



Setti D. Warren  
Mayor



Robert J. DeRubeis  
Commissioner

## Off-Leash Area Working Group

July 02, 2010, 9:00 am  
Room 222- City Hall  
Meeting Minutes

**Attending:** Susan Albright, *Alderman*, Bob DeRubeis, *P & R Commissioner*, Ann Dorfman, *Citizen Representative*, Amy Koel, *DOLAC Chairman*, Carol Schein, *P & R Recreation*, Carol Stapleton, *Recreation Manager*, Ted Kuklinski, *Citizen Representative*.

**Absent:** Candace Havens, *Interim Planning Director*, Wally Bernheimer, *P & R Commission*, Ralph Torres, *Animal Control Officer*.

**Also Attending:** Harry Sanders

### 1. Ordinance – Update

- Mr. McIntyre inquired about the Board of Alderman's (BOA) process regarding the ordinance.
- Commissioner DeRubeis reviewed:
  - June 16, 2010 – ordinance reviewed by the Programs & Services (P & S) Committee. Ordinance tabled. BOA requesting some revisions.
  - Commissioner DeRubeis and Marie Lawlor of the Law Department have met to review the ordinance revisions requested by the BOA. The revised ordinance will be presented to the P & S Committee on July 14, 2010.
- Commissioner DeRubeis stated one issue did come up in the review of the ordinance. The issue is regarding fees; fees cannot be charged for any usage in a park that is federally funded. Marie Lawlor is verifying this information.
- Alderman Albright requested an update on the June 14<sup>th</sup>, Special Commission Meeting for Claflin Park and McGrath Park. Commissioner DeRubeis stated both proposals were tabled. The Commission is looking for more detailed information regarding fees, etc. The Law Department checked the deed for Claflin Park, referred to by the abutters when Claflin School was sold, and there are no restrictions on the use of the park.
- Mr. Kuklinski stated people are upset about legalizing the area as an off leash area. OLAWG needs to be clear the area will remain a multiuse area.
- Commissioner DeRubeis agreed and stated there may be hourly restrictions for the off leash areas. Ms. Dorfman stated formal hours will let people know when dogs may be present in an area. Some people may not want to be around dogs. Off leash areas do not restrict other uses. People share space all the time and work out any conflicts. An example is a softball game in the same area a family may be having a picnic, people will move to accommodate the other group.
- Commissioner DeRubeis stated there has to be guidelines he can follow as the Commissioner. When there are conflicts in an area, it needs to be clear who has preference in an area at any particular time.
- Ms. Dorfman stated currently the behavior in Newton is working well, 95% of the people know how to interact in the parks. The issue is there are a few illegal off leash areas and people who do not want to be around dogs do not know where to go.
- Mr. McIntyre agreed people do work it out (sharing the parks), but what Mr. Kuklinski has stated that at the June 14<sup>h</sup> meeting it was clear there is a perception/education problem regarding the off leash recreation areas. Ms. Koel stated she and Ms. Schein were very clear about the process and shared usage, but the people at the meeting just did not get the whole picture. Commissioner DeRubeis stated some people would not know what to do in a shared usage situation, we need to educate them. Alderman Albright agrees and stated

Commissioner DeRubeis needs to have a response for any issues that may occur. Ms. Koel stated dog owners need to be respectful, and if they are not we must have a plan.

## **2. Master Plan/Mission Statement**

- Ms. Dorfman stated OLAWG needs a documented Master Plan the public can refer to. Mr. McIntyre stated it took the group a long time to create and agree on the 13 criteria for evaluating green space. To start over and create a Master Plan would bring the current process to a halt for at least six months. Ms. Dorfman stated with out a Master Plan it is hard to defend our choices. Mr. McIntyre stated that is what we are working on now. A Master Plan will not make a difference because most people will not read it.
- Alderman Albright stated she thought the group was doing really well, the group:
  - Established a website and public meetings for the public to have full access to the process
  - Established criteria
  - Applied the criteria to the green space
  - Came up with a list of areas
- Mr. McIntyre stated a Mission Statement is also important but his concern is the group will lose time, the group does not have much time before having to go before the Commission with the information they have requested. The biggest issue is people do not want dog parks in their "backyards". There is tension to get this process perfect; we should continue to work on that now, not on a Master Plan.
- Commissioner DeRubeis stated the original charge from the Commission was to come forward with a list of parks or Old Cold Spring Park would be closed. We have done that and again the Commission is looking for additional information of Old Cold Spring Park will be closed. Commissioner DeRubeis agrees a Master Plan would take a long time to complete, the best thing this group can do right now is be persistent and move forward.
- Mr. McIntyre stated the group should address the questions as they come up. We are very close to not having any off leash areas in Newton.
- Ms. Dorfman stated she is not sure she can be part of OLAWG any longer, the group is moving in a different direction then she believes they should be working towards. Mr. McIntyre stated the group is working together to move forward. Ms. Koel agrees the group is working together to move forward and is doing so in a thoughtful manner.
- Alderman Albright stated she is concerned about the group bringing parks forward one or two at a time. Commissioner DeRubeis stated the Commission could not handle a large quantity of community meetings all at once; maybe four of five parks at one time would be ok.

## **3. Next meeting Agenda**

- Information requested by Commission, Fencing, fees, and professional dog walkers, etc.
- Two new sites to be proposed to Commission along with Claflin Park and McGrath Park
- Norumbega update

Respectfully submitted,

*Robin McLaughlin, Secretary*