

**Park and Recreation
Green Dog Subcommittee
Town Hall, Select Board Hearing Room
Monday, June 3, 2019 6:00 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/Approval of the minutes

J. Bain opened the meeting, and thanked everyone for coming out.

N. O'Connor moved for approval of the minutes April 29, 2019 Green Dog Subcommittee Minutes. Seconded by D. Lyons. All in favor.

E. Gallentine introduced herself and detailed the Agenda. She stated that she has been with the program since the beginning. E. Gallentine discussed the makeup of the subcommittee. The Committee is interested in ideas, what the Green Dog Program means to you and what might make it better. She know how important this program is to the community and how it helps build a community.

Agenda

Program History

Role of Subcommittee

Green Dog Program Goals

Communication

Costs & Revenue

Friends of the Green Dog Program

Green Dog Survey Results

Open Discussion/Feedback

The Subcommittee members introduced themselves.

N. Madden addressed the audience.

What is the Green Dog Program?

1. Innovative recreation program that allows dogs to enjoy time off-leash during specified off-leash hours at established parks. She stated that a lot of people worked hard to create this program and there was no program like this. She stated that it was innovative and it was an idea to find a way to enjoy Brookline's parks and Open Spaces, to have a shared use of beautiful open spaces with dogs and their humans.
2. Off-leash hours are generally Dawn to 9 am or Dawn to 1 pm – with winter dawn to dusk @ 3 parks. It was designed to augment the leash laws, make them better and allow the leash laws to give more.
3. There are 14 Green Dog parks across the Town. She stated that what this is about is that the Green Dog Program is at its best brings people and dogs together. It allows for recreation and socialization. Friendships, lasting bonds and a sense of community have formed from this program.
4. Program rules and regulations help ensure this shared use approach meets the needs of dog owners & other park users. She stated that it at its best it helps to implicate a culture of stewardship, the idea of everyone having a stake in our parks.

N. O'Connor detailed the Green Dog Program timeline. She stated that she has been with the program since the beginning.

2001- Initial thoughts by Parks and Recreation Commission regarding the creation of an informational pamphlet outlining dog etiquette in the parks. Several dog owner groups approached the Commission regarding the potential for legal off-leash opportunities. She stated that we formalized something that was already going on. She discussed the numerous meeting at various parks that took place with the neighbors/dog owners.

2001-2003- Commission met for 2 years with community and petitioned Town meeting to allow pilot program: significant time and negotiation with the public on locations and hours. Green Dog Pilot Program first permitted by Town Meeting with *sunset provision* of June 2005. N. O'Connor discussed the work that was done with Cambridge regarding this program.

2004- Green Dog Program Kickoff event at Brookline Avenue Playground

2006- Town by-laws amended through Town Meeting to fully establish the Green Dog Program as a permanent program. The Parks and Recreation Commission designated off-leash areas at specified parks, subject to dog owner etiquette and education, public review, and annual evaluation. She stated that back then we were talking about education, we were not about ticketing.

Parks and Recreation Commission approves the inclusion of Winthrop Park as dawn-to-dusk off-leash area following the petition from a neighborhood group. Complaints regarding noise and degrading park conditions lead to reduced hours and then removal from the Program

2008- Boylston St Playground assessed/added as a dawn to 9AM off-leash site
Green Dog Advisory Committee: discussion and proposal of membership fee

2009- New townwide communication strategy, signage and establishment of Green Dog website. Fees introduced and issued with licenses through the Town Clerk office.

2010- Rules and Regulations updated by Parks and Recreation Commission: emphasize that dogs that exhibit aggression will be prohibited from participation in the Green Dog Program.

2012-“He’s Just Being Friendly – Dog Park Etiquette 101”: a free seminar offered to Green Dog Program participants to learn important tips and guidelines for safe and fun off-leash play

2013- “Friday Night Lights” – Evening, lit off-leash hours for Green Dog Program participants at Brookline Avenue Playground

Formation of Dog Park Subcommittee, with goals of:

1. Develop site selection criteria for a designated Dog Park
2. Develop design criteria for a designated dog park (usability)
3. Make recommendation to Parks and Recreation Commission as to whether or not the subcommittee favors construction of an enclosed Dog Park and where that location(s) might be.

