

Off-Leash Area Working Group

Friday, May 30, 2014

City Hall, Room 202

Meeting Minutes

Attending: P&R Commissioner DeRubeis, Ald. Susan Albright, Officer Ralph Torres, Officer Lisa Mikoleit, Lee McIntyre, Amy Koel, Carol Stapleton, Ted Kuklinski, Carol Schein

1. Officer Torres introduced Officer Mikoleit the new part-time Animal Control Officer. Officer Torres also reported he has spoken with the City Clerk to have the ordinance updated to include off-leash fines.
2. Animal Control Specialist report
 - There are more professional dog walkers at Cold Spring Park and Hunnewell Park.
 - Commissioner DeRubeis stated Crystal Lake opens next week; Jason will begin receiving calls to go to the lake.
3. Commissioner DeRubeis reported the new fence has been installed at the tennis courts abutting the off-leash area at Cabot Park. Construction begins August 1st for the Cabot Park renovation project. Alderman Albright asked if there is an alternate location available during renovation. Commissioner DeRubeis stated we can look at a map at the next meeting.
4. School Committee meeting update – Commissioner DeRubeis reported the NSHS off-leash proposal was not on the agenda for the last School Committee meeting. It may be on the agenda in June. The group reviewed the map and stated the area pictured on the proposal was not where the group discussed during the site visit and agreed to push back the location and resend the presentation to Mike Cronin.
5. Thompsonville Playground update- Commissioner DeRubeis reported the Bowen PTO went before the P & R Commission to present the basketball half court in the playground. The Commission requested a more detailed proposal; no vote was taken by the Commission. Mr. McIntyre recommended OLAWG go before the Commission with the proposal for Thompsonville Playground. All group members present agreed to present the proposal to the Commission on June 16th.
 - Mr. Mark Holt, abutter to Thompsonville Playground stated the area is used for Lacrosse overflow practices and games. His concerns regarding the off-leash area include:
 - Disturbing the birds of prey which are on the endangered list and their prey, the rabbit population
 - Fencing any part of the area will restrict use by others
 - Mr. Holt has spoken to the dog owners who currently use the area and they do not want the off-leash area.
 - There is confusion regarding the basketball court from the neighbors.
 - Mr. Kuklinski stated there are no birds of prey on the endangered list that frequent Thompsonville Playground. Alderman Albright asked if the leagues impact the wildlife. Mr. Holt replied yes but the birds of prey are out at night. Alderman Albright responded there are no dogs out at night in the off-leash areas.
 - Commissioner DeRubeis commented Thompsonville Playground will be on the OLAWG agenda for further discussion.
6. A resident representing a group of dog owners looking for an area for small dogs commented she has visited the sites suggested by OLAWG. Hunnewell Park looks like an ideal site; there is little activity on site. Ms. Koel commented there was opposition from the sports leagues. Commissioner DeRubeis stated the group will revisit the options for a small dog area.
7. Next meeting is scheduled Friday, June 13 at 9:30am in Room 202, City Hall