



Setti D. Warren
Mayor

Off-Leash Area Working Group

March 19, 2010, 9:00 am
Room 222- City Hall
Meeting Minutes



Robert J. DeRubeis
Interim
Commissioner

Attending: Bob DeRubeis, *Interim P & R Commissioner*, Alderman Susan Albright, Wally Bernheimer, *P & R Commission*, Carol Schein, *P & R Open Space Coordinator*, Carol Stapleton, *P & R Recreation Manager*, Amy Koel, *DOLAC Chairman*, Ann Dorfman, *Citizen Representative*, Officer Ralph Torres, *Animal Control Officer*

Also Attending: Harry Sanders, *Resident*

1. Update from 03-15-10 Commission Meeting

- ✎ Interim Commissioner DeRubeis commented the Commission had a failed vote to extend Cold Spring Park (CSP) off-leash Area (OLA) for three months. Mr. Bernheimer made a new motion to extend the CSP OLA for one month and the motion passed 4-2.
- ✎ Mr. Bernheimer stated Mr. Kastner made a motion requiring the Commission to approve the criteria developed by OLAWG. The motion failed and Mr. Bernheimer believes Mr. Kastner was going in the wrong direction. A sub committee of Congress is not required to gain approval from Congress for criteria developed by the sub committee.
- ✎ Ms. Schein inquired what happens in a month. Mr. Bernheimer stated OLAWG will present OLA choices to the Commission.
- ✎ Ms. Dorfman stated she believed Commission Chairman Magni had instructed the group not to rush the process. Interim Commissioner DeRubeis stated he misunderstood Chairman Magni. Chairman Magni & a few of the other Commission members do not believe the CSP OLA is connected to the progress being made by OLAWG.
- ✎ Ms. Dorfman stated the Alderman represent the citizen's of Newton, what is the responsibility of the Commission? Do they represent the Community? Can the public contact the Commission members? Mr. Bernheimer stated each Commission member represents a Ward in the City. One issue is there are three wards without representation on the Commission. Mr. Bernheimer stated the Commission members may be contacted by the public.
- ✎ Mr. Bernheimer stated a lot has been learned form the Cold Spring Park experiment and he has changed his opinion about CSP being a failed experiment. Mr. Bernheimer observed a disconnect from the Commission members regarding OLA and CSP. Some of the Commission members see OLA and CSP as separate issues. Mr. Bernheimer explained to the Commission the CSP OLA is being evaluated along with the other green space. Interim Commissioner DeRubeis stated the members were surprised CSP was being evaluated. Mr. Bernheimer stated it does not make sense to close the only official OLA in the City.
- ✎ Mr. Bernheimer stated there are only 7 abutters that want the CSP OLA closed, and they believe the OLA should be closed before it is evaluated.
- ✎ Ms. Koel stated the linkage between the CSP OLA and OLAWG was established at the December 2009 Commission meeting. Mr. Bernheimer agreed and stated OLAWG has made good progress.

2. Process – Ann Dorfman

- ✎ Interim Commissioner DeRubeis stated Ms. Dorfman would like to address the group on her concerns about the process being followed. Interim Commissioner DeRubeis will allow 5 minutes for discussion; the group has a lot of items to review.
- ✎ Ms. Dorfman is not comfortable with the current process. Ms. Dorfman distributed a handout to the group members. Ms. Dorfman created the document in December 2009. The handout lists 25 steps and some comments, Ms. Dorfman suggested the group follow. Ms. Dorfman believes steps 1-14 have been skipped. The group needs

to agree on expectations and review the benefits to dog owners, dogs and everyone else.

- ❧ Ms. Koel stated this is a very good document and hopes Ms. Dorfman does not think she is being ignored. Ms. Koel has read the document several times and items 1-14 have been thought about and discussed for years and these issues are reflected in the current criteria. The group may not be following the list of items in the order that Ms. Dorfman recommended but all items are being discussed.
- ❧ Interim Commissioner DeRubeis agreed with Ms. Koel and stated items 1-14 are Phase II issues.
- ❧ Mr. Bernheimer stated Ms. Dorfman's outline is very good and the group is aware of the implementation issues, though the process may not be following the order Ms. Dorfman recommended, the group has to look at the big picture, create a list to make the process manageable, discuss all the items listed and each park will be evaluated and have its own individual rules.
- ❧ Interim Commissioner stated in the future as OLA's are presented, the OLAWG will meet to evaluate the areas and to discuss any major issues in existing OLA's. Mr. Bernheimer agreed the group will meet to discuss broader issues.

3. Green Space Evaluations

- ❧ The group discussed the green space evaluations completed by Ms. Stapleton in Ward 8. A list of evaluations will be posted when all evaluations have been completed.

4. Other Business

- ❧ Interim Commissioner DeRubeis requested Ms. McLaughlin forward blank criteria forms to the members and all members forward their completed evaluation forms to Ms. McLaughlin. Park evaluations will be first on the agenda next meeting.
- ❧ Mr. Bernheimer requested the group discuss the ordinance at the next meeting.
- ❧ Alderman Albright requested a list of OLA criteria from other communities. Ms. Dorfman stated she has a list she will e-mail.

Action Items

1.	E-mail blank evaluation forms to group members	Robin
2.	Completed evaluation forms sent to Robin	All members
3.	Other community OLA criteria e-mailed to group members	Ann/ Robin

Respectfully submitted,

Robin McLaughlin, Secretary