Altamanu

Date: March 17th 06

Project: Dogs in the Parks, Master Plan
Focus Group Meeting Date: Tuesday March 14, 2006
Meeting Held: Park District Offices,
218 West Madison

Minutes of meeting

1. Diane Stanke of the Park District of Oak Park opened the meeting, welcomed the participants and 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.
    - The "Dogs in the Parks Master Plan" Process

2. Ms. Stanke introduced John Mac Manus of Altamanu Inc. who facilitated the meeting. Mr. Mac Manus gave a brief overview of the issues involved in choosing sites for a dog park and asked the participants for their opinions.

3. The participants were representatives of the Park District, Village and schools. Some of the participants were dog owners. All seemed to favor Dog Parks or made no negative comments about the concept of providing dog parks in Oak Park. The issues of cleaning up after dogs was constantly commented on and the attitudes of dog owners.

4. The following is a record of the statements made at the meeting :

    Dog owners should control their dogs and pick up after them.
    This is a problem throughout Oak Park
    Dog Owners should understand that not everyone loves their dogs
    They should understand that they are not the only ones who use the parks
    Why do they think they have the right to let their animals use public parks
    Dogs are not people
    If I had an elephant would the PD provide space for me to exercise it, having a dog is a choice by the owner not the Village
    I am sure that they love their dogs but members of staff have been bitten by dogs off leash in the parks.
    Their convenience should not be my difficulty

    Should be as stated in the master plan, 1.9 dog parks not 4

The size criteria was based on national basis but Oak Park is so underserved by open space
Dog Parks are good for building community
I am not a dog owner but we should serve the people's interest
Socializing for owners is good but they often do not watch their dogs.
My kids were knocked down by dogs in the park

Be sure of safety in design
Use 6 ft fences near streets
Stevenson has an 8ft fence around the skate park

Ridgeland Common

Current issues at Ridgeland include dog versus dog
Is there a potential of rocks and gravel falling down from the train?
Marching bands complain about feces
This is the most explosive issue
It will be the same with soccer and base ball
They have to take responsibility for cleaning up
If they do not, why should we let them into the parks?
My kids do not defecate in the parks
What about a supervisor to watch them?
Could be expensive
What about a dog cleaner upper?
Same
Then it must be the dog owners associations
Waste issues have been taken care of at Ridgeland
People let dogs out of cars to run in the parks and do not watch them or clean up after them
More calls about animal excrement every year
We are trying to change attitudes slowly, by advertising
Use peer pressure
How about signs?
People take them down as if they have the right too
Then it must be peer pressure or the life of dog parks will be short
The organizations will have to watch and let the PD know who is not following the rules
Then the PD should send those individuals a letter saying they should leave (stop attending) the dog park
Use FOOPD and volunteers
FOOPD will have to take responsibility
We could have volunteers with deputy badges
What about Police?
Too busy and it is too emotive an issue
They have real criminals to catch
Yes but something has to be done about dogs off leash in the parks
Yes I have to regularly to pick up my kids because dogs are scaring them

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Where do the most dog owners live?

Get Village Health Dept to map the dog licenses
There are 3,000 licensed dogs and up to 5,000
Great idea but most dogs are not licensed
Yes but they have to be to use the dog parks

Conflict of use

When we have Dog Parks Plus I can't use the park
But they use it at off peak hours

Stevenson Park as site for Dog Park

There will be more chance for conflict when the weather gets good
The park will be packed in the summer
In the evenings the skate park and basketball will be used
There can be 40-50 people there up until 8pm
It may be a good site but why this in an overcrowded park?
They are all overcrowded
There will be issues of teens swearing and adults complaining
We have to expect conflicts as teens will be teens and will push the envelope
We are trying to get more programs for teens
Why add a dog park
Dogs and younger kids do not mix
Teens will antagonize dogs and there will be complaints
Teens will be discouraged by having too many adults around

How can we make it work

But it is a good site how can we make this work?
Use a hedge of Privet 8 to 10 ft in height
Make the fence an art project
Use tennis screening
Only enter on the east side
Use mulch and trees

Taylor Park

No dog park before a master plan
Some people want to change the park completely
Swimming pool, ice hockey etc
And then there are the historic people, they will want to restore the park
We need to start again in Taylor, the money would be wasted
Taylor can turn into a bog in wet weather
I have seen ducks using the lower field

Ridgeland

Better than Taylor

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Same thing, there has to be a master plan
Lots of competing ideas
The dog park could only be temporary
This is a regional issue, use Thatcher Woods
It is Softball versus dogs and Softball will win if it comes to a crisis
Dogs have other options, it is difficult to play baseball on the street
There have been conflicts in the past
But you can schedule games
Is there a parking issue?
No and there is no conflict with the Farmer's Market
And there is the parking structure
300 spaces
The dogs urinate on the fence?
I do not want kids playing up against that
We can find a way to separate them

Site on Garfield

The Animal Care League uses the site
They are very careful in picking up after their animals
Site is a log term bet

Maple Park

People are organized
They complain about noise from Concrete Plant
Safety is an issue in the park
Better with dogs
Site is a dead zone now
We can improve this site

Mr . Mac Manus summed up, requested the attendees to remain involved and suggested that they send any comments or suggestions to him via Email. He then reminded the attendees of the date of the next meeting and encouraged all to attend.

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