

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION
COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LOS ALTOS, HELD ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 20TH,
2020, AT 7:00 P.M. REMOTELY, WITH ACCESS VIA RINGCENTRAL**

3. Fenced-in Dog Park and Pilot Off-leash Hours Program

3a. Dog Park Workshop Results

Public Comment:

Catherine Anne Stansbury questioned the decision to send workshop notifications to only residents living within 1000 feet of potential dog park locations (rather than to the entire community). Her concerns were addressed by Donna Legge and Trevor Marsden.

Martin Saso believed that the data had a built-in bias. He also stated that the safety of the public (with regards to off-leash pets) is his primary concern.

Zahra Ardehali spoke about the smallness of the data sample and the unfairness of taking existing green space from Los Altos residents.

Menashe Shahar stated that he was not aware of any public outreach and did not receive a mailer regarding the workshops.

Vladimir Rubashevsky stated that his household did not receive a mailer and he worries about the safety of having off-leash dogs and the sanitation/cleanliness of an off-leash dog park.

J.W. Smith expressed disappointment that materials that were presented were not available to audio participants. Donna Legge and Commissioner Weinberg directed the resident to the Parks and Recreation Commission webpage, which always contains relevant attachments.

3b. Community-driven Drop Park Input

Public Comment:

Martin Saso asserted that he and his neighbors were not part of the community-driven outreach. He stated that he believes that the City has an agenda, and he highlighted liability issues and enforcement that he does not believe has been appropriately researched and explored. Martin suggested certified mail for future outreach/communication.

Catherine Anne Stansbury testified about passing out workshop information and promoting the workshops to her meet-and-greet at McKenzie Park. She expressed disappointment that input from non-Los Altos Residents was not considered.

Keren Shahar stated that the community-drive outreach seemed to target dog owners and might have been overlooked by non-dog owners (or seen as junk mail).

An unnamed member of the public expressed that he believes certified mail would not be appropriate or cost-effective. He believes that the communication was appropriate.

Carol Stanek stated that the questionnaires and surveys had wording that could be easily misunderstood, which could allow the data to be misunderstood.

J.W. Smith stated that the communication has been abysmal and the ease of connecting to the remote meeting was disappointing.

An unnamed member of the public spoke to express that the outreach should have included door-to-door communication for the residents located immediately next to each park.

Martin Saso stated that he agrees that people did not get the community outreach that was conducted.

3c. Fenced-in Dog Park and Pilot Off-leash Hours Program Recommendations

Public Comment:

Keren Shahar expressed displeasure about off-leash hours at Heritage Oaks being unsafe for both dogs and humans. She also expressed concerns about potential COVID-19 impact.

Barbara Goodrich praised the off-leash proposal and commented that she received notice. She stated that she interpreted the data differently. She stated that she believes a dedicated space for dogs is appropriate.

John Squire highlighted the unpredictability of dogs and stated that off-leash hours are unrealistic. He stated that noise pollution and enforcement are going to prove problematic.

Vladimir Rubashevsky spoke in opposition to using Heritage Oaks Park for off-leash hours and highlighted children's activities and suggested choosing another location. He mentioned liability and the cost of litigation.

Chaya Shahar stated that she was not informed about the workshops or the possibility of Heritage Oaks Park being considered for the pilot off-leash program. She was adamantly opposed to the subcommittee's recommendation.

Barbara Adey spoke to express that she and her neighbors are opposed to a fenced-in dog park anywhere in Los Altos, especially due to the expense and the loss of green space.

Manashe Shahar adamantly stated that he and his McKenzie Ave neighbors were not notified about the possibility of Heritage Oaks Park as a fenced-in park option.

Jane Clayton stated that she believes that Heritage Oaks Park is not a good option for off-leash hours due to not fitting the criteria that the City set forth when it began the search process.

Catherine Anne Stansbury thanks the Commission and Subcommittee for their hard work. She detailed her history working on the dog park program. She recommended a fenced-in location (as she believes off-leash hours are not as safe as a fenced-in location).

Millie Squire spoke in opposition of an off-leash pilot park at Heritage Oaks. She cited parking issues, traffic issues, and safety concerns (regarding enforcement).

Nan McCaffrey spoke about her concerns regarding Heritage Oaks Park. She believes that the proposal lacked appropriate input and that the questions posed at the workshop were confusing.

Martin Saso commented that he has significant concerns about safety (regarding unleashed dogs biting people). He highlighted that Heritage Oaks does not meet four of the six criteria that the City set forth for the off-leash pilot program.

Commissioner Eckmann asked a follow-up question (and then made a follow-up comment) about dog bite statistics.

Vice Chair Spielman discussed reported incident rates for the City of Los Altos (and the City of Mountain View).

J.W. Smith appreciated previous comments regarding the safety issues of allowing dogs to be in the park off leash.

Zahra Ardehali spoke about her appreciation for the hard work on these issues. She also expressed that she does not believe that the City has the resources to implement and to enforce any of the dog park options.

Yoav Agmon expressed that he agrees that Heritage Oaks Park is not an appropriate location for an off-leash space. He said that having kids and dogs unconfined in the same space would be unsafe. He also cited additional park activities like graduations, parties, etc.

Mercedes Hawkins testified that her major concern is the idea of dogs and children sharing a space. She urged looking at another location (that is not already allocated as park space).

Sarah Carcone Agmon spoke about the large number of children in the park (specifically at the hours suggested). She believes that choosing off-leash instead of fenced-in (as a budgetary concern) is inappropriate.

John Petro echoed his neighbors' comments and specifically highlighted the overlap of current activities and the proposed off-leash hours at Heritage Oaks Park. He expressed that he has concerns about how the pilot program will be run and evaluated.

Heather Larkin expressed that the extended neighborhood around Heritage Oaks Park will also be affected by an off-leash pilot program. She cited several criteria regarding conflict avoidance (opposing shared park space).

Frank Martin commended the Commission for gathering community input and expressed concern about the negative input. He spoke in favor of sharing the park space.

Rami Roley expressed that she participated in the workshop as a pet-owner, but she believes that Heritage Oaks Parks is unsafe for kids and pets to share.

Tracy Pirnack spoke to express that she is not in favor of an off-leash area in current parks. She believes that the responsibilities need to be more thoroughly explored and explained.

Ilona (last name unknown) stated that she observes young children in the park frequently, and she believes that the park is too small for a fenced-in park and that it would be unsafe to have off-leash dogs and children in the same space.

Derek Pitcher cited that limited park land is one very important reason to not reclassify existing park land as shared space.

Dona Tasic stated that health and safety is her primary reason for not wanting a fenced-in dog park. Her second reason is that she does not want to lose existing green space. She additionally asked that City Council not let this item appear on the agenda again.

Branimir Tasic yielded his time.

Richard McCaffrey stated that he believes Heritage Oaks Park and McKenzie Park neighbors will not be able to enjoy the park if it is reclassified as a dog park.

Carol Stanek expressed that she noticed that there were many vocal opponents tonight, but she thinks that is not an accurate representation of all the citizens. She believes that families that are uncomfortable with dogs could stay away during shared park time. She pointed out that many young people have animals and are not having children, and the park should be shared space.

Betty Christopher does not believe she will be able to utilize the park in the same way, as a senior, if unleashed dogs are allowed.