



Setti D. Warren  
Mayor

## Off-Leash Area Working Group

May 21, 2010, 9:00 am  
Room 222- City Hall  
Meeting Minutes



Robert J. DeRubeis  
Interim  
Commissioner

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

**Absent:** Candace Havens, *Interim Planning Director*, Walter Bernheimer, *P & R Commission*, Fran Rice, *P & R Commission*, Ted Kuklinski, *Citizen Representative*

**Also Attending:** Harry Sanders, *Resident*

### 1. May 17, 2010 Commission Presentation Update

- Interim Commissioner DeRubeis reported the four areas; Claflin Park, McGrath Park, Old Cold Spring Park and Norumbega Park were presented to the P & R Commission for consideration as off leash areas. There will be a special community meeting on June 14, @ 7pm in the War Memorial at City Hall. The meeting will be for the Claflin Park and McGrath Park communities. To date, no community meeting has been set for Old Cold Spring Park. The proposal for Norumbega Park will go before the Conservation Commission in July; the information will have to be forwarded to Anne Phelps, of the Conservation Commission, in June for review.
- Interim Commissioner DeRubeis stated he will make the presentation to the Commission on June 14<sup>th</sup> for Claflin Park and McGrath Park. The same format will be used on the presentation as in the previous presentations.
- Ms. Koel stated a group of proponents for an off leash area in Norumbega Park has put together a proposal. Ms. Dorfman inquired if the group was from Norumbega and do they represent the people who use the park. Ms. Koel stated yes. Alderman Albright commented the group is working with Norm Richardson, who is a member of the Conservation Commission. Ms. Koel will forward a copy of the Norumbega proposal to Ms. McLaughlin for distribution and review by the OLAWG members. Interim Commissioner DeRubeis commented the proposal will give the group a base point to work from.
- Ms. Koel recommended Mr. Richardson be included in the preparation of the Norumbega proposal going to the Conservation Commission. Interim Commissioner DeRubeis agreed. Ms. Koel stated she will contact Mr. Richardson to see if he is available.
- Interim Commissioner DeRubeis commented he received a phone call from an abutter of Claflin Park. The concerns of the caller:
  - There is a bus stop by Claflin Park for Cabot Elementary School
  - NNHS athletes use the park for practice
  - The Park is used for sledding in the winter.
- Interim Commissioner DeRubeis commented Claflin Park is fenced along Lowell Ave., this will encourage dog owners to keep their dogs on a leash until they are in the off leash area.
- Interim Commissioner DeRubeis also commented NNHS does not have a permit to use Claflin Park for practice. And part of the presentation to the P & R Commission included a recommendation of seasonal hours at Claflin Park, due to sledding.
- Interim Commissioner DeRubeis stated dog owners and non-dog owners need to be educated on the issue so they may coexist together. And people need to abide by the rules to coexist.
- Mr. McIntyre commented a lot of people are turning their attention to this issue and it may be a good idea to have an education session.

- Interim Commissioner DeRubeis stated he has also received feedback on dog waste on the athletic fields from the sports youth groups. Representatives of girl's softball were present at the Commission meeting 05/14/10. Ms. Koel spoke with the two girls from girl's softball after the meeting. The girls were concerned with the holes in the athletic fields and recommended using wooded areas for the off leash recreation area. Ms. Koel explained the concerns of off leash dogs on the trails and in the wooded areas. The girls were not aware of all the issues and concerns, an education session may be a good idea. Interim Commissioner DeRubeis commented the holes in the athletic fields may not have been made by dogs; education on this issue may be a good idea.
- Mr. Sanders inquired if the group considered creating a volunteer group for dog waste patrol.
- Officer Torres commented he has not received any complaints of dog waste on the athletic fields.
- Mr. McIntyre stated there will be questions on fencing of the off leash areas. Fencing may appear to be the perfect solution but may cause overuse of an area. The experience that Brookline had with overuse of a fenced-in area should be taken seriously. Ms. Dorfman stated there is a strong need for some fenced areas. Ms. Dorfman stated there is a strong need for fenced areas.
- Ms. Dorfman stated McGrath Park has potential for dogs to run out on to Washington Street without a fence. Interim Commissioner DeRubeis stated the proposed area is fenced on three sides; the wooded end of the area has no fence.
- Mr. McIntyre stated that he had heard that some letters were written to the Aldermen who voted no on the extension of the ordinance asking why they voted no. Some of the Aldermen wrote back and expressed that they voted no because the off-leash areas were not fenced. All groups need to be educated on this issue.
- Ms. Schein commented she spoke with Marion Pressley, a landscape architect, and Ms. Pressley has seen successful off leash recreation areas based on topography only. Ms. Schein will investigate.
- Interim Commissioner DeRubeis stated not all off leash recreation areas in Newton will be fenced.

## **2. Ordinance Update**

- Alderman Albright stated the extension on the existing ordinance through September 30, 2010 was passed by the Board of Alderman.
- Mr. McIntyre inquired if the Programs & Services Committee has the public meeting to discuss the ordinance, will a vote be taken at the public meeting.
- Alderman Albright stated if Programs & Services votes on the revised ordinance, the ordinance will have to go before the full Board of Alderman. If there is no vote, the existing ordinance will be in place through September 30, 2010.
- Interim Commissioner DeRubeis stated one of Alderman Sangiolos' concerns was that OLAWG could not present any off leash areas under the existing ordinance. Under Sec. 3-30 Dogs Off-Leash Program section (b) 1 of the existing ordinance the language reads, "A municipal agency with care, custody and control of public land, may from time to time designate one or more specific areas on such land to be designated off-leash areas." This allows the Interim Commissioner to present off leash areas to the Commission for consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

*Robin McLaughlin, Secretary*