

Revised Proposal
for an
Off-Leash Dog Park
at
Hunnewell Park,
Newton, MA

Submitted by
38 Waban Street
Newton, MA 02458
November, 2009

City of Newton, MA

Application for Dogs Off-Leash Site

November, 2009

Please answer all questions and complete accompanying tables. Please use additional sheets if necessary. Thank you!

1. Location Name

Hunnewell Park (See Attachment #1)

2. Location Address

Please include names of streets which form the perimeter of the site.

Mass Turnpike, City of Boston,
Elmhurst, Simpson & Grasmere Streets in Newton end at Hunnewell Park

3. Sponsoring Group/Individuals

A. Name of sponsor (individual or group)

Diane Cotting
38 Waban Street
Newton, MA 02458
(617) 795-2214

B. Names and contact information (address, phone and email) of all individuals interested in working to support the off-leash site (Please use separate sheet.)

(Attachment #2)

C. If group, name and contact information of primary contact person

4. Physical Description of Location and Proposed Off-Leash Site

If proposed off-leash site encompasses only a portion of general location, please indicate exactly what part(s) of larger location you are proposing. Information requested below is for proposed off-leash site, not entire location.

A. Description

Land, vegetation, existing structures, natural or developed physical boundaries

Hunnewell Park is a relatively unknown parcel of land located in Newton on the Brighton city line boarded on the east side by the New Balance Factory building, on the north by the Mass Pike, and Amtrak Train Lines and on the South and west by 5 abutting Newton residences . The grassy 199,217 square foot property is separated from the Newton properties by 30 foot wide border of trees and vegetation. Near the entrance to the park, there was an old chain-link backstop from a baseball field that had not been used for more than five years. In July Newton's Parks and Recreation Department permitted the Little League to make "improvements" to the park by clearing away brush, building the infield and adding benches. My understanding is that Little League will use the park infrequently and will post times and dates of scheduled games and practices so that dogs will not be in the park when baseball is in play. There is also a small fenced-in tot lot at the far west corner of the field. There is an existing chain link fence that completely surrounds the park and the dog walking community has replaced gates to the park where necessary.

B. Sketch

Please go to the City's website (<http://www.ci.newton.ma.us>) and, on the home page, look for the link to the "Assessor's Database." Search for the property location by street address and click on "Aerial Photo" to get an overview of the site. Print the Aerial Photo and sketch the boundaries of the area proposed for the off-leash site. (See Attachment #3)

C. Approximate dimensions of site: 199,217 square feet

D. Proposed location of fencing

If contemplated; please note that some sites will not be suitable for fencing.

The entire park is enclosed by chain link fence. There are 2 gates on the Brighton entrance to the park, one at the end of Grasmere Street by the tot lot and a locked double gate on Simpson Street allowing access for the Newton Parks and Recreation Department's grounds keeping equipment. We propose adding a fence to a small area between the New Balance parking lot and the Little League Field. The dog walking community will help supply the fencing material and fundraise to offset the cost. (See Attachment #3A)

5. Available Parking

Please note that some sites might have multiple entrances.

A. Parking location(s) relative to off-leash site, approximate number of spaces

The city of Newton has a right-of-way to the park through the New Balance Factory on Newton Street in Brighton. There is ample parking for 25 cars. This should be the only access to the off-leash site. (See Attachment #4)

B. Please indicate available parking in attached sketch (See Attachment #5)

C. Route between parking and proposed site

From Newton Street in Brighton (See Attachment #5)

6. Current Usage Information of Location and Proposed Off-Leash Site

To ensure reasonable accuracy of this information, sampling of several weekdays/weekends might be necessary. Include seasonal variation, if known. Please answer the questions below and summarize the information on the Current Use Table as well.

A. Description of unofficial use of this location for off-leash dogs

Please indicate current activities on this site, e.g., dogs and handlers/on- and off-leash, sports, use of site as shortcut for pedestrians, etc. Please include times these activities occur and approximate numbers of people and dogs.

