Altamanu

Gary F. Balling
Executive Director
Park District of Oak Park
218 Madison Street
Oak Park, IL60302

Date: Feb 9, 2006

Project: Dogs in the Parks, Master Plan
Public Meeting Date: Wednesday, February 8th, 2006
Public Meeting Held: Oak Park Conservatory 7-9 pm.

Minutes of meeting

1. Mr. Gary Balling, Executive Director of the Park District of Oak Park, opened the meeting and presented a series of PowerPoint slides that addressed the following:
    - The history of Dog Friendly Policies of the Park District of Oak Park (PD)
    - Information on the PD Comprehensive Plan process
    - Results of the public survey that was part of that process - Dog Friendly Areas/Dog Parks ranked #8 in the order of most important facilities needed in the Oak Park system.
    - Limited public open space in Oak Park and the extraordinary demands on that space - NRPA standards call for 10 acres per 1,000 residents
      Oak Park with 82.9 acres of public park land has 1.6 acres per 1,000 residents. (Comparison, Lincoln Park in Chicago is 1,212 acres). The "Dogs in the Parks Master Plan" Process
    - Next public meeting Wednesday, March 8th at Field Center at 7pm

2. Mr. Balling introduced John Mac Manus of Altamanu Inc. who presented the following:
    - Information gathered by Altamanu Inc. from Parks Departments across the country addressing the planning process used to create Dog Friendly Areas (DFA's),
    - Potential successes and concerns with the process and the resulting final design
    - Relative sizes of DFA's
    - The design criteria used
    - Issues the public has with DFA's
    - Changes made to DFA's over time
    - Recommendations on materials to be used in DFA's

3. Members of the general public made comments on the information presented. This information was noted and added to the information charts presented. (See attachments)

4. Mr. Mac Manus then presented PowerPoint slides of DFA's in the Chicago area. These included images of DFA's at the following locations:

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- Park Ridge
- Beck Lake
- Pooch Park in Skokie
- Lawrence in Chicago, where decorative metal railings, asphalt and pea gravel are used
- Montrose Beach in Chicago
- Wiggly Park in Chicago, where users and residents have complained about the size, materials and overuse of the area.

5. Altamanu Inc. has made an examination of all potential sites in Oak Park, publicly or privately owned, including sites suggested by members of the public and the Park District of Oak Park. Mr. Mac Manus assured the meeting attendees that no decision has been made and all open spaces in Oak Park were examined for suitability. Mr. Mac Manus made a PowerPoint presentation of the potential sites. Some sites were ruled out initially as they were obviously unsuitable, due to size, existing use and/or adjacent uses. The audience was asked for their comments on the potential sites and there was discussion about each site. Mr. Grandy of the PD joined in the discussions and offered his perspective and knowledge of the workings of each site. (A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is available from the Park District)

6. The sites examined included sites at the following locations:
    - Lindberg Park, NE corner, audience also suggested NW corner near and/or including one of the tennis courts. There was discussion about how often these courts are used, with some residents stating not at all and some stating that they are used all the time. Mr. Grandy stated that removing a tennis court is always a cause for concern for the general public. At present the PD has 26 tennis courts.
    - Taylor Park, East of the tennis courts. There was a discussion about the NE corner, which was considered unsuitable due to drainage problems and the north side near the picnic area which was considered unsuitable due to proximity to residences. It was noted that this is an historic park and real care would have to be taken to incorporate any DFA into the park. The original design intent of the park's designer Jens Jensen must be considered. One resident stated that there could be a problem with parking on adjacent streets.
    - Field Park, NW corner, considered unlikely due to small size, current use and proximity to the school
    - Ridgeland Common on the temporary site currently used as a DFA. Considered a site with potential.
    - Stevenson SE corner behind the reservoir and multi-use space. This was considered a site with potential.
    - Mills Park, considered unlikely due to historic nature of Pleasant House, and previous concerns expressed by neighbors about changes or additions to the park.
    - Site south of Village Hall bounded by Adams, Lombard and Taylor. The site is owned by the Village. Mr. Grandy of the PD stated that his understanding was that a commitment was made to the local residents, by the Village when Village Hall was built, that this site would always remain open space. Some audience

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members stated that a DFA would be open space. The site will continue to be considered. A resident stated that the site was underutilized due to its topography but Mr. Grandy stated that the site was used for pick-up football. Mr. Mac Manus has seen toddlers using the site in the company of adults.

