Altamanu

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

Date: March 10, 2006
Project: Dogs in the Parks, Master Plan
Public Meeting Date: Wednesday, March 8th, 2006
Public Meeting Held: Field Center 7-9pm.

Minutes of meeting

1. Mr. Gary Balling, Executive Director of the Park District of Oak Park, opened the meeting, welcomed the attendees 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.
    - The "Dogs in the Parks Master Plan" Process, including Working Group Meetings, Dog Park tours, public meetings and the focus group meeting that will take place on Tuesday March 14th, 2006
    - Comments from and on the last public meeting
    - Dates of next public meetings

2. Mr. Balling introduced. Josephine Bellalta and John Mac Manus of Altamanu Inc. who facilitated the meeting. Mr. Mac Manus gave a brief summary of the last public meeting. 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
    - Recommendations on materials to be used in DFA's

2. Mr. Mac Manus then presented PowerPoint slides. The first slides showed all the sites that were considered by Altamanu Inc., the Park District, members of the public and the Working Group.

3. The sites had been evaluated using a series of criteria 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)

4. Some sites were ruled out initially as they were obviously unsuitable due to size, existing use and/or adjacent uses. After the application of all criteria 5 sites seemed to have potential for Dog Friendly Areas. They were:
   Taylor Park
   Ridgeland Common
   Stevenson Park
   Garfield (a privately owned site)
   Maple Park.

5. Mr. Mac Manus showed photographs of each site, read through the criteria and then opened the meeting for comment to discuss each site. Gary Balling and Mike Grandy of the PD joined in the discussions and offered their perspective and knowledge of the workings of each site.

6. The sites were discussed in detail; please see the PowerPoint presentation for full information on the criteria as they relate to these sites.

   Taylor Park – This site is considered important for a number of reasons: There are presumed to be more dog owners in the northern section of Oak Park and this is the only site still being considered north of Lake Street.

   Various sites considered within Taylor Park
   There was a discussion about various sites in the park including the NE corner, and the Western open meadow close to Ridgeland. These were considered unsuitable due to drainage problems and proximity of residences. The site on the north side near the picnic area was considered unsuitable due to proximity to residences.

   Site east of the tennis courts selected for consideration
   The site east of the tennis courts was considered by Altamanu and the PD as the only potential site in the park and there were concerns even with this site due to its proximity to tennis courts, a playground and memorial trees. It was noted that this is an historic park and real care would have to be taken to incorporate any DFA into the park. Mr. Balling has suggested an organic shape to the DFA which is considered appropriate for this site. Two schemes were examined. One set back 20 ft from the playground and another set over 40 ft from the playground. This second scheme was recommended by Diane Stanke of the PD.

   Historic park design
   The original design intent of the park's designer Jens Jensen must be considered. Residents questioned if the historic design intent was still evident. Mr. Grandy stated that there had been changes in the park but the topography remained intact. Mr. Mac Manus stated that DFAs had been incorporated into historic parks in NY and that this had been accomplished even in parks designed by Olmstead who is venerated in the Landscape Architectural profession. Mr. Mac

1700 W. Irving Park Rd.+ suite 202 + chicago, illinois 60613 + 773-528.7492 telephone + 773.305.0805 facsimile + info@altamanu.com

Manus had also discussed the design intent with Julia Bacrach of the Chicago Park District who is regarded as an expert on historic landscapes and the work of Jens Jensen in particular. Use of Jensen's planting palette, approach to definition of space, view sheds and compression of edge plating zones should be considered. Mr. Grandy stated that the use of mounding was unlikely as Jensen had not used mounding in this park and the natural topography was still evident. A resident asked if Jens Jensen had any associations with dogs. Mr. Mac Manus will investigate.

Residents asked if the playground could be relocated. This would be addressed when the master plan was carried out. The playground could not be moved east of the path as that would require fill and would change the topography.

The amorphous shape would provide spaces for both older and smaller dogs.

Cost for running a water line would be minimal.

Access to the DFA would be during regular park hours

Existing light standards could be used to light the DFA and this issue could be addressed in detail during the master plan.

Ridgeland Common -on the temporary site currently used as a DFA. The site is currently working well. Some issues with the entryway/air lock. It is too small and there are log jams. Wood chips tend to spread out under the gates and there are some drainage problems. These can be resolved.

The main issues may emerge as the park is used during the summer. The DFA abuts the baseball backstops. The park is used for Sports Camp and is packed with kids in the summer. We will have to see how both the park and DFA work in tandem. Mr. Grandy said his staff is already putting up netting to catch stray balls and some sort of screening will also be placed along the fence.

Dog Park Plus
FOOPD representatives again expressed their interest in keeping Dog Park Plus on this site. It 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. Mr. Balling stated that this area is being used on a temporary basis with permission granted by the Cook County Department of Animal Rabies Control and that any efforts to establish it as a permanent solution would need the approval of the County.

An attendee stated that other municipalities are also considering following a similar shared approach and hopefully there would be a positive resolution.

