

Concord Dog Park Committee Meeting
January 31, 2018

Attendees:

Susanne Jarnryd
Deborah Richardson
Bob Schulman
Don Shobry
Anne Umphrey
Jeff Young

Guest – Kate Hodge

The meeting began at 7:05 with a round of introductions since Susanne just joined the committee as the replacement for Janet Vera.

The committee members present unanimously voted to accept the minutes of the meeting of 1/17/2018.

Don shared data with the committee on dog complaints to the Concord Police, and dog bites. The complaint data, which shows a decline of 40% over the past 6 years, came from the Concord Police Department courtesy of Michael Dettlebach who also plotted the complaint locations on Google Maps. A visual inspection of his map did find any clusters of complaints around parcels of open lands. Instead, the highest density of complaints seemed to be in the areas with the highest pedestrian foot traffic, like the Concord town center and the shopping district in West Concord.

The dog bite data shown below came from the Town Annual Reports, and shows that the incidence of dog bites is flat to declining.

The Committee then recapped our session with Marcia Rasmussen for the benefit of Susanne, who had not yet seen the minutes for that meeting. We reviewed the terms and questions of interest for our meeting with Assistant Town Manager Kate Hodge. Key terms include open space, recreation, and passive recreation. Key questions include developing an understanding of which town departments are involved with open space and recreation, and what their roles are. We also need to understand which town departments view dog owners as constituents that they serve.

Don then stepped through initial findings from a review of both guidelines for and descriptions of existing and planned dog recreation facilities. This preliminary search looked at guidelines or facility descriptions from the following.

Acton, MA	Denver, CO	London, England
American Kennel Club (AKC)	Edmonton, Alberta	Maynard, MA
Ann Arbor, MI	El Paso County, TX	Natick, MA
Boulder, CO	Galveston County, TX	Norfolk, VA
Cambridge, MA	Harris County, TX	Wilmington, MA

This review also included a study of 17 dog parks done by the University of California, Davis, Veterinary School. The review includes initial lists of amenities that are required or are viewed as desirable. The document is attached. These are some initial findings.

1. Very few facilities are designed with input from animal behaviorists.
2. There are primarily two types of recreational facilities for dogs; dedicated dog parks and shared multi-use facilities. Communities with more extensive dog related

recreational facilities seem to be moving towards shared facilities, which can offer a cost advantage over dedicated dog parks.

3. The communities with the most extensive dog recreation facilities view a support group of dog owners as a prerequisite, which reduces maintenance costs and improves cleanliness, but many communities ignore this or try to address this after the fact.
4. There are two contradictory approaches to siting dog parks. The communities with more extensive dog recreation facilities site facilities within neighborhoods so that they can utilize on the street parking. Other communities pick locations away from residential areas, which creates a need for parking facilities and also creates challenges with respect to community ownership and support.
5. Two common metrics are a goal of locating a dog facility within a 20 minute walk of each dog owner, and a minimum size of 1 acre, although there are dog facilities that are hundreds of acres in size.
6. Cleanliness is the primary factor in determining the acceptability of dog facilities.
7. Despite the recommended minimum size of 1 acre, communities in Massachusetts are building small, dedicated dog parks that still incur significant costs. Billerica, Maynard, Natick and Wilmington have or are considering dedicated dog parks of 0.3 acres to 0.8 acres in size. The 0.8 acre Billerica dog park had a final budget of \$175,800, which does not include any land acquisition costs.

The committee was asked to provide feedback on the document and to review the list of required and desired amenities.

The committee then discussed the low turnout for surveys on dog parks, and that the way in which questions are posed can impact results. Only 63 Concord residents expressed an interest in dog parks in the survey done in 2014. The only number given by the Acton Dog Park Committee on survey responses is 97.

We then selected the dates of March 14 or 15 for our initial public hearing, pending the availability of the committee members that were not in attendance. We will use the communication channels described in the previous meeting minutes to notify the public. Our chair will follow through on the location, timing, and creation of the public announcement.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35.