Since the main entrance to the park is from Newton Street in Brighton through the right-of-way in the New Balance Parking lot, it seems few Newton residents use Hunnewell Park. On any given day from 9 am until 4pm, local dog walkers from exercise as many as 25 dogs at a time in harmony and all do a fine job of cleaning up after their charges. I am told that several of these professionals have used the park for 10 years or more. I have interviewed more than 30 people over a four month periods on week days and weekends and have met only an occasional Newton resident. Many Brighton residents live in apartments off Newton Street and are thrilled to have this area to walk their dogs and enjoy the grassy field. Noise from dogs barking is not a factor as the sounds from cars on the Mass Pike and Amtrak trains drown out any noise made by dogs in the daytime. At night I am told that teens go into the park to party and drink beer. The dog walkers often pick up bottles and other trash on their first walk of the day. Recently, New Balance thinned the trees that toughed the fence all around their parking lot. The dog walkers were planning to get together to clean up all the newly exposed trash along the fence. At the far west end of Hunnewell where near the tot lot, I have seen a few children playing however they are often accompanied by a family pet. On one occasion, I saw a few people playing Frisbee with their children and their dogs.

B. Dog walkers

Please indicate whether professional dog walkers currently utilize the park and if so, please describe: number of dog walkers, number of dogs/walker and times of use.

There are five or six professional dog walkers who use the park. A few of these people live in Newton, but others do not. Many of the dogs being walked are owned by Newton Residents. Each dog walker manages about 4 dogs at a time. Their hours of operation are from 10am-3pm. As Newton residents discover the park, we are finding that our dogs enjoy the socialization they experience when the dog walkers are in the area with their client's pets.

7. Proposed Usage of Off-Leash Site

Please answer the questions below and summarize the information on the Proposed Use Table as well.

A. Indicate any proposed restrictions/regulations*

Numbers of dogs allowed at once, number of dogs/person, etc.

We suggest no more than 4 dogs per person and restricting use of the off-leash area during Little League games.

B. Potential on-site conflict

How would on-site conflicts between dogs and between owners be handled?

For the past 10 years dog owners and dog walkers have managed any conflicts that have arisen.

C. Proposed maintenance/enhancement of proposed site/location by volunteers

Park users have maintained the site for many years. Volunteers regularly come together to maintain the park now.

D. Please include any additional equipment (trash barrels, pick-up bags, informational sheets, etc.) that you think is necessary. Please include proposed process for ensuring that dog waste is addressed in an environmentally sound fashion.

Additional trash barrels are needed at the park now. When volunteers pick up trash left at night, the barrels often overflow. Dispensers for dog bags should be available. The area should be posted to alert those entering the park that it is an off-leash area, reminding them to keep the gates closed and to pick up after their dogs and keep the park clean.

8. Abutters

Number and location of abutters (properties bordering the site)

There are, in fact, only 5 properties in Newton that directly abut the park.

9. Potential conflicts with non-owners

A. Existing Problems

Please describe in as much detail as possible any and all historical or ongoing problems related to use of the park by dogs/owners. Include complaints by neighbors and between dogs/owners and other park users. If historical, describe how the problem(s) were resolved, if at all.

There has been a concern from the abutters of the Grasmere, Simpson & Elmhurst entrance to the park that new park users will create traffic their streets. We believe that fencing in the area by the Newton Street Entrance help manage this concern. (See 9 (C) and Attachment #6)

B. Potential problems

Do you foresee any potential conflicts between off-leash dog use and other park users?

The park has seen little use for many years compared to other parks in Newton. It is now used for a number of Little League games but the games are scheduled. With the proposed fenced in area for the off-leash park and limiting hours of use during games I am convinced the dog owners can live in harmony with other park users.

C. Mitigation of problems

Please describe how the proposed restrictions/regulations (above 7A*) might mitigate any historical/ongoing/potential problems.

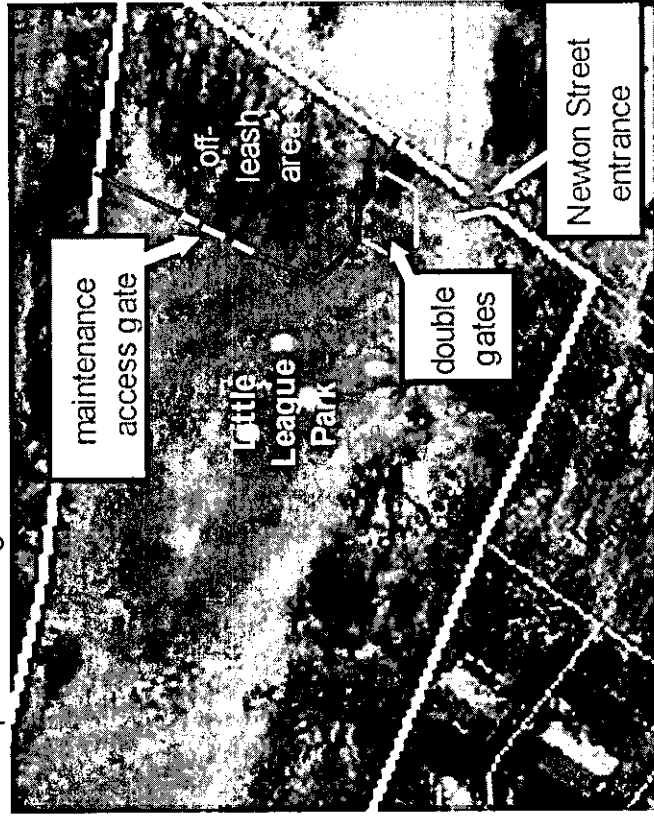
We have learned a lot from the off-leash experiment at Cold Springs Park. A major complaint at that park has revolved around the parking issue. So, we will limit access to the Park for off-leash purposes to the Newton Street Entrance.

