



CITY OF KIRKLAND

Department of Parks & Community Services

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MEMORANDUM

To: City Council
From: Park Board
Date: March 24, 2010
Subject: Joint meeting between Park Board and the City Council

The Park Board is looking forward to our annual meeting with the City Council. The following is a proposed agenda for our joint session, scheduled for April 6:

Agenda

- I. **2009 Accomplishments:** A brief review of work accomplished in 2009.
Highlights include:
 - Completed a trail and park improvement plan for Forbes Lake Park
 - Awarded the contract for the construction of the new Everest Park Restroom/Storage Building
 - Completed construction of the Rose Hill Meadows Park
 - Expanded community garden/pea patch program with 15 new garden plots at McAuliffe Park, 35 total
 - Replaced playground equipment at South Rose Hill Park
- II. **Park Board Work Plan:** A review of major components of the Board's 2010 work program (work plan attached)
- III. **Off-Leash Dog Areas:** Park Board seeking direction from Council on process and parameters for pursuing off-leash areas (OLA's) in Kirkland

OFF-LEASH DOG AREAS IN KIRKLAND

As the City Council is aware, the issues surrounding off-leash dog activity in Kirkland have been a recurring Park Board work plan item over the past several years. While many cities in the region have been able to achieve results and provide some form of off-leash area (referred to herein as OLA's) for their citizens, we have struggled to find a suitable solution which fits for our community.

In the past, the Council and Board have agreed on the following basic policy issues related to off-leash dogs, some of which are detailed in Resolution R-4478 which the Council passed in 2004:

1. That park rules should continue to require owners to have their dogs leashed and that resources should be devoted to **ensuring enforcement** of leash laws. In addition,

dogs should be prohibited outright from certain unique park facilities (such as McAuliffe Park, Peter Kirk Pool, Tot Lot playground, pea patches, etc.)

2. That OLA's are a **legitimate recreation use** for parks and should be considered in the formal master planning process of any park site.
3. That successful OLA's in Kirkland must have support from a private **stewardship group** which, through funding assistance and/or volunteer support, helps offset both initial start-up costs and on-going operational costs.
4. That as part of the consideration of specific sites for OLA's, a public process should include at a minimum **public hearings** held by the Park Board and specific **outreach to neighborhood associations**.

In 2008, Kirkland Dog Off-leash Group (KDOG) formed and officially became a recognized non-profit organization about one year ago. To date, nearly 200 individuals have signed up to be involved in KDOG and the organization has expressed a commitment to provide volunteers and financial support for OLA's in the Kirkland community.

At the City Council's January 19th meeting, Jean Guth, representing the KDOG organization, asked the City Council to move forward with Resolution R-4478 to conduct a public hearing on an off-leash area. Ms. Guth entered into the record of City Council's February 2nd meeting a petition signed by 648 individuals in support for an off-leash park in Kirkland. The Council has also received dozens of email messages in support for holding a public hearing for an off-leash area. Council subsequently asked for a staff report summarizing the Park Board's work regarding off-leash areas (memo attached) and requested to discuss this subject with the Park Board at the April 6th Study Session.

KDOG representatives have also attended several Park Board meetings over the past several months. Organization representatives were invited to attend the Park Board's February meeting, at which time they presented their extensive research on various approaches local and national communities have taken to meet the off-leash needs of dog owners and their pets.

Based on these discussions, the Park Board has prepared the following two recommendations for the Council's consideration:

1. FENCED Off-Leash Area Option

The Park Board requests that the Council authorize the Board and staff to investigate the feasibility of utilizing park property south of the Heronfield Wetlands as a designated, fenced OLA.

Purchased in 2005 from the Schott family, the undeveloped site is approximately 7.5 acres and located at the southwest corner of 113th Avenue NE and NE 120th Street (just west of the Kirkland Municipal Court building). A portion of the Heronfield Wetlands extends onto the property, while the rest of the site contains a mix of deciduous and conifer forest habitat on relatively steep slopes as well as a large, open grassy meadow at the toe of the slope. The

meadow area, once used as pasture land, is currently invaded by Himalayan Blackberry but could be converted to a fenced OLA. In preliminary conversations with KDOG they have expressed an interest in partnering at this location.

