



Robert J. DeRubeis
Commissioner

Off-Leash Area Working Group

Friday, September 07, 2012

9:30 a.m., Room 202

Meeting Minutes

Attending: Commissioner DeRubeis, Alderman Albright, Director Candace Havens, Lee McIntyre, Amy Koel, Carol Stapleton

Also Attending: Jean Marie Patriacca, *41 Westchester St.*, Mark Goldin, *Watertown St.*, Martin Lowenthal, *51 Westchester St.*

1. Edmands Park - off-leash area proposal – Public Discussion Only- No Vote

- ✓ Commissioner DeRubeis reviewed the process followed by the Off-Leash Area Working Group (OLAWG) and explained how Edmands Park was selected as one of the 24 possible sites for an off-leash area.
- ✓ Commissioner DeRubeis reviewed the current status of the off-leash program; there are seven open off-leash areas. OLAWG has proposed Edmands Park, Thompsonville Playground and an area at Newton South High School as possible off-leash areas. Today OLAWG invited those with an interest in Edmands Park to attend this meeting to ask questions, share concerns and comments regarding the proposal.
- ✓ Ms. Patriacca commented The Friends of Edmands Park ("Friends") was formed to keep the open space wild and used by many. The Friends self-police the park. If it is not broken why fix it? Sometimes change is not for the best and part of the fear is what would change.
- ✓ Mr. Goldin asked why the group needs two off-leash areas so close to each other, Edmands Park and Cabot Park. Dog should be on leash in Edmands Park.
- ✓ Mr. Lowenthal commented he has seen the evolution of Edmands Park. There were very few dogs in the beginning, but dogs are more common now. Mr. Lowenthal stated he wrote a letter to the P & R Commission a few years ago for them to address the maintenance issues at Edmands Park. Mr. Lowenthal asked if there is a section of the park to be used for the off-leash area or is the whole park to be designated as an off-leash area. If the entire park is to be used that would be a problem because currently the abutters do have dogs in their yards that come from the park. There is more community involvement than city involvement at Edmands Park.
- ✓ Commissioner DeRubeis stated the community work is appreciated.
- ✓ Alderman Albright commented the self-policing is fantastic and appreciated. The Newton Centre off-leash area is a similar situation where there is a strong group who self-police the area and it works well. Alderman Albright was charged with the task of looking into creating off-leash areas for off-leash dogs by the Board of Alderman. Off-leash dogs are everywhere in the city and the goal is to create order out of chaos and make it better for all. Edmands Park is unique there are off-leash dogs in the park and there are others without dogs and who have children who are afraid of dogs who cannot use the park because they do not know when the off-leash dogs will be in the park. Creating hours for off-leash activity would allow others to use the park.
- ✓ Mr. McIntyre commented the current status at Edmands Park sounds like the ideal situation for a self-policed off-leash area. Mr. McIntyre requested the Friends speak with the rest of the Edmands Park community. From the discussion today, it sounds like some would like dogs on leash and others would like the park to remain as it is with off-leash dogs.
- ✓ Mr. Rosenthal inquired about the legal implications.
- ✓ Alderman Albright asked if there is a Master Plan for Edmands Park.
- ✓ Director Havens commented this has been a great discussion. With more official off-leash areas there will be less pressure on any one area.

- ✓ Commissioner DeRubeis commented this was a great discussion today and he would like to continue the discussion over the next few OLAWG meetings.

2. Next meeting

- ✓ The next meeting is Friday, September 14 at 9:30am in Room 202
 - 1.Continue discussion on Edmands Park

Respectfully Submitted

Robin McLaughlin, Secretary