

**Park and Recreation
Green Dog Subcommittee
Town Hall, Room 103
Monday, February 12, 2019 7:00 p.m.**

Subcommittee Members Present: John Bain, Daniel Lyons, Jim Lyons, Nancy O'Connor, Michael Hackel, Nancy Madden, Rob Daves and Laurie Lasky

Subcommittee Members Absent: Sue Levy

Staff Present: Jessica Zarni, Administrative Assistant, Alex Cassie, Park Ranger, Erin Gallentine, Parks and Open Space Director

Guests Present: see attached

Welcome/Call Meeting to Order

E. Gallentine opened the meeting, and thanked everyone for coming out.

Agenda

Outcome of December Meeting

Problem Identification & Resolution

Green Dog Program Goals/Successes

Next Steps

Outcome of the kick-off meeting

1. The most significant problems with the program are clear and have been repeatedly expressed by dog owners, non-dog owners, park users and staff

2. The problem is not related to the Green Dog Program itself, but is an overall problem with compliance with the Town's Leash Law

3. The Committee needs to come up with an approach to address the biggest problems and present these to the public, Commission & Select Board

4. The Green Dog Program is not intended to, nor will it, solve all compliance issues regarding dogs in Town

5. E. Gallentine's goal is to Select 5 program changes to implement and roll out in 2019 and 5 program changes to implement and roll out in 2020

Recognized Program Challenges

1. Non-Compliance with Rules and Regulations

- Unregistered Users
- Evening Off-Leash Use
- Field Closure Compliance
- Dogs Outside Green Dog Areas

2. Confusion Regarding Program Parameters

E. Gallentine wanted to share with the Committee an email she received from a visitor of Schick Park. The person who wrote this email is upset about off-leash dogs and dog feces. E. Gallentine

stated that this is the type of complaint A. Cassie frequently receives. E. Gallentine discussed the ongoing issue of people moving the signs at Downe's Field. L. Lasky asked if there are certain parks that have more complaints than others; E. Gallentine stated that lately it is a town wide problem. A. Cassie stated that last week the fields were closed Tuesday through Friday; they found 35 dogs/dog owners on the fields that had posted 'field closed' signs. E. Gallentine discussed the compaction issue that comes from abusing the fields when they are closed; it significantly impacts the town's assets. L. Lasky stated that the Arnold Arboretum had issues that got worse and worse regarding noncompliance and they have shifted their approach and cracked down on noncompliant behavior. She is wondering if the Committee should reach out to them and ask about the changes they made and their success.

A. Cassie presented the Committee with two questions that fed into the survey. A. Cassie stated that the first question focused on park issues and the second question focused on things that we aren't doing that we should be doing. The results from the survey questions were shared with the Committee.

Historic User Complaints

- Feces Removal
- Disregard of Program by Non-Residents/Dog Walkers/Overcrowding
- Confusion regarding Program Parameters/Signage
- Request for Evening Hours
- Request for Enclosed Spaces & Double Gates
- Request for Dog Waste Bags & Receptacles
- Trash from Athletic Field Users
- Field Conditions

Non-Compliance & Unregistered Use

Problem: Enforcement is not effective

Action: Change Staffing Model

Existing: 1 Full-Time + 5.5 Seasonal Employees sharing all Park Ranger functions. E. Gallentine stated this model is failing because it is impossible to be in all of the parks all the time. She added that you can't have seasonal employees doing this level of work, as it requires very sophisticated communication skills and knowledge of the parks. E. Gallentine discussed the difficulty of filling these positions. She stated that A. Cassie is amazing and has a lot on his plate.

Proposed: 2 Full-Time (code enforcer and Park Ranger), 1 paid internship (1 year, that could be renewable for one year) & 2 Seasonal Employees.

1. Job description is complete

2. Budget request FY20, it has been presented to the Town Administrator.

Benefits: Professional Staff, Develop Relationships with Park Users, Support Programming for Green Dog, Assist with Enforcement, Proactive Communication, Community Building, Training, Longevity

Action: Amend Town Bylaw

This enables the DPW staff to issue fines for violations of leash law in public parks. M. Hackel stated that the Committee needs to think about how many citations are given before someone's license is revoked from the Green Dog Program. N. O'Connor stated that even if you revoke a person's license it is possible they may still go to the park, but more important is educating Green Dog and non-Green Dog participants about protecting our fields/investment. L. Lasky thinks there needs to be an opportunity to get back in the Program. She stated that there is so much to do and in thinking about the education piece, the Committee needs to think about what their goal is: to give people a new framework through which they can understand how their participation in Town with a dog is connected to community. She added that there are so many things to educate people about. M. Hackel stated that the Committee really hasn't taken the time to give Green Dog participants the numbers (pricing on fields/maintenance). He stated that people need to understand the associated costs and maybe it will prompt them to change their behavior. J. Carroll asked if the Green Dog Park Liaisons were successful in self-policing. E. Gallentine stated that they were early on, but dropped off dramatically in terms of success.

