



Setti D. Warren
Mayor



Robert J. DeRubeis
Commissioner

Off-Leash Area Working Group

August 6, 2010, 9:00 am
Room 222- City Hall
Meeting Minutes

Attending: Bob DeRubeis, *P & R Commissioner*, Susan Albright, *Alderman*, Carol Schein, *P & R Open Space Coordinator*, Ralph Torres, *Animal Control Officer*, Lee McIntyre, *Citizen Representative*, Amy Koel, *DOLAC Chairman*, Robin McLaughlin, *Secretary*

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

1. August 23, 2010 Presentation

- Commissioner DeRubeis stated the P & R Commission are waiting on the outcome of the ordinance going before the Board of Alderman on August 9, before they will move forward and vote on additional off leash areas.
- Currently the presentation for the 8-23-10 meeting includes:
 - Clafin Park
 - Off Leash Area hours of operation: 9:00 am- 3:00 pm. The off leash area opens after the morning bus stop pick up and closes for NNHS athletic practice.
 - Close the off leash area from December 15- March 15 for winter sledding
 - McGrath Park
 - Parking restricted to the P & R parking spaces.
 - Install snow fencing from Washington Street to tennis courts to avoid having dogs running into the street.
 - No time restrictions
 - The presentation needs to be completed at the next meeting.

2. David Olson, City Clerk – Dog License Process

- Commissioner DeRubeis introduced David Olson, City Clerk, and explained to Mr. Olson the group has been discussing fees for use of off leash areas and would like to tie the off leash area fees into the dog licensing process.
- Mr. Olson explained the dog licensing numbers have gone up, but are still low for a city the size of Newton. Last year there were 3,100 dogs licensed. Currently there are 3,106 dogs licensed for 2010. The State Health Department requires veterinarians send the City Clerk notification of a dogs rabies certificate. The City Clerk is adding the information to a database and is capturing names of individuals who are not licensed.
- Commissioner DeRubeis asked why there is little compliance regarding dog licensing. Mr. Olson stated some people believe because their dog stays in the house or is on a leash, a license is not required. Ms. Koel stated dogs do get loose from their homes and leash; people should be made aware licensing their dog is a safety measure. Alderman Albright recommended writing an editorial for the newspaper.
- Letters are sent to the residents in February notifying them their dog must be licensed by April 1.
- Ms. Schein inquired if the licensing can be paid on-line. Mr. Olson stated due to the rabies certification requirement, on-line payment is difficult.
- Alderman Albright stated the licensing fee has not changed in many years, could the license fee be raised \$5.00. Mr. Olson stated the licensing fee is similar to those in surrounding communities.

- Mr. McIntyre inquired if two types of licensing would be feasible. Mr. Olson asked how each license would be identified. Mr. McIntyre stated different colored tags are an option. Mr. Olson recommended different shaped tags.
- Alderman Albright asked if the money for the off leash area tags would go to the off leash areas. Commissioner DeRubeis stated yes a revolving account would be set up.
- Commissioner DeRubeis asked Mr. Olson what type of stress this would add to the current licensing process. Mr. Olson stated it would slow the process down and there would be an administrative cost. Commissioner DeRubeis stated an admin fee could be taken from the off leash area fee.
- Mr. Olson asked if non Newton residents will be able to purchase a tag to use the off leash areas. Commissioner DeRubeis stated yes, there may be a higher fee for non residents and professional dog walkers to use the off leash areas. Mr. Olson asked if the City Clerk's office would be expected to handle the out of town and professional dog walker fees, the process would be more complicated because a different database would need to be created.
- Alderman Albright recommended phasing in fees as additional off leash areas are opened. Mr. Olson stated the group should be ready to go with fees in February when the initial notification letters are sent to the residents.
- Officer Torres inquired if there will be an ordinance for fines in the off leash area. Commissioner DeRubeis stated yes the fines would be tied into the ordinance.

3. Data Collection

- Ms. Koel stated the intern is unavailable to collect data in the off leash areas.
- Mr. McIntyre inquired if Officer Torres would be available to make observations at Claflin Park and McGrath Park. Officer Torres stated he would be available to make observations.

4. Next Meeting: August 13, 2010 – Room 222 – 9:00am

Agenda Items

- Review August 23, 2010 presentation

Respectfully submitted,

Robin McLaughlin, Secretary