Stevenson Park - SE corner behind the reservoir and multi-use space. This was considered a site with potential. The existing fence and retaining wall could be used and therefore there is only a need for a new fence on the east and west sides.

1700 W. Irving Park Rd.+ suite 202 + chicago, illinois 60613 + 773-528.7492 telephone + 773.305.0805 facsimile + info@altamanu.com

PD staff at the park had concerns with the number of activities mixing dog owners and teens. The fence should be screened to minimize visual contact as it will be distracting for both the teens and the dogs.

The screening of the fence could become an art project.

The retaining wall could provide us with an opportunity to mound and create an interesting landscape.

There may be drainage issues and we will have to talk to the EPA due to the proximity to the underground reservoir. Mr. Balling pointed out that there are two reservoirs. There is one under the west ball fields as well.

PD still needs access through this area for trucks. This could be regulated to cause as little disruption as possible. Mr. Grandy stated that it could be as little as an hour during the day.

What about using Lake Street side for access? The park slopes down steeply to Lake Street. We would have to create a ramp to get in and that would take up valuable space in the park and disrupt baseball.

Privately owned site on Garfield just east of the Post Office - This was considered a site with real potential but as it is privately owned and as there may be environmental issues, it should be considered as a long term possibility.

Mr. Balling informed the meeting attendees that the site was considered for purchase previously by the PD. It may have contamination 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.

A DFA could improve the site by providing proper fencing and planting along the parkway.

A resident stated that the Animal Care League uses the site to exercise dogs and would the league be able to get access to the site when it became a DGA?

Residents in the area have expressed concern to the Animal Care League about dog waste on the streets. However, this problem may or may not be related to the League. The League also uses Maple Park.

This site has only one residence within 100 ft.

This site could be a good agility area for dogs.

1700 W. Irving Park Rd.+ suite 202 + chicago, illinois 60613 + 773-528.7492 telephone + 773.305.0805 facsimile + info@altamanu.com

A wooden fence along the I290 side could reduce noise.

The asking price for this site was $90,000 in 2000; however, it is one of the few sites in Oak Park that is unlikely to be developed as two proposals have already been rejected by the Village. This may impact the price.

Maple Park - 3 sites were examined in Maple Park; North, Center and South. Both the Northern and Southern sites were considered unsuitable. The central site, on disused basketball courts adjacent to the existing restroom and tennis courts, was considered a potential site. The site has existing mature trees and some mounding.

This is the largest site at 13, 800 sq ft. It is important as it would serve the southern part of the Village.

The Harlem edge of the park is extremely noisy and it is a suitable site for the DFA. The local edge along Maple should be improved. The basketball courts are not used and the removal of the 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 DFA to prevent distraction for both the players and dogs.

A screen could also be used.

The sound of balls hitting the fence will be deadened by the noise of the traffic, but we could see how it worked on site and make adjustments.

Some dogs like to bark and chase cars. This site will allow them to get lots of exercise along the Harlem edge.

The dogs will provide security to this part of the park.

Could the DFA be excavated? Only a little as we do not want to damage the roots of the existing trees.

Fence along Harlem should be at least 6 ft high.

Tennis courts are important and lighted courts even more so. These courts are used most of the year.

7. General statements made by the public at the meeting included:

1700 W. Irving Park Rd.+ suite 202 + chicago, illinois 60613 + 773-528.7492 telephone + 773.305.0805 facsimile + info@altamanu.com

- 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.
- Could we have grass? Only if we had a very large site so that sections of the DFA could be cordoned off and the grass allowed to regrow. This is very unlikely in Oak Park as there is just not enough space.
- Could there be Dog Parks Plus at Maple? Unlikely, we would have to fence off the area.
- Mr. Balling stated that Dog Parks Plus works better on fields with irrigation.
- Could we have a temporary fence which could be put up and taken down every day? It would be very expensive.
- The park should have separate areas for large and small and aggressive dogs.
- The areas for small dogs and puppies usually gets used for aggressive dogs.
- If two (½) acre parks were recommended and none of these park sites come close to this size, then why couldn't we have four dog parks? Mr. Balling said that this number is a guideline based on population and percentages. The fact remains that Oak Park has very little public green space.
- Mr. Mac Manus said that they had tried to maximize the size of each site under consideration but also did not want to eliminate any existing popular uses in the parks in order to reduce potential conflict.
- We should spread out the parks and have one in each of the northern, central and southern sections of the Village.

8. Mr. Balling concluded the meeting by stressing the need for public involvement, requesting the attendees to remain involved and suggesting 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.

9. After the meeting attendees remained to discuss and praise the process. One attendee vigorously recommended a DFA in Lindberg Park. The suggested site was discussed and PD officials felt it was too close to a ball field and residences. The attendee stated that the residents would not object. Later the attendee stated that he did not drive and any of the DFAs were too far away from his house to walk his dogs to them.

1700 W. Irving Park Rd.+ suite 202 + chicago, illinois 60613 + 773-528.7492 telephone + 773.305.0805 facsimile + info@altamanu.com