2014- Dog Park Subcommittee determines that there are currently no sites in Brookline that meet their established criteria for a dawn to dusk off-leash site. She stated that what she found out was that a lot of people did not know the background on how we go to the program we have now.

2018-“Office Hours” with Parks and Recreation Commissioners at all Green Dog locations to receive feedback on the Program

Formation of new Green Dog Subcommittee to collect information relating to Green Dog town wide, evaluate the program, and advise changes/improvements. She stated that the Green Dog Program is at the will of the Park and Recreation Commission.

D. Lyons presented the role of the Subcommittee portion of the meeting.

- **Review and update goals of the program.**
- **Review definition of success**
- **Create an Evaluation Strategy**
 - **Review Green Dog Parks/Locations/Criteria**
 - **Review Rules & Regulations**
 - **Review Compliance**
 - **Program & Park User Satisfaction**
 - **Review Program Fees/Revenue Model**
 - **Review Communication Tools/Signage**
 - **Review Staffing, Education & Enforcement**
- **Create recommendations – short and long term**

D. Lyons discussed Historic Complaints/ Challenges

- **Non-compliance with Rules and Regulations especially:**

- Off leash hours/locations
- Temporary suspensions for maintenance or field conditions
- Not picking up dog waste
- **Disregard of Program by Non-Residents/Dog Walkers**
- **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**

He stated that we want to breathe new life into this program and we don't want to lose it. He stated that this committee has gone a long way to make this happen. He stated that we are here to listen and hopefully in the end we will be in a better place.

J. Carroll discussed the Goals and Definitions of Success

He wanted to start off by express how fortunate he is to live in the Town of Brookline. He stated that all the services and resources available are important treasure and to be able to come together and have open discussion like this makes him feel very fortunate. He wanted to thank E. Gallentine and her team who go above and beyond to provide all the amenities and services we could wish for in these parks.

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.

Communication

J. Bain stated A. Cassie is a wealth of knowledge and the Town is lucky to have him. He stated that he can say enough about him and has witnessed his expertise.

A. Cassie introduced himself, he stated that his goal is education and promote what the program is all about. He listed the communication tools that are used. The goals through these suites of education tools is provide as much as information as possible, why it is a good thing and why it is important to follow these rules to allow people to get the most benefit out of the program.

1. Website
2. Signage (This is being worked on in the subcommittee)
3. Twitter
4. Site Visits
5. Email

The Cost of running the Green Dog Program vs Green Dog Program Revenue of 2018 was detailed.

Alex detailed both costs and what goes into them

M. Hackel stated that he wanted to share a little about his journey. He has been a resident for 53 years and he grew up abutting Dean Park. He stated that the power of the school system is most valuable asset they we have in our community. He adopted a dog five years ago and he had no idea about the power of the parks. He stated that having a built in community helping him understand what its like to have a dog is just amazing. M. Hackel discussed interaction he has in the past with Alex and the former Brookline animal control officer. He stated that the best investment he has made is the Green Dog Program. He stated that it costs less than a cup of coffee and he gets to meet people . He becomes a better person by being a dog owner and by being a part of this community.

Operating costs and the operating revenues that are generated through the licensing was discussed. This committee has gotten together to look at the data, he stated that we have 1400 residents and the cost project is 143,000. He stated that we are looking at a number of different sceneries for residents/nonresidents for price increase. These scenarios were detailed on a graph. He stated that in the last 10 years there has been no cost increase to these programs.

A slide based on program fees by visit frequency, on an 11-month(fields are typically closed in March) year was detailed. The Resident and non-green dog fee was detailed by daily, weekly and monthly.