2. Submit for May 2019 Town Meeting.

Action: Police Enforcement

E. Gallentine, J. Bain and N. O'Connor had a meeting with the Brookline Chief of Police to work on a strategy for enforcing Town bylaws in the parks and protecting public assets.

Green Dog Program 2018 costs and revenue was discussed amongst the Committee. E. Gallentine stated that one item that will be a recommendation from this Committee before the full Park and Recreation Commission is an increase in fees. L. Lasky and E. Gallentine discussed how it has been over ten years since an increase. The Committee discussed how the increases would/could happen over time. N. O'Connor stated that the Committee should figure out the best model for an increase. R. Daves stated that there may be a push back with a high increase all at once and thinks education is very important. M. Hackel stated that, in collaboration with a price increase, the Committee may want to publicize some improvements the Town plans on making to the parks. N. Madden stated that the Committee can communicate that everyone can help keep the fees down by not overusing the turf and misusing the Town's assets. She stated that the Committee will need to be able to revisit the fees in the future. R. Daves hopes there will be more compliance through education. N. O'Connor stated that she is still not sure how the enforcement/education piece is going to work. N. Madden stated that while no one likes to pay more, she thinks those invested in the program will renew. E. Gallentine stated that a large issue is that people are showing up who don't have the tags. The Committee discussed how a lot of people do not know Brookline Avenue Playground is in Brookline. J. Bain stated that this program is a luxury and we should be able to raise the rates to accommodate it. M. Hackel discussed how Brookline Avenue and Downe's Field seem to frequently have dogs off-leash outside of designated off-leash hours. The Committee will put a pin in this and a working group will come up with some options regarding fee increases. M. Hackel pointed out that whatever fee recommendation the working group comes up with, there will not be an increase for the dog license. A. Cassie discussed the number of unlicensed dogs in Town. E. Gallentine discussed prorating the Green Dog fee in certain instances. She stated that this is important for those that are new to Brookline, enabling them to have a fair fee. This will also help with dogs that need to

be 6 months old to enter into the program. M. Hackel discussed the possibility of offering incentives to veterinarians and adoption agencies.

Confusion Regarding Program Parameters

Action: Create Park Profiles & Review Green Dog Locations

1. Create a profile of each Green Dog Park, Alex Cassie discussed these profiles
2. Review location, hours, and complaints in each Green Dog Park
3. If necessary, create a priority plan to communicate site specific problems
4. Review Green Dog Park locations

Action: Update Agreement signed by all Green Dog Participants/Dog Licenses

Action: Review Rules and Regulations,

The Committee discussed the code of conduct. L. Lasky asked how the Committee would define rough play. A. Cassie stated there is no written definition it comes down to patterns of violent incidences or behavior, but they have behavioral check boxes to look at that are incident driven. L. Lasky thinks it would be helpful to have input from an animal behaviorist. She knows that many times normal dog behavior is viewed by some as aggressive behavior. L. Lasky and M. Hackel discussed adding a rule that requires the owner's eyes and attention to be focused on their dog.

E. Gallentine stated that in regards to rules and regulations, one commonly discussed matter is the notion of not allowing unneutered dogs to be part of the program. M. Hackel discussed a few incidents that he had with unneutered dogs. L. Lasky wanted to point that not all unneutered dogs are aggressive. M. Hackel stated that while they maybe not aggressive, they often generate bad behavior in other dogs because neutered/spayed dogs will respond to them negatively. R. Daves stated that when he sees an unneutered dog he keeps his distance. He thinks it's too harsh to be predetermined. N. Madden stated that there is a growing trend of waiting longer to neuter your dog. D. Lyons and A. Cassie discussed a few occurrences of people having to been removed from the program due to aggressive dogs.

Action: Review Signage Plan

1. Review Signage at each Park
2. Create New Sign with Color of Annual Color of Dog Tag & Clear Language

Action: Improve Communication Plan

1. Review Communication Tools and Better Advertise
2. Update Brochure/Simplify Brochure to most important concepts (Insert)

Action: Create a Friends of Green Dog Program

E. Gallentine stated that when the Town first started the program, the liaisons were great partners with communication and enforcement. She stated that over time, compliance went down and it became a less desirable role for these liaisons. They didn't want to be enforcers, they wanted to be ambassadors. N. O'Connor suggested a Friends of Green Dog Program. N. Madden stated that if someone gets their dog license and or Green Dog tag, the Committee could suggest that they

are now a member of the Friends of the Green Dog Program. She stated that everyone is already part of it, it's inclusive, and the members can help to build a park by park identity. She discussed the possibilities of parties, coffee hours and cleanup events. R. Daves stated that if you give it a name it gives it a voice. E. Gallentine loves this idea and thinks it is a value add. M. Hackel stated that Friends is great branding, he thinks we need to create a community at every single park. A. Cassie wanted to point out that results from the survey stated that dozens of people would like to be liaisons. J. Carroll stated that when the Committee first started the program, it was on a trial basis. Over time, it was instituted permanently, but now the Committee is observing serious challenges in the program. He suggested putting a sign at each park and inviting visitors to rank the park in terms of success in the context of this program. L. Lasky discussed maybe experimenting with temporary closures, and requesting that people adhere to the rules and regulations or risk losing the program altogether.

