Date:	April 4, 2006
Project:	Dogs in the Parks, Master Plan
Public Meeting Date:	Monday April 3rd, 2006
Public Meeting Held:	Carroll Center, 1125 S. Kenilworth, 7pm
Subject:	**A Potential Dog Park in Maple Park**

Minutes of meeting

1. Mr. Gary Balling, Executive Director of the Park District of Oak Park, opened the meeting, welcomed the attendees 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, including Working Group Meetings, Dog Park tours, the focus group meeting and public meetings
   - Dates of next public meetings

2. Mr. Balling introduced. John Mac Manus of Altamanu Inc. who facilitated the meeting. Mr. Mac Manus gave a brief summary of information gathered to date. This included:
   - 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 for DFA designs
   - Issues the public have with DFA's

3. Mr. Mac Manus addressed the list of criteria used for evaluating potential sites. The criteria were developed by Altamanu Inc. and the Park District. Representatives of FOOPD also added to the list of criteria. (Please see the copy of the PowerPoint presentation for these criteria)

   Mr. Mac Manus then described why Maple Park is being considered as a potential dog park site. The central area of the park has disused basketball courts adjacent to the existing restroom. The site has existing mature trees and some mounding. This is the largest site at 13,800 sq ft. It is important as it could serve the southern part of the Village.
   The Harlem edge of the park is extremely noisy and it is a suitable, potential site for the DFA. The park could be considered as being divided into the Harlem edge and the local edge. The local edge along Maple should be improved. The basketball courts are not used and the removal of the

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courts and new plantings and additional topography could improve this section of the park and screen a DFA from the residents.
The use of existing fences and the proximity of water and sewer could minimize costs.
There could be a separation between the tennis courts and DGA to prevent distraction for both the players and dogs.

4. As Mr. Mac Manus described the associated improvements that could be made to the park to integrate the Dog Park into Maple Park, a member of the audience interrupted the presentation and from this point on there was a general discussion of the issues. General statements made by the public at the meeting included but were not limited to the following:

The public voted for a referendum to give the Park District funds to improve the parks.
The improvements that were described should be made in Maple Park anyway and have nothing to do with a dog park and should not be tied to it in any way.
Residents do not want a dog park in their area.
There is too much going on in the park already.
There are existing problems with drinking and drug use at night.
Problems with outsiders coming into the park
The lighting is poor; it is dangerous in some parts of the park at night.
There are problems already with dogs running off leash in the park.
Residents complain about feces on their lawns and dogs off-leash, broken bottles, drinking, and drug use. A dog park will bring more dogs and outsiders.
The local police beat officer was present at the meeting and urged residents to call the police.
Why not go to the Forest Preserve?
The Forest Preserve does not allow dogs off leash.
There are too many dogs running off leash in the park as it is.
A dog park will provide an area for dogs off lease. No dogs should be allowed off-leash in the rest of the park.
Why was the dog park (Dog Park Plus) at Ridgeland closed by Cook County?
Because Cook County requires all dogs to be vaccinated.
Feces was not the issue? No it was not.
Everyone in this community has to deal with the same issues. There have always been problems with drinking in the parks. You have to call the police.
The residents of the area have to contend with Harlem and Roosevelt, major roadways, a concrete factory and now you want to add a dog park.
A dog park will be a blight. Dog owners were not responsible at Ridgeland Common.
I saw a person drop off their dog at Ridgeland Common and go to the Farmers Market.
This was before the Dog Park/Dog Park Plus opened.
What about feces? Dog owners are not responsible.
Ridgeland used to be an open field but it is now an organized dog park and the problems you saw are being dealt with. Members of FOOPD monitor the site. If someone doesn't pick up after themselves they are asked to leave.
If owners continue to abuse the dog park rules they will be asked not to attend.
Is the dog park monitored by the Park District during all open hours?
There is only a monitor on Saturday and Sunday mornings from 6am to 8am.

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The Dog Park will bring more problems.
Dogs will get loose.
A screen could also be used.
A fence along Harlem should be at least 6 ft high
Where is the local demand for a dog park here?

A representative from the Park District Citizen Committee was present at the meeting and explained that in the results of the community survey, the number one requested park facility was a walking/jogging path and a dog park was the 8th choice out of the top 16.In the Park District survey more people wanted Dog Parks than indoor pools.

