



## 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  
Reso\Dogsreso

## 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.