

Off-Leash Area Working Group
Friday, September 12, 2014
City Hall, Room 202
Meeting Minutes

Attending: P&R Commissioner DeRubeis, Alderman Susan Albright, Sergeant Jay Babcock, Officer Ralph Torres, Officer Lisa Mikoleit, Amy Koel, Bud Grantham, Carol Schein

1. Reports- Officer Torres, Jason Roberts
 - Sgt. Babcock, Supervisor of Officer Torres and Officer Mikoleit commented he is planning to attend as many OLAWG meetings, as his schedule allows, for better understanding of the process.
 - Cold Spring Park incident – Officer Torres reported a minor incident between two dogs at Cold Spring Park. Both parties have been spoken to about the incident. Ms. Freedman, one of the owners involved in the incident, was present at the meeting. Ms. Freedman is concerned the other party involved will call animal control whenever they see each other. Officer Torres stated he has spoken to the other party involved, he understands the situation and has not called since the incident.
 - Officer Mikoleit commented there have been several incidents at Braceland Playground; most calls involve unaltered male dogs. There will be additional presence and enforcement by Animal Control in the area.
 - Officer Torres commented there has been increased activity at Edmands Park. There will be additional presence and enforcement by Animal Control.
 - Sgt. Babcock asked if there is a process for dogs involved in an incident. Commissioner DeRubeis replied yes. The incident/report is forwarded to Animal Control and OLAWG takes the recommendation of the Animal Control Officer. Sgt. Babcock asked if the off-leash permit could be revoked. Commissioner DeRubeis replied yes, all of the off-leash areas are on Park & Recreation land. The P & R Commission supports enforcement by the Animal Control Officers.
 - Officer Torres commented the Police are still looking for Mr. Roberts's assailant from the incident at the Cove.

2. Small Dog Area
 - Commissioner DeRubeis introduced Bill Paille, Director of Transportation. OLAWG is looking for space for a small dog off-leash area. The two sites the group has visited are Spears Park on Washington St and the area across from Oakley Spa on Washington St. Mr. Paille commented both sites are challenging sites due to parking and traffic. The area across from Oakley Spa would be the better option. Recently a traffic study was completed on Washington St. There is no good place to cross safely and cars drive very fast down the street. Mr. Paille stated the area across from Oakley Spa could be reconfigured to the specifications of the master plan.
 - Ms. Schein asked if the plan includes sidewalks. Mr. Paille stated yes.
 - Victoria Riccardi, small dog owner stated Spears Park is the preferred site her concern is having big dogs and small dogs together. Having the site directly next to the Mass Pike is scary and sidewalks would be required for those walking to the area.
 - Mr. Grantham lives across from the Cabot Park off-leash area and in general people do not follow rules. It will be very difficult to separate the big dogs from the small dogs.
 - Officer Torres commented a small dog area is a good idea but enforcement is a concern. Sgt. Babcock asked how size would be determined for a small dog. There may have to be an ordinance change for enforcement. Alderman Albright asked if the enforcement could be included in a rule/regulation instead of the ordinance. Sgt. Babcock stated if the Law Department approves it. Officer Torres stated the fee needs to be defined also.
 - Sgt. Babcock commented bike lanes are eventually going to be put in on Washington St and the Bus Stop on the corner of Walnut and Washington would need to be relocated.

- Ms. Koel asked the timeframe for these changes. Mr. Paille replied at least a year.
- Alderman Albright commented the success in moving this along is if the off-leash proposal and traffic improvements were presented together. Mr. Paille agreed this is an opportunity to facilitate safe crossing on Washington St.
- Commissioner DeRubeis suggested doing some research on small dog off-leash areas in other communities.

3. Next meeting: Friday, September 26, 2014