Date: April 5, 2006
Project: Dogs in the Parks, Master Plan
Public Meeting Date: Tuesday April 4th, 2006
Public Meeting Held: Stevenson Center, 49 Lake Street, 7pm
Subject: **A potential Dog Park in Stevenson Park**

Minutes of meeting

General: The meeting followed the same format as other community meetings

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.
    - A detailed description of the "Dogs in the Parks Master Plan" process
    - When individual Site Master Plans for each park will be carried out

2. Mr. Balling introduced John Mac Manus of Altamanu Inc. who presented the following:
    - Maps showing the location of all licensed and vaccinated dogs in Oak Park. There are approx. 2,500 licensed dogs in Oak Park and probably double that number in reality.
    - Dog ownership as shown on these maps is spread evenly across Oak Park
    - Information gathered by Altamanu Inc. from Parks Departments across the country addressing the planning process used to create Dog Friendly Areas (DFA's) the data shows that Dog Parks are the hottest issue for urban parks across the country.
    - Relative sizes of DFA's
    - Issues the public have with DFA's
    - Examples of DFA's
    - The design criteria used to select potential sites (see copy of PowerPoint presentation)

3. Mr. Mac Manus assured the meeting attendees that no decision has been made and all open spaces in Oak Park were examined for suitability. Some sites were ruled out initially as they were obviously unsuitable, due to size, existing use and/or adjacent uses.

4. The sites that have been selected as potential sites for further consideration included sites at the following locations:

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- Taylor Park
- Ridgeland Common on the site currently used as a DFA. Considered a site with potential.
- Maple Park which was discussed with residents at a community meeting the previous evening, and
- Stevenson at the SE corner between the reservoir and multi-use space and the elevated rail lines.

5. Mr. Mac Manus pointed out the site which could be seen from the room in Stevenson Center where the meeting was held. He then presented photos of the site and went through 3 pages of criteria developed by Altamanu Inc., the Park District and members of FOOPD that were used to evaluate the site at Stevenson.

6. He then opened the meeting up for discussion. Statements made by the public at the meeting included:
    - An entrance from Humphrey is probably a good idea.
    - An entrance there would give separation between the dog park users and the other areas of the park
    - Noise from the Skate Board Park was an issue with one attendee.
    - The skate park is not used in the morning when a lot of dog owners would be using the park.
    - When is the Skate Park the busiest?
    - The Active Sports Area (Skate Park and Basketball Courts) are open and used from March through November. They are busiest from April through September during the warmer weather.
    - Most popular after school
    - Very active from 3.30 until 8pm.
    - Skate Park is not used when it gets very hot in summer (no shade).
    - Concern was expressed that the park is heavily used now. How many dogs could we expect at a time?
    - I was at the dog park at Ridgeland from about 4 – 4-30 today and there were 7 dogs using the park. Usually it is less. While I was there the dogs were too busy running around and I did not hear them bark
    - Anyway this site is already very noisy with the trains.
    - This is unusual. In previous meetings it has been residents expressing their concern of noise created by the dog park. Here it is dog owners concerned about the noise from the Skate Park.
    - Is parking an issue?
    - No, there is parking on Humphrey and on Lake
    - It could be a problem if new activities and programs are added in the future, but there is no problem now. Most of the kids come on foot to the Skate Park and for Basket Ball.
    - How many Dog Parks will we have?

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- The Comprehensive Plan called for 1.9 Dog Parks, an unusual number but we are shooting for one or two.
- Many dog owners would like 3 or more.
- It is good to spread them out across the community.
- How will you make the decision on which sites will be used?
- Mr. Balling explained the planning process again and said that after all the sites have been evaluated and discussed publicly, the working group will discuss them with the Park District. Public sentiment will be taken into consideration and John Mac Manus will then make a final recommendation to the Park Board for their discussion.
- I prefer the site at Ridgeland. This site seems to me to be unsafe.
- I was hassled coming here tonight.
- We can add lighting to the park.
- I still would prefer another site. I want to go to a park I like to visit anyway such as Taylor. I walk my dog at Taylor and would like to be able to let my dog off-leash in a dog park there.
- There is the issue of trucks going through this site and the potential of dogs getting loose.
- Mike Grandy stated the ball field has to be dragged once a day but that the times for bringing a truck through the site were flexible and he was sure they could accommodate the dog park. He would do so when there was little activity and he was sure dog owners could curb their dogs for a short while.
- The site at Ridgeland has topography. The dogs like the mound.
- We could add topography to this site if Mike would allow it.
- I have already planted vines along the wall
- It could be possible to add ledges to the wall for the dogs to jump and exercise. We could work with dog owners to create a good park
- Is there the same amount of activity at Ridgeland?
- Yes all our parks are heavily used
- There's Baseball, Sports Camp, lots of activity during the high season.
- There is always a potential for conflict.
- What about here?
- The kids use their own language and it may be offensive to some of the dog owners.
- The kids may not want to see more adults on the site.
- We can use tennis screening on the fence as long as we keep some visibility.
- We could turn it into an art project.
- Mr. Balling gave some information about the mural project that could be happening this summer at Ridgeland Common elevated tracks.
- The kids could decorate the fence.
- There will be some adjustments by everyone. It is always the way.
- But Taylor would be my first choice
- And mine.

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- But there will be difficulties having a dog park at Taylor. It is close to the playground.
- It is an historic park.
- I prefer Ridgeland anyway.
- What about Dog Park Plus?
- The Dog Park Plus use of Ridgeland Common is very important to Dog owners.
- It promotes a sense of community and it allows larger dogs to get much needed exercise.
  Mr. Balling addressed this issue. Dr Parmer, from the Cook County Department of Animal & Rabies Control, had been invited to attend the focus group meeting to discuss this issue but he was unable to attend. I asked John Mac Manus to call him and discuss Dog Park Plus.
- Mr. Mac Manus informed the meeting that Dr Parmer stated that Oak Park would have to abide by the regulations and he did not think that Dog Park Plus could continue.
- A resident stated that Dr Parmer has his own convictions, but others may see it differently.
- It may become an issue in other communities soon as they try to find a solution for dog parks where there is very limited park land.

7. Mr. Mac Manus asked if anyone present was against a Dog Park at Stevenson, on the site discussed. The majority of the attendees stated that they would prefer dog parks to be located at Ridgeland and at Taylor but would accept this site if the others were not available.

8. Balling summed up, thanked the public for attending, stressed that the Park District wants to hear from the community and encouraged the attendees to remain involved. He then reminded the attendees of the dates of the next meetings and encouraged all to attend.

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