



DATE: May 9, 2018

AGENDA ITEM # 2

TO: Parks & Recreation Commission
FROM: Manuel A. Hernandez, Commission Liaison
SUBJECT: Dog Park/Off-Leash Sub-Committee Report

BACKGROUND

Recently the Parks and Recreation Commission posted an electronic survey on the City website regarding dog activity areas. The purpose of the survey was to gauge the interest the community might have in dog activity areas in Los Altos parks.

DISCUSSION

At the March Commission meeting the dog park sub-committee was tasked with reviewing the results of the survey and bringing back a report to the May Commission meeting for discussion.

The Dog Park sub-committee will present their report to the Commission. The Commission will discuss the sub-committee's report and possibly decide on a recommendation to City Council.

Attachments:

- A. Dog Park/Off-Leash Sub-Committee Report

The subject of a Los Altos dog park has been considered for many years. According to the discussion in the 2012 Master Los Altos Parks Plan, “A CIP was created in 2009 for construction of a dog park. That project was funded but placed on hold until a site was selected.” This report from the sub-committee of the current Parks and Recreation Commission will

- 1) submit the criteria for a dog park,
- 2) present the pro’s and cons of various dog park locations,
- 3) make a recommendation for the location best suited for an off-leash dog park in Los Altos,
- 4) make a recommendation for a pilot program that allows dogs to be off-leash and owner-supervised (without fences) at suggested locations in town at specified times of the day.

DOG PARK CRITERIA

*A minimum of 10,000 square feet for off-leash activities for dogs of all sizes. (Carmel Village on San Antonio Rd. has 7,500 sf and Mitchell Park in Palo Alto has 22,000 sf.)

*Sufficient parking

*Access to bathrooms

*Sufficient buffer between the park and residences/places of worship

*Access to a water fountain designed for people and pooches

*Adequate shade

*ADA compliant

*Appropriate hours including periods closed for maintenance

*A 4’ or 6’ fence surrounding the dog area with a double entry system

*Properly engineered drainage, surface medium and maintenance regimen that ensures sanitary conditions and a pleasant visit

*Clear and well-placed signs that post park rules

*Seating and small tables

*Covered trashcans

*Free doggie bags

*Waste disposal Stations

DOG PARK LOCATIONS DISCUSSED

- 1) **Grant Park**-fields are heavily used and they could not spare the 10,000-sf needed for a fence enclosure, neighborhood setting would not absorb additional traffic and parked cars, especially from users coming from nearby Cupertino and Sunnyvale
- 2) **Heritage Oaks Park**-although the undeveloped back end of the park is large enough for a fenced dog park with nearby bathrooms and ample shade, the parking is insufficient and the residences are too close
- 3) **Marymeade Park, McKenzie Park and Shoup Park**-the space required for a dog park on the grassy field would virtually eliminate the picnics, Frisbee tosses and open space enjoyment that goes on now.
- 4) **Montclair Park**-no space

- 5) **Redwood Grove**-The close proximity to residences, the quiet enjoyment of a natural setting and the parking demands including Shoup Park and Garden House negate this as a possible dog park location
- 6) **Rosita Park**-The sports fields should not be disturbed. The small area alongside the parking lot is only 20% of the size required.
- 7) **Village Park**-Before this park was renovated, it might have been an anchor activity destination downtown for dogs and dog owners to commune. Too much money has been invested to consider a do-over.
- 8) **Lincoln Park**-There are two sides to Lincoln Park.
 - a. The side between Edith and Main Street is a naturally beautiful grassy field with mature redwoods. But its limited parking, lack of bathrooms, closeness to residences, and its use as a venue for the 4+ decades old *Fine Art in the Park* makes this side of Lincoln inappropriate for a dog park.
 - b. The other side, between Main Street and the start of Orange Ave along Lincoln Avenue would not provide the required 10,000 square feet of land without interfering with places of worship, bathrooms would be needed at great expense, parking would be inadequate when nearby organizations were active and errant balls and Frisbees would require golf range type netting to guard against traffic disruption on the busy Foothill Expressway. If we are willing to settle for a long, narrow dog park with restrictions on playing fetch, such a park exists not too far away in Los Altos Hills at Purissima and Elena Roads.
- 9) **Hillview Park**-The committee unanimously agreed that the 10,000 square foot area for future expansion included in the new Hillview Community Center architectural plans would satisfy all of the criteria for a fenced in dog park. The dog park could be operated on this part of the Hillview Community Center until such time as an additional wing would be added to the Center. In the meantime, the dog park would provide a popular amenity that would build community among 1,000's of potential users and on-lookers. Who doesn't like to watch dogs at play whether they currently own a dog or not?

