park following most of the construction until seeding could be done in the fall as required by the contract, and then again it would need to be closed following seeding. The August 1 start date will allow for keeping the park open until then. Following summer/fall construction, the park will then need to be closed until spring 2015. The OLA water spigot, the tennis court re-paving and new fencing and piping water to the bocce courts will continue as planned on separate contracts. Ted asked if a temporary area at Cabot could be considered while it was closed. P&R agreed to consider it. Signage will be required letting all know it's closed.
- **South High:** Susan Albright talked with Matt Hill, Chair of the School Committee. Matt is okay with the off-leash area proposed for Brandeis Road (on the side opposite the school) as long as Joe Stembridge, Principal, is behind it. Matt suggested sending a letter to the School Committee and asking them to docket it for a vote at either the March or April meeting. Their vote will require a letter of support from the principal, a map with the proposed OLA delineated, and a brief project summary. Susan will follow up with Principal Stembridge for a letter. The agenda at the next OLA meeting, March 21, will be devoted to the proposed South High OLA. A full-size aerial will be needed in order to stake out the limits.
- **Jason Roberts, Off-Leash Area Specialist,** replaced all mutt mitts in the OLAs this week. His citation powers are still under discussion.
- **Next Meeting:** Friday, March 21, 2014 at 9:30am in room 202, City Hall