



Robert J. DeRubeis  
Commissioner

## Off-Leash Area Working Group

Friday, May 17, 2013

City Hall

### Meeting Minutes

**Attendees:** Ald. Susan Albright, Carol Stapleton, Ted Kuklinski, Lee McIntyre, Commissioner Bob DeRubeis, Carol Schein, Amy Koel, Bud Grantham, Animal Control Officer Ralph Torres.

**Also Attending:** Friends of Cabot Off-leash Area, Joe Kenyon, Lizbeth Hedstrom, Susan Lunin, Newton Conservation Commission, Harry Sanders.

#### Introduction

Commissioner DeRubeis welcomed Bud Grantham as a new member to OLAWG and invited him to sit at the table. Susan Lunin, Vice Chair of Newton's Conservation Commission (ConCom) and sole member of ConCom's OLA subcommittee, was introduced as the invited guest.

#### ConCom/OLAWG Discussion

Alderman Susan Albright began by reading from Wellesley's Natural Resources Commission's website re dog policy on their conservation land trails: *dogs are welcome on the trails on- or off-leash as long as under voice control of the owner.* She inquired of Susan Lunin if Wellesley doesn't need to operate under the same federal regulations as Newton.

Susan Lunin stated that it depends on the area. There are very stringent federal laws regulating the use of conservation land -- specifically any activity within 200' of water that flows to the Charles River. Regulations apply to open water and piped water underground. Most of Newton's ConCom dealings are with abutter's impacts on City conservation land. Whether it is 100' - or 200'-buffer that is regulated depends on the type of resource area.

She explained that some sites simply don't work -- there's no parking; abutters don't want; area is well-maintained, i.e., Houghton Garden, etc. It was noted that Norumbega is heavily used currently. Susan stated that there are a lot of issues with abutters there.

Susan Lunin suggested a couple of possible Conservation areas: (1) Deer Park - unused, fenced area, she says there's no deer ticks there now; or (2) Hunnewell (note: already an OLA on the P&R portion). Other possibilities mentioned: perhaps some portion of Warren, Norumbega or Flowed Meadow. All ConCom areas require that fences start 6" off the ground to allow for wildlife movement. Susan confirmed that there certainly is a possibility of ConCom working with OLAWG. She views the process as a venn diagram; we should be able to find some common ground. She was glad to hear there is a budget. Perhaps there would be a trial off-leash area on conservation land. There would need to be established criteria as to how to assess whether or not the trial period was successful (enforcement issues, wildlife impact, abutter complaints). OLAWG reiterated their desire to work with ConCom on this issue.

OLAWG needs to take another look at the Norumbega proposal. Susan said there were issues with it. Candace Havens, Planning Director, should have the complete, final version. Susan Albright said she is hoping for an ongoing conversation, even in between working group meetings. Susan Lunin stated she is open to that.

Additional OLA Sites to Be Brought Forth Next:

1. Thompsonville – fenced area
2. Newton South High – fenced area along Brandeis Rd.
3. Forte Basketball Court Area – alongside and around the corner possibly
4. Edmands – no fencing

Next week: Discuss all 4 sites. Bring aerials of all sites for discussion. Bob hoping to get rm. 209 in order to have access to smart board for the next meeting.

Other Business:

Response to email from D. Lilly – P&R will post a sign on Tyler Terrace somewhere at the top of the sledding hill closer to drive down to Mason-Rice. Sign should have map and explain that dogs must be on leash until they get to OLA.

Lyons and Stearns have both requested mutt mitt stations. Bags are being stolen so this has become a problem. The Commissioner stated that we will do a trial run at Lyons.

The Commissioner thanked Ralph for all his help with Jason starting his new job. The Commissioner wants the Law Dept. to keep moving on revising the ordinance to include citation power for Jason.

Harry brought up professional dog walker issues. Issued permits for them are down this year; the cost of these permits hurts their business.