As part of analyzing the suitability of the site, the Board and staff would consider environmental and associated permitting issues, site access, impact to neighboring properties, parking and traffic needs/constraints, and other related issues. A site development cost estimate would also be prepared. Public involvement would include specific outreach to the Juanita neighborhood association and one or more public hearings.

If the Council authorizes the Board to explore this location, we anticipate returning to the Council with a specific recommendation this fall.

2. UNFENCED Off-Leash Areas Option

In addition to considering a fenced OLA, the Park Board is interested in exploring a revision to Kirkland's existing park regulations to allow limited off-leash dog activity within certain areas of a limited number of existing developed park sites.

KDOG's research has found examples where park systems have designated unfenced off-leash areas within an existing park, or a designated area within a park that is allowed only during specific times. The Board found this concept to have merit and recommends the Board work with KDOG to develop specific site criteria and to engage in a dialog with the community to identify sites for Council's consideration.

Some of the characteristics of this approach include:

- Limited off-leash recreation use in existing parks during certain times of the day (such as early morning), and/or certain times of the year (such as October through March);
- Limit the off-leash recreation use to a specific location within a park, unfenced but defined through signage or other means;
- On-going volunteer stewardship of designated sites to monitor activity, help ensure compliance with rules, provide educational resources and support to dog owners, and complete routine maintenance tasks as appropriate.

Some of the possible advantages of this approach include:

- A neighborhood-based strategy which encourages off-leash recreation activity geared to meeting a more localized need;
- A geographically-dispersed strategy which lessens impacts to the transportation system and associated impacts to the environment;
- A low-cost strategy which can be implemented without a commitment of new resources;

- A shared-use strategy which would allow continued multiple uses of park open areas and thus would not require segregating a portion of a park site exclusively for off-leash recreation activity;
- This approach lends itself well to a test period, or pilot approach. Effectiveness can be evaluated and the program revised or curtailed after a pre-determined period of time.

The Board believes that this option has enough merit to warrant a closer look and engagement with the community to gauge interest and support. Obvious concerns about safety, impacts to immediate neighbors, and impact to other park uses would need to be studied. Again, the KDOG organization has expressed a willingness to partner with the City in this effort and the implementation of any authorized program.

If the Council is willing to allow the Board and staff to explore this option, once again we anticipate returning to the Council this fall, if not sooner, with a specific recommendation.

Attachments:

- 1_Park Board 2010 Work Plan
- 2_Background Memorandum on Off-Leash Areas
- 3_Resolution R-4478 regarding Dogs Off-leash
- 4_Location Map for Potential Off-Leash Area

Kirkland Park Board 2010 Work Plan

Goal 1: Develop or redevelop existing parklands and public recreation facilities.		
Objective	Description	Timing
<u>Objective 1.1:</u> Implement Juanita Beach Master Plan	Construct Phase 1 improvements to park (CIP funded)	Throughout 2010
<u>Objective 1.2:</u> Expand community garden/pea patch program	Provide additional opportunities for community gardening/pea patches within the park system (unfunded)	Throughout 2010
<u>Objective 1.3:</u> Develop renovation plan for Waverly Beach Park	Complete an assessment and prioritized recommendations (with cost estimates) for improvements to Waverly Beach Park (CIP funded)	July - December
<u>Objective 1.4:</u> Develop a pilot off-leash dog area in Kirkland	Find a suitable location, secure sufficient volunteer stewardship commitment and donated funds for a pilot OLA (unfunded)	Throughout 2010
<u>Objective 1.5:</u> Secure State grant funding to complete planned improvements to Forbes Lake Park Trail System	Make application for up to \$500,000 of State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) funding for Forbes Lake Park	April - September
<u>Objective 1.6:</u> Update the City's Comprehensive Park, Recreation, and Open Space Plan (PROS PLAN)	Update to six-year planning document	Complete by June
<u>Objective 1.7:</u> Update the Parks' Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for 2011 - 2016	Update to six-year budget planning document	Complete by June
Goal 2: Maintain or increase maintenance and operational levels of service for parks and for recreation facilities.		
Objective	Description	Timing
<u>Objective 2.1:</u> Implement the Green Kirkland 20-Year Plan	Implement restoration plans including volunteer stewardship components (CIP funded). Seek and secure stable funding for Green Kirkland program beyond 2010	Throughout 2010
<u>Objective 2.2:</u> Repair/replace deteriorating park amenities	Complete replacement of playgrounds at Peter Kirk Park and Houghton Beach Park (CIP funded)	Throughout 2010
<u>Objective 2.3:</u> Minimize negative impacts to park system and park/recreation users due to budgetary reductions	Provide advice and guidance to staff as requested regarding potential community impacts related to proposed and/or implemented budgetary reductions and seek community-based solutions (including adopt-a-park opportunities)	Throughout 2010