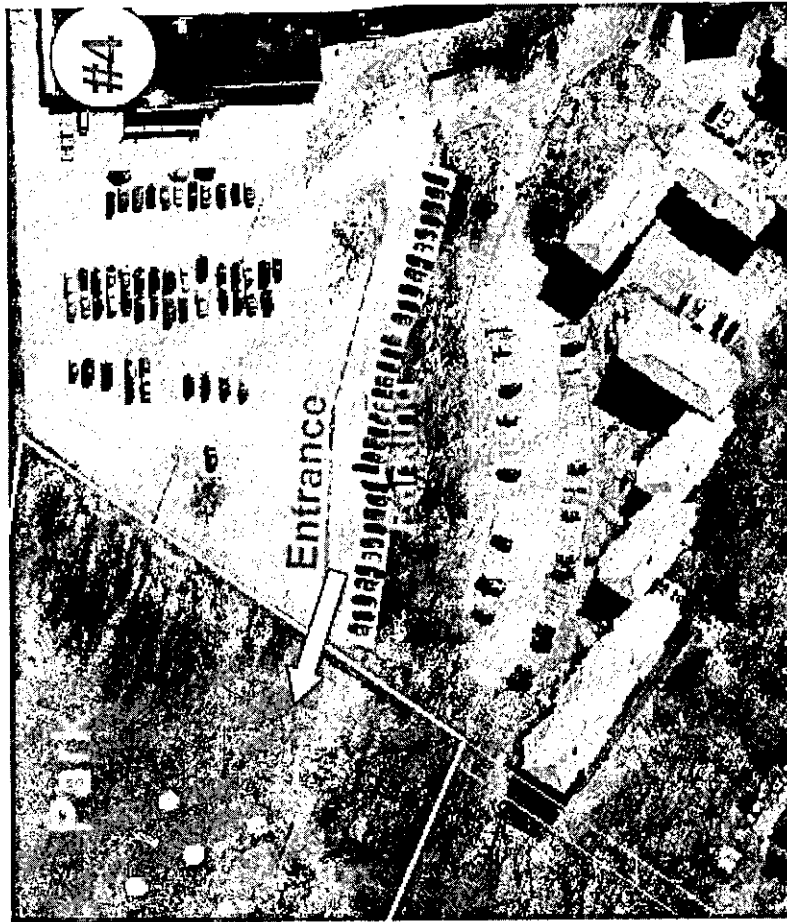
10. Additional information

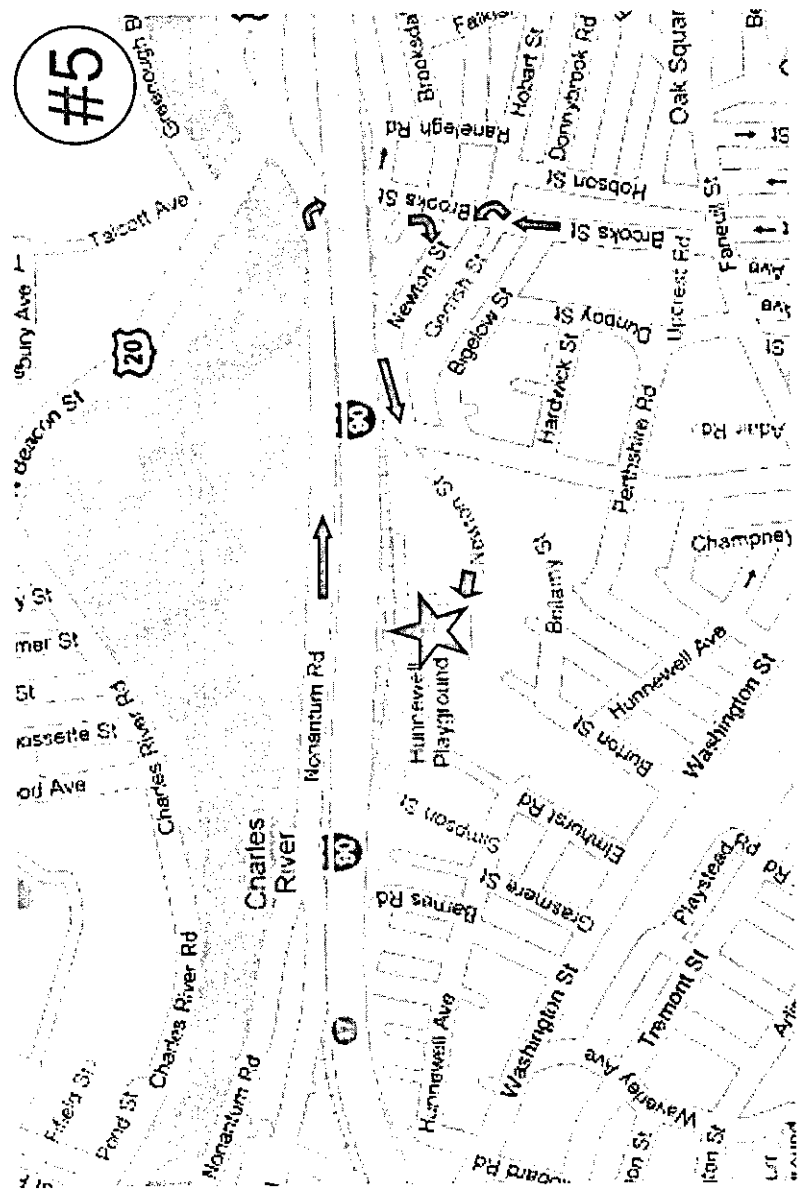
Please supply any additional information you think might be helpful to the Off-Leash Advisory Committee, the Conservation Commission or the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Although Hunnewell Park is owned by the city of Newton, few Newton residents are able to enjoy this beautiful field because no one seems to know about it. On the other hand our neighbors in Brighton have the benefit of this wonderful resource at the expense of Newton taxpayers! This plot of land is in an area that has been a buffer zone between the Mass Pike and Amtrak and a small section of Newton Corner. The main access to the park is via a right-of way through the New Balance Factory on Newton Street behind a chain link fence with a sign reading "Private Property" with notice that access to the park is offered by "New Balance Corporation and the City of Newton Parks and Recreation Department." This park has been used as an off-leash facility for years unofficially but very successfully. The area has policed itself well; volunteers have kept the park clean and relatively safe. If more folks knew about its existence it is possible that the park would be used by more folks