Friends of Green Dog

- Communicate challenges or ongoing issues back to Green Dog Program management
- Communicate with other park visitors and dog owners
- Compile feedback
- Share program experiences and insights
- Build and foster community connections
- Promote investment in the success of the Program
- Supported by Parks and Open Space Division

Historic Complaints

Request for Evening Hours

- Develop Criteria for Parks with Evening Hours
- Review Possibility of Year Round Evening Hours at Designated Parks

Request for Enclosed Spaces & Double Gates

- Review criteria for enclosed dawn to dusk dog runs
- Establish process and pilot for pop-up enclosed dog runs
- Evaluate and build permanent dog runs if successful

Aerial shots of possible locations at Brookline Avenue, Corey Hill (passive side), Pond Avenue and Chestnut Street parking lot, Robinson Playground, Soule Recreation Center, Warren & Eliot Playground, Larz Anderson Park, Waldstein Playground, Boylston Street, Schick, Coolidge Playground, Putterham Woods, Griggs Park and Knyvet Square for dog runs was discussed amongst the Committee. There was a discussion around possibly removing/or in conjunction with Green Dog morning hours, offering evening hours for these dog runs in a few selected trial areas. L. Lasky wanted to point out that this shifts the model of neighborhood parks for dog owners, she thinks these are for little dogs that are not well trained. M. Hackel stated that outside the school system, the parks are our most valuable asset. He thinks this allows everyone to be happy, it adds something that we are not offering. E. Gallentine discussed the recommended site selection criteria for a fenced in dedicated dog park handout that can use be used as a jumping off tool for the Committee.

Request for Dog Waste Bags & Receptacles

- Discuss Dog Waster Bags/Special Receptacles as part of dog run pilot

Trash from Athletic Field Users

- Patrol parks, remove trash, document problems and communicate with AFU

Athletic Field Conditions

- Develop parameters for Athletic Field Condition Review
- Document, Address & Communicate Problems

Green Dog Program Goals

❖ Green Dog program goals

1. Provide an opportunity for people to have off leash time with their dogs
2. Reduce complaints from dog owners & non-dog owners in all Town parks
3. Improve neighborhood & community connections

❖ Success is defined as:

1. Effective sharing of parks and open spaces
2. Dog owners enjoying parks while not causing harm to the parks or interfering with other users
3. Involves compromises – not everyone’s needs can be met ALL the time, but the hope is that by meeting MORE people’s needs, we can all enjoy the parks and open spaces in our town
4. Win/win situation for park users:
 - Dog owners have an “outlet” during specific times
 - Reduction in conflicts for other park users – resulting from dog owner compliance with program rules and regulations

Updated Green Dog Program Goals

Green Dog Program Goals

1. Provide people with legitimate exceptions to the leash law to have quality off leash time with dogs.
2. Foster respect among all park users enjoying precious park space for different reasons.
3. Make Brookline parks the best they can be for the most people
4. Foster understanding that any off leash program exists in the larger context of the leash law; it is complimentary to it, and meant to enhance compliance with it.

Success is Defined as:

1. Dog owners observing leash law as required.
2. Dog owners cleaning up after their dogs.
3. Dog owners understanding and having flexible attitude toward any shortening of off leash hours due to weather, field conditions, or the needs/uses of others (permitted sports, school based activities, field maintenance).
4. Expectations of use reliably met: dogs on leash as required, clean up done as required.
5. Enhanced appreciation of the multiple needs of park users, the values of our parks and open spaces, and the responsibility all users share to protect our common spaces.

Action items

1. Changing staffing model

*The Committee is in agreement this is a step in the right direction.

*Sub Committee of Advisory 5/12/19

2. Amend Bylaw (The Committee supports this)

*This will be assigned to Subcommittee of Advisory TBD

3. Police Department Enforcement and Collaboration

*J. Bain N. O'Connor and E. Gallentine will continue to work on this.

4. Recommend changes to Rules and Regulation

*The Committee will continue the discussion around neutering

5. Review Existing GD locations

* Green Dog location profiles (A. Cassie L. Lasky M. Hackel, J. Bain and D. Lyons)

6. Improved communication plan and signage (S. Levy, E. Gallentine, R. Daves and J. Carroll)

*Brochure/signs/program-at-a-glance

7. Create a participant agreement/code of conduct

*The committee will send notes

8. Recommended fees for 2020

*The small group will meet again and come up with three scenarios.

* Financial Aid/Scholarship Fund for Green Dog was discussed.

9. Create friends of Green Dog Program

*R. Daves and N. Madden have agreed to kick this off

10. Evaluate and recommend pilot dog run areas. (N. Madden, M. Hackel, J. Bain, N. O'Connor, D. Lyons and Jim Carroll)

*E. Gallentine stated that for this matter, the Committee will need a sub group and all of the Commissioners should be on it. It needs to be brought back to the full Park and Recreation Commission. The Committee will need to develop a process to let the neighborhood know.

J. Bain moved to adjourn. Seconded by D. Lyons. All in favor.