It was actually the 8th choice out of 30 so there is a great demand.
We are local residents and we would like to see a dog park. We think a dog park is an attraction. It will raise property values.
What about parking?
Yes, there are already too many people coming to the park for T Ball.
Where will all the people park during T Ball?
The dog park is most active early in the morning, 6-8 am and in the evening. The times should not conflict with T Ball.
Oh yes it will. T Ball goes all evening.
In Forest Park the residents are very angry about their dog park.
They complain about the smell.
The Forest Park dog park does not follow Cook County regulations and may not remain open if they continue to ignore the regulations, so it is not a good example.There is no restriction on who can use it. People from outside the community come to use it and it is over crowded.
A dog park in Oak Park would be restricted to registered Oak Park residents. There would be a limited number of permits.
There should be a maximum number of dogs allowed.
How many are there at Ridgeland?
There is a maximum of up to 200 permits being issued but there is usually less than 4-5 dogs at a time..
The most I have seen in the park was 5 dogs, most of the time I am the only person there.
No owner can have more than 2 dogs in the dog park at any one time.
It is regulated by the local dog organization, FOOPD. If dog owners do not follow the rules they will loose their dog park privileges. In order to obtain a Park District dog permit, you must be an Oak Park resident, pay a fee of $39, and show proof of not only a Village dog license and rabies vaccination but several other vaccinations. Then you receive a dog park permit which must be worn at all times in the dog park.
The dog owners who use dog parks are usually much more responsible than other dog owners.
A dog park would have real controls and would make the park safer.
At the moment it is a free for all.
It would be better for kids – safer.
You have come here without a proper plan for us to look at and lots of “we hope to and we would like to”. But who is responsible for regulating the dog park? Who is going to clean up? Who is going to check on the people using it? How will the park be monitored?

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By the local dog org. FOOPD and by the Park District and if you see abuse of the park, you can call Animal Control.
I live in the area and I bring my dog to Beck Lake near O'Hare. There the dog park is monitored by the users and it works well.
Sounds like good intentions. You would like to control it; you would like to regulate it. But you have not said how you are going to regulate it.
We have real issues of drinking and homeless in the park. The police do nothing and now you are going to add another problem.
The local police officer addressed the audience:
The police will answer your calls. We are very aware of the problems in the neighborhood but you have to call. I have not had a call about dogs off-lease for a year but you complain about it. Instead call us. We will respond. Work together with us and we can do something about the problems.
Mike Grandy from the Park District stated:
We all live in the same community and share the same problems. I used to be a supervisor in Carroll Park and I kept taking names and license plates. get the plates of offenders so you can give them to the police. If you see something you don't like, just quietly go into your house and call the police and when they come, give them the plate numbers. It takes time but it worked in this park. Some of the trouble makers will go elsewhere but some of the offenders will stop. Work together, it takes time. Also there are the Park District night maintenance teams who are on duty from late April through October from 3:30pm to 1am, 7 days a week. They close up restroom facilities and check parks and programs. They have radios and are in contact with the police.

I have to clean feces off my lawn. I have a daughter and I do not want to be concerned about her safety. (This comment was repeated many times by the resident at other times during the meeting)
The dog park will bring more people to the park and that is the best thing for security. It has been proven that a well attended park is safer.
You say that but what I see is more people, more garbage, dirt and problems.
There will always be people who will mess it up for everyone else. That's just the way it is.
What about the noise?
We can use berms and plantings and tennis screening on the fences but I doubt if we will be able to block out the noise from Harlem.
Remember that we are all members of the same community. There are good people on both sides. Just because they have different opinions does not make them bad people. The problem is we have only 20% of the park space we should have and therefore we have problems of park overuse.
An attendee asked who will make the final decision. Gary Balling responded that the Park Board will make the final decision.

A dog park will bring a set of controls.
Better for family and kids.

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I live on the corner opposite the site. I am a dog owner. I clean up feces from my front garden all the time. It is part of living near a public park. But if you develop a dog park, you should do it well:

- There must be more than one dog park in Oak Park
  A FOOPD member stated we would like as many as we can get
- Do not have it open during T Ball season
- Add lighting for security (The police can't see into the park at night)
- Be careful with planting so you keep good visibility

We would like to see more than one park.
FOOPD: We would love to see 4.
When considering the number of dog parks, remember the Park District has to maintain them. We are currently considering on one or two dog parks.
Well you have to have more than one, you have to spread out the load.
Otherwise there will be more problems with drinking and drugs. It will attract more dogs, there will be nothing but dogs. Where will the kids go?
I am a resident. I am a dog owner. I don't have kids. I pay my taxes. I have been waiting for a dog park for years.

If you do this you should do it well. You will have to have more than one dog park. You have to spread the load so that we do not feel like we are the only ones. You should make sure you do it well. You have to make sure that you:

- Keep the park maintained - clean up the park
- Make sure there are real controls and monitoring of the park
- Make sure that it is aesthetic
- And open more than one at a time

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I like the idea of a walking path around the park. Are there going to be other meetings like this to discuss Maple Park. I have lots of other suggestions.
Executive Director Gary Balling stated a master plan is scheduled to be developed for Maple Park in 2007.
Yes there are other issues, like the lighting and not being able to see into the park.

8. Due to technical difficulties, the power point presentation prepared for the meeting could not be shown. Mr. Mac Manus asked any residents who would like to view the plan on Mr. Mac Manus' laptop computer and discuss the proposed plan for the dog park site to stay behind after the meeting.

9. Mr. Balling explained there are 3 more neighborhood meetings planned this week and next week. He thanked the audience for attending and taking part.

After the meeting attendees remained to discuss the site and other current concerns with Maple Park. Community members said they used the tennis courts and they could be modified but do not take away a court. Also, the area north of the courts (the play center) is very dark and a safety concern. Residents liked the idea of a continuous path system. The path system causes a safety concern at the moment as kids

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run out on to the road to get by the tennis courts. Residents again stated that if this proposal went ahead, the Park District would have to make sure they could maintain and regulate it.

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