



Setti D. Warren  
Mayor

**Off-Leash Area Working Group**  
**January 7, 2010**  
**9:30 am**  
**Recreation Office**  
**Meeting Minutes**



Robert J. DeRubeis  
Interim  
Commissioner

**Attending:** Alderman Albright, Robert DeRubeis, *Interim Commissioner*, Candace Havens, *Interim Planning Director*, Fran Rice, *P & R Commission Chairman*, Amy Koel, *DOLAC Chairman*, Carol Schein, *Open Space Coordinator*, Carol Stapleton, *Recreation Manager*, Ann Dorfman, *Citizen Representative*, Robin McLaughlin, *Secretary*

### **1. Introductions**

- Interim Commissioner DeRubeis welcomed and introduced the Off-Leash Area Working Group (OLAWG) members.
- Interim Commissioner DeRubeis stated he has updated Mayor Warren on the OLAWG and explained the members will develop the criteria for opening off-leash areas in Newton.
- Mayor Warren requested the members establish clear communication and transparency with the public.

### **2. Parks & Recreation Commission Motion**

- The Parks & Recreation Commission made the following motion on December 21, 2009:  
*Interim Commissioner to define a committee to create, analyze, and define specifications of the ordinance for opening additional dog parks.*
- Interim Commissioner DeRubeis recommends the members determine the criteria and then post the criteria on the website along with a survey to gather public input.
- Ms. Dorfman agrees this is a good idea. Ms. Dorfman recommended the OLAWG include an off-leash dog owner, as she is not. Ms. Koel stated she knows someone to ask and will follow-up.

### **3. Discussion of Off-Leash Area Working Group Members**

- Interim Commissioner DeRubeis stated the group has representatives from the Aldermen, the Parks & Recreation Department, and the Parks & Recreation Commission, an Open-Space Coordinator, a Recreation Manager, the Planning Department and a private citizen.
- Interim Planning Director Havens recommended including an owner of a dog walking company. She employs a dog walking company to walk her dogs, as do many other Newton residents. Dog walkers have their own system and may have different views on the issue.
- Ms. Dorfman inquired how the City deals with a dog walking business using the park lands for profit. What is OLAWG's responsibility to the Community? How is this regulated?
- Interim Planning Director Havens commented the OLAWG's responsibility is to listen to people, find out what the issues are and create the criteria based on the issues. For example if the Hunnewell neighborhood was given the opportunity to be involved in the process, the reaction may have been different.
- Ms. Koel stated the abutters of Hunnewell Park were notified of the Hunnewell proposal and were invited to the community meetings. Ms. Koel is working on having updates put on the website to keep all residents informed.

#### **4. Current Potential Members**

- Ms. Dorfman proposed a citizen's group be included in the OLAWG.
- Alderman Albright stated the public has been asking the City to take responsibility for the off-leash areas and this group is a result of that request.
- Mr. Rice commented the Commission has received comments and suggestions from the public for over a year and this group was formed to address those comments and suggestions.
- Interim Commissioner DeRubeis stated the OLAWG is made of diverse group. He has spoken with Mr. Bernheimer of the P & R Commission who is interested in joining OLAWG. Interim Commissioner DeRubeis suggested a person from the Conservators should be involved and asked the members for suggestions.
- Ted Kuklinski of the Conservators was recommended. Interim Commissioner DeRubeis requested Ms. Koel contact Mr. Kuklinski.

#### **5. Web Page**

- Interim Commissioner DeRubeis recommended all the OLAWG information, meeting agendas, minutes, etc., be posted to the P & R web site. The survey can also be posted on the P & R Customer Service web site where the public would have access and the ability to provide feedback.
- Ms. Koel recommended the "Dog Info" portion of the website, currently separate from the P & R web page, be moved to the same location as the OLAWG information.
- Interim Commissioner DeRubeis asked the members if they agreed with these actions. All members agreed.

#### **6. Development of criteria for feasible green areas**

- Ms. Schein stated that any public space must be ADA compliant.
- Ms. Dorfman inquired if dogs are allowed in Area X without any changes to the area; does the park have to be ADA compliant? If there are multiple dog parks in the City, would they all need to be ADA compliant?
- Interim Commissioner DeRubeis requested Ms. Schein follow-up and confirm the ADA regulations.
- Ms. Koel requested Ms. Schein find out who makes the decisions if a park is or is not ADA compliant.

#### **7. Discuss issues and criteria**

- There will be further discussion at the next meeting.

#### **8. Frequency of meetings**

- Interim Commissioner DeRubeis recommends the OLAWG meet once per week. All members agreed.
- The next OLAWG meeting will be Friday, January, 15 at 9:00 am in Room 222.

Action Items:

1. All members will submit five criteria for Newton off leash areas to the Secretary by Thursday, January 14 at noon (please submit via e-mail: [rmclaughlin@newtonma.gov](mailto:rmclaughlin@newtonma.gov)).
2. Carol Schein will verify the ADA regulations for public parks and who makes the decisions if a park is ADA compliant.
3. Amy Koel will work with Tom Cahill to move the Dog Park information on the web page to one location on the Parks & Recreation web page.
4. Amy Koel will contact Ted Kuklinski of the Conservators and inquire if he would be interested in joining the OLAWG.

Respectfully Submitted,  
*Robin McLaughlin*