Kirkland Park Board 2010 Work Plan

<u>Objective 2.4:</u> Peter Kirk Pool Capital Improvements	Implement upgrades to meet new code requirements and improve pool operations (CIP funded)	February - June
<u>Objective 2.5:</u> Develop new operational plan for Kirkland Teen Union Building (K-TUB)	Determine new operational plan including possible new community operational partner(s) for the teen center	January - July
<u>Objective 2.6:</u> Complete tasks necessary for provision of parks and recreation services to the Pending Annexation Area in 2011	Continue preparations for assumption of County-owned parks and open spaces and provision of services to the PAA	Throughout 2010
Goal 3: Develop more revenue-generating opportunities, alternative revenue sources, and private partnerships within the park system.		
Objective	Description	Timing
<u>Objective 3.1:</u> Implement Marina Park business plan	Maximize opportunities for revenue-generating activities at Marina Park, such as recreation concessions and events	Throughout 2010
<u>Objective 3.2:</u> Planning for possible future park bond and maintenance levy	Subject to Council direction, continue to explore strategic issues related to the planning and timing of a possible park bond and maintenance levy. Make recommendations to City Council as requested	Throughout 2010
<u>Objective 3.3:</u> Encourage appropriate use of park facilities for community events	Review and make recommendations on policy issues related to special events in parks	Throughout 2010
Goal 4: Develop partnership opportunities with the Lake Washington School District.		
Objective	Description	Timing
<u>Objective 4.1:</u> Implement new Joint Use Agreement with LWSD	Implement new agreement to ensure reciprocal use of public facilities in a manner which maximizes opportunities and equitably meets the broad needs of the community. Track and assess impacts of the new agreement	Throughout 2010
Goal 5: Develop more indoor recreation space.		
Objective	Description	Timing
<u>Objective 5.1:</u> Indoor Recreation Center	Actively seek potential community partners and conduct site analysis as sites are identified (CIP funded)	Throughout 2010

Kirkland Park Board 2010 Work Plan

Goal 6: Acquire open spaces, unusual and unique sites, and neighborhood park land in areas of the City where recreation opportunities are deficient.		
Objective	Description	Timing
<u>Objective 6.1:</u> Acquire suitable land for community park land and/or open space	Be responsive to acquisition opportunities as they arise (CIP funded)	Throughout 2010



MEMORANDUM

To: Dave Ramsay, City Manager

From: Jennifer Schroder, CPRP
Parks and Community Services Director

Date: February 9, 2010

Subject: Summary of the Park Board's work regarding an off-leash dog park

Background

In the fall of 2002, a section of the lawn area at the Waverly Park site had become muddy and in poor condition. The park had become a popular gathering area for dog owners to exercise their pets. The combination of poor drainage and concentrated use by dogs turned the lawn area to mud. The area was fenced off and closed for turf restoration. Following the closure of a section of the park, a citizen advocacy group for off-leash areas sent several letters to the Council requesting that the City provide pet owners with an off-leash area. This group identified itself as K-Dog.

In response to requests for an off-leash dog area at the Waverly Park site, the City Council held a joint study session with the Park Board to discuss dogs and parks (April, 2003). The Council directed the Park Board to form a Dogs and Parks Committee. The Committee was formed in May, 2003 and included representatives from the Park Board, K-Dog, Lake Washington School District, Audubon Society, Juanita Bay Ranger Program, Kirkland American Little League, and citizens at-large. The Committee was charged with developing recommendations concerning leash-law enforcement priorities, park use policies relating to pets, and off-leash recreational opportunities.