after work reducing the amount of underage drinking and party that clearly goes on in the park after hours. An off leash dog park offers friend and neighbors a wonderful opportunity to congregate with their pets and form another common bond for the residents of the City of Newton.

Proposed fencing for off-leash area at Hunnewell Park







Newton Little League Scheduled Games

9/13/2009	Sun	1:00 PM	Newton Central Tigers	Needham Blue	Hunnewell	AA
9/13/2009	Sun	3:30 PM	Newton Central Orioles	Newton North	Hunnewell	AA
9/17/2009	Thu	5:00 PM	Newton Central Orioles	Newton East Blue Claws	Hunnewell	AA
9/22/2009	Tue	5:00 PM	Newton Central Tigers	Newton East RockHounds	Hunnewell	AA
9/23/2009	Wed	5:00 PM	Newton Central Orioles	Newton South Rockies	Hunnewell	AA
9/24/2009	Thu	5:00 PM	Newton Central Dodgers	Weston Mudcats	Hunnewell	AA
9/27/2009	Sun	12:30 PM	Newton Central Dodgers	Newton South Rockies	Hunnewell	AA
9/30/2009	Wed	5:00 PM	Newton Central Tigers	Newton South Rockies	Hunnewell	AA
10/4/2009	Sun	1:00 PM	Newton Central Dodgers	Newton West	Hunnewell	AA
10/4/2009	Sun	3:30 PM	Newton Central Orioles	Needham Red	Hunnewell	AA
10/12/2009	Mon	1:00 PM	Newton Central Dodgers	Newton Central Orioles	Hunnewell	AA
10/12/2009	Mon	3:30 PM	Newton Central Tigers	Newton West	Hunnewell	AA