OFF-LEASH DOG PILOT PROGRAM

The Municipal Code does not permit dogs to be off-leash anywhere in Los Altos. And yet, single or groups of dog owners regularly let their dogs off-leash to play and exercise. The sub-committee recommends that a few parks meeting the selection criteria allow dogs to be off-leash from sunrise to 9am, 7 days a week for a test period to be decided by the full Commission (6 to 12 months?). The program could be canceled at certain parks at any time or at all off-leash parks based on a staff review of complaints and at their sole discretion.

OFF-LEASH PARK CRITERIA

*Trial area designated should not be used as a sports field

*At least one trial location should be convenient to north and south Los Altos

*Sufficient parking

- *Sufficient buffer between the park and residences/places of worship
- *Clear and well-placed signs that post off-leash park rules
- *Covered trashcans
- *Free doggie bags (The City should consider free doggie bag dispensing stations at all Los Altos parks at multiple locations in each park to make it easy for dog owners to succeed in cleaning up after their dogs)
- *Waste disposal Stations

OFF-LEASH LOCATIONS DISCUSSED

- 1) **Grant Park**-A small area alongside the basketball courts and near the playground might provide an early morning off-leash area should the trial program be successful. The small area might require activity limitations.
- 2) **Heritage Oaks Park**-The undeveloped back end of the park might be considered for off-leash activities following a successful trial program elsewhere. The land will need to be reviewed for ground and landscaping improvements to make this space safe and useable.
- 3) **Marymeade Park**-The grassy field is too close to the busy Fremont Road thoroughfare.
- 4) **McKenzie Park**-Dog owners already meet in the morning between the two playgrounds at either end of the grassy field. This park qualifies as our south Los Altos trial location.
- 5) **Shoup Park**- Dog owners already meet in the morning on the grassy field. This park qualifies as our north Los Altos trial location.
- 6) **Montclair Park**-no space
- 7) **Redwood Grove**-The close proximity to residences, the quiet enjoyment of a natural setting, the fragile native vegetation and the parking demands including Shoup Park and Garden House negate this as a possible off-leash dog park location.
- 8) **Rosita Park**- A very small rectangular area alongside the parking lot might provide an early morning off-leash area should the trial program be successful. The small area will require activity limitations.
- 9) **Village Park**-The layout of the space with its close proximity to two busy streets require all dogs to be on-leash at all times of the day or night.
- 10) **Lincoln Park**-There are two sides to Lincoln Park.
 - a. The side between Edith and Main Street is a naturally beautiful grassy field with mature redwoods and is used frequently by owners of small to big dogs to exercise and socialize with other dogs and dog owners. This location provides an alternative north location to Shoup Park or an additional trial park to Shoup with an even larger off-leash area for use from sunrise to 9am. While ball throwing is very controllable, flying discs should be disallowed to discourage errant discs from entering the Foothill Expressway corridor.
 - b. The other side, between Main Street and the start of Orange Ave along Lincoln Avenue could provide an off-leash area limited to small dogs only. Because of the narrow parcel so close to the street, all fetching activities might be disallowed.

- 11) **Hillview Park**-Although the Little League field is used now for dog obedience training and unpermitted off-leash visits, its use as a sports field disqualifies it as a trial candidate. There is a future possibility that after a successful early morning off-leash trial program, the ball field could be tested as an off-leash area during the baseball off-season. Damage to the field from overuse or dog digging would have to be considered and monitored.