The Committee looked at existing off-leash areas in Seattle and throughout King County to learn about size criteria, maintenance needs, infrastructure elements, and other concerns such as enforcement. Size of off-leash areas researched ranged from fenced dog runs, which limit the number of pets and pet-owners that can use the run at one time, to Marymoor Park which is a 40 acre off-leash area.

In February, 2004, the Committee presented to the City Council a list of site selection criteria for an off-leash area, identified several parks to consider for a pilot program, provided a list of parks to eliminate from consideration, proposed rules for pet owners to follow, and sought enforcement for those rules. Council asked the Park Board to concentrate their efforts on 10 parks and to revisit the site selection criteria for each proposed site.

Over the next six months, the Park Board reviewed the site selection criteria, costs to implement and maintain proposed off-leash areas, funding strategies, and the importance of enforcement.

On October 19, 2004 the Park Board presented for City Council approval the following findings and recommendations:

Findings:

- Off-leash opportunities are a legitimate park activity, but only under the right circumstances (e.g. size, location, compatible use and infrastructure)
- Off-leash opportunities should be considered as a program element in future park development and redevelopment
- Off-leash activities should be evaluated through the criteria created by the Dogs and Parks Committee and the needs of neighbors, park users, and other interested parties, as best as possible
- The "off-leash community" should share responsibility for both implementing, and maintaining an off-leash area
- The City needs to be committed to enforcement of the leash-law
- The City should both facilitate and encourage ways that responsible dog ownership can be promoted through educational outreach and through special events, as examples
- Existing parks that meet the site selection criteria for consideration of an off-leash area are: Crestwoods Park, Juanita Beach Park, North Kirkland Community Center, Snyder's Corner, and Terrace Park.

The Park Board recommendation was the following:

1. Include off-leash dog areas as a program element for public consideration as part of all future park master planning projects.
2. When a stewardship group steps forward to champion an off-leash area, the following criteria should be followed:
 - Conduct a Public Hearing on the five park sites identified by the Park Board as sites to consider for an off-leash area. (Crestwoods Park, Juanita Beach Park, North Kirkland Community Center, Snyder's Corner, and Terrace Park)
 - Involve Neighborhood Associations in the public process
 - Funding for start-up costs and ongoing maintenance should be offset by user fees, donations and volunteer stewardship.
3. Amend Chapter 11.80 Park Rules of the Kirkland Municipal Code to prohibit pets from entering the Cemetery, McAuliffe Park, Peter Kirk Pool, Tot Lot Park, and Ohde Pea Patch.

After a thorough discussion, the City Council moved to accept the Park Board's recommendation with changes. The changes included the removal of the public hearing limitation to the five named parks and the addition of language for pets to be allowed in the cemetery provided they are on a leash and under close control.

On November 16, 2004 Council adopted Resolution R-4478 approving the Park Board's recommendation regarding dogs and parks.

Implementation of R-4478

- *Include off-leash dog areas as a program element for public consideration as part of all future park master planning projects.*

Based on this policy, the following master plans included, during the public-input phase, an off-leash area element for public consideration: Juanita Beach Park, McAuliffe Park, Forbes Lake development plan, Rose Hill Meadows and Carillon Woods. Of the five plans, Juanita Beach Park was given the most consideration, however it was deemed there was not enough room between other uses in the plan to adequately site an off-leash area. Other than the Park Board's careful review and consideration for an off-leash area within each of these plans, there was no organized group supporting an off-leash area.

- *Amend Chapter 11.80 Park Rules of the Kirkland Municipal Code to prohibit pets from entering the Cemetery, McAuliffe Park, Peter Kirk Pool, Tot Lot Park, and Ohde Pea Patch.*

January 2005, the City Council approved Ordinance O-3998 relating to animal control and the regulation and prohibition of animals running at large. The ordinance amended the sections regarding regulations and enforcement, running at large, established leash law infractions as a civil penalty and authorized the Parks Director to adopt rules prohibiting dogs or other domesticated animals from entering parks or certain portions of parks after consultation with the City Council.