- IDOT property along I-290. Though this property on the North side of I-290, bounded by Harrison and Ridgeland, could made a very suitable site it was considered unlikely as it is owned by the state, may be considered by IDOT as part of a potential expansion of I-290, and we were informed by the Chicago Park District that IDOT had taken out a DFA that had been placed on IDOT property after a dog jumped a fence onto a roadway.
- Privately owned site on Garfield just east of the Post Office. This was considered a site with real potential. Mr. Balling informed the meeting that the site was considered for purchase previously by the PD. It may have environmental issues but the PD was still interested. The Trust for Public Land may potentially assist in the purchase of the site and the PD could pay the Trust back overtime. Grants may also be available. This site was also recommended by residents.
- 3 sites were considered in Rehm Park. The audience considered all of them unsuitable.
- 3 sites were examined in Maple Park; North, Center and South. Both the Northern and Southern sites were considered unsuitable. The central site, on underused basketball courts adjacent to the existing restroom and tennis courts, was considered a potential site.
- Other sites briefly discussed included:
- Columbus Park in Chicago, however, the Chicago Park District stated that they were not considering a DFA in the park and did not encourage us to pursue the issue.
- A number of privately owned sites that were ruled out as unlikely, including sites on Madison and on Marion Street Mall.
- Longfellow Park was suggested by a member of the audience but was considered unlikely due to the small size of the park, because it is used by the school and because the site would be very visible to residents.

7. Statements made by the public at the meeting included:

- Many suggestions were made for materials that could be used in the DFA. All had positive and negative attributes and more research is necessary.
- The Dog Park Plus use of Ridgeland Common is very important to Dog owners.
- This area is being used on a temporary basis with permission granted by the Cook County Department of Animal Rabies Control.
- Dog Park Plus promotes a sense of community and it allows larger dogs to get much needed exercise.
- The smaller sites recommended for DFA's should not replace Dog Park Plus.
- Some dog owners would prefer to continue with the temporary Dog Park Plus on weekend mornings rather than replacing it with a Dog Park.

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- Other dog owners who do not get the opportunity to use Dog Park Plus at Ridgeland due to other commitments would really like to have a DFA to use after work or at other times.
- Mr. Balling stated the Dog Park Plus was approved as a temporary facility by Cook County and that any efforts to establish it as a permanent solution would need the approval of the County.
- Are there any statistics on the size of dogs in NY? Their dogs may be smaller because of the population density and number of apartment dwellers.
- There are many large dogs in Oak Park because of the high number of private homes with gardens, but the numbers of smaller dogs are on the rise with the ongoing construction of condos and apartments.
- It would be very good to distribute the DFA's to reduce overuse.
- There are no ordinances that would restrict a DFA in Oak Park
- The DFA in Forest Park is heavily overused
- It is used by many residents of Oak Park
- They use wood chips over soil and have major problems with erosion.
- The temporary DFA in Ridgeland which uses wood chips over a concrete pad seems like a very good solution to erosion problems.
- Forest Park did not use a public process to select the DFA site and there has been public rancor over the issue.
- The collection of a petition and direct solicitation of local residents will be necessary prior to the installation of a DFA.

7. Mr. Balling summed up, stressed the need for public involvement, requested the attendees to remain involved and suggested that they send any comments or suggestions to him via email at garyb@oakparkparks.com. He then reminded the attendees of the date of the next meeting, Wednesday, March 8 at 7pm at Field Center, 935 Woodbine, and encouraged all to attend.

This is our understanding of what occurred at the meeting. If you have any questions, wish to make additions or changes to these minutes or require any additional information please do not hesitate to contact us, John Mac Manus, at cell phone number (708) 203.1081 or via email at john@altamanu.com.

Yours sincerely:

John Mac Manus
VP Altamanu, Inc.