- *When a stewardship group steps forward to champion an off-leash area, the following criteria should be followed:*
 - *Conduct a Public Hearing*
 - *Involve Neighborhood Associations in the public process*
 - *Funding for start-up costs and ongoing maintenance should be offset by user fees, donations, and volunteer stewardship.*

To date, the Park Board has not held a public hearing on a proposed off-leash area or site. On March 17, 2009 the Park Board recommended that the City Council direct the Park Board to conduct a study to identify opportunities or alternatives for off-leash area(s) within the Kirkland park system and for the Park Board to chair a community stakeholder committee. Council communicated that they did not want the Park Board to convene a stakeholder committee and additionally, some council members voiced opposition to site off-leash areas in developed parks. The City Council's minutes reflect that Council agreed that the Park Board could continue to explore and identify opportunities or alternatives for off-leash areas and return with a recommendation at a future council meeting.

Since that time, a stewardship group has formed. In 2008, the Kirkland Dog Off-leash Group (KDOG) submitted their application to form a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and received approval from the state on March 26, 2009. To date 185 individuals have signed up to be involved in KDOG and they are willing to support an off-leash area. After all the research the Park Board has completed, and including research KDOG has conducted on "preferred criteria" for an off-leash park, the issue comes down to finding a site that is acceptable to the City Council so that a public hearing can be held. The Park Board and City Council will have the opportunity to discuss this in-depth at their joint meeting at the April 6, 2010 Study Session.

RESOLUTION R- 4478

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF KIRKLAND APPROVING THE PARK BOARD RECOMMENDATION REGARDING DOGS AND PARKS.

WHEREAS, in response to several requests that the City of Kirkland provide pet owners with an off-leash recreational area, the City Council held a joint study session with the Park Board, in April 2003, to discuss dogs and parks; and

WHEREAS, the Council directed the Park Board to form a Dogs and Parks Committee, which committee was formed in May 2003, and included representatives from the Park Board, K-Dog, Lake Washington School District, Audubon Society, Juanita Bay Ranger Program, Kirkland American Little League, and citizens at-large; and

WHEREAS, the Committee was charged with developing recommendations concerning: leash law enforcement priorities; park use policy relating to pets; and off-leash recreational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the Committee looked at existing off-leash areas in Seattle and throughout King County to learn about size criteria, maintenance needs, infrastructure elements, enforcement, and other concerns; and

WHEREAS, because the Committee determined that City designation of a single park for off-leash use would effectively create a destination dog park, the Committee recommended off-leash areas be provided in multiple park sites; and

WHEREAS, the Committee presented a list of selection criteria to the City Council in February 2004 and has continued to work to refine those criteria over the last six months; and

WHEREAS, the City Council reviewed the Park Board Recommendation at its meeting on October 19, 2004;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the City Council of the City of Kirkland as follows:

Section 1. The Kirkland City Council hereby approves the Kirkland Park Board Recommendations Regarding Dogs and Parks, as amended and set forth in Exhibit A attached hereto and by this reference incorporated herein.

Passed by majority vote of the Kirkland City Council in open meeting this 16th day of November, 2004.

Signed in authentication thereof this 16th day of November, 2004.


MAYOR

Attest:

City Clerk
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EXHIBIT A

Park Board Recommendation

1. Include off-leash dog areas as a program element for public consideration as part of all future park master planning projects.
2. When a stewardship group steps forward to champion an off-leash area, the following criteria should be followed:
 - Conduct a Public Hearing.
 - Involve Neighborhood Associations in the public process
 - Funding for start-up costs and ongoing maintenance should be offset by user fees, donations, and volunteer stewardship.
3. Amend Kirkland Municipal Code Chapter 11.80, "Park Rules" to prohibit pets from entering, McAuliffe Park, Peter Kirk Pool, Tot Lot Park, Ohde Pea Patch and that pets are allowed in the cemetery provided they are on a leash, stay on roads and pathways and under close control.

Potential Off-Leash Area