J. Bain stated that we are here tonight to present the issues put forward and the feedback is the biggest reward we could have for tonight's meeting. The cost increases are being looked at.

R. Daves and N. Madden presented the Friends of The Green Dog Program

R. Daves stated that we are in the middle of this, we have met three times and no decisions have been made. He thinks the commission and staff has done amazing things in Brookline for the parks. He thinks this program needs advocates, he thinks there should be a group for one of the biggest user groups in town. It would be educational, social and serve as an advocacy function to get feedback. N. Madden stated that this is something we are developing and would start

officially in the fall. She stated that this program is a community, having a group in which we are all included and have access to will help strengthen this program.

Purpose:

- Provide forum for Program users to communicate with one another and Parks & Open Space Division staff
- Advocate for Program and Program improvements
- Build positive relationships with Parks & Open Space Division, Police, park abutters, and other park visitors
- Welcome and include new Program members
- Enhance understanding of Green Dog requirements and increase/promote compliance
- Organize social events or dog-related programming and opportunities

Goals by end of 2019:

- Members from every Green Dog location
- Host 2 Friends of the Green Dog Program events (Kickoff + one other)
- Host one session with Green Dog administration to discuss issues

R. Daves stated that A. Cassie will let the All Green Dog Participants know who there will be an organizational date.

A. Cassie presented the findings from a Green Dog satisfaction survey and compared them to the survey findings of 2011.

J. Bain opened the meeting up to the discussion portion.

N. O'Connor and A. Cassie discussed having something on the application regarding the Friends of Green Dogs. SHE asked A. Cassie that at the next annual user group meeting make a note for recreation to talk to user groups about the trash issues. She is sure she brought it up in January but it's something that needs to be louder

Charlie Golay addressed the Committee. He is a nonresident member. He stated one of things in his group (Harry Downes) is that they don't go to the park on weekends because of lack of enforcement. It is so many strange people, it's scary. He discussed some of the interactions regarding enforcements he has seen by Sukhmnai, seasonal park ranger. He hasn't seen her as much. A. Cassie stated that we can't be there all the time every day, they have to spread themselves over all the parks and responsibilities outside the Green Dog. C. Golay stated that in regards to increasing the cost of fees and he doesn't think 100 a year for resident and 150 a year is out of line at all.

Michelle Russell-Einhorn addressed the subcommittee. She said she is going to speak on behalf of a few of her dog walking colleagues that couldn't be here tonight. First, she would like to state that she has universal support for the program and echoes everything people said. She stated that regulars mostly who are people who pick up after their own dogs and remind others who haven't picked up after their fogs. She stated that you can spot the non-licensed users, they do not look after their dog. She stated that the trash is a huge issue and thinks there needs to be an enhanced message that it's a shared space. She discussed incidents of one dog as having 2 episodes of eating edibles at Amory. Her dogs have eaten two pacifiers. She stated that there are a lot of

different people using it and they are not keeping track of the trash. She stated that the responsible users are trying to maintain very hard to maintain park so they do not lose privileges of using the park. She stated that people universally like having the rangers come to Amory, they said they would be in favor of increases licensing fee, longer hours, and issuing tickets for noncompliant program users. She discussed the issue of people not closing the gates and ignoring the no dogs allowed in Halls Pond Sanctuary. She also wanted to bring up the issue Park and Recreation trucks driving on the paths and tearing up the field.

Susan Baylus addressed the Committee. She wants to echo everything that has been said. She supports increasing the fees. She does feel that if you ask for more you need to give more. She acknowledged that there big issue with noncompliance. She thinks we need to have some evening hours. She happened to see some information for a town meeting member that showed a number of incidents between, dog-and-person and dog-and-dog. She thinks it's important to share information with dog owners. She didn't know there were 97 incidents and thinks it is important for people to understand how many of these incidents occur. She stated that the trash is ridiculous.

Sharon Hogan addressed the subcommittee. She agrees with the statement that if you are going to ask for higher fees than you need to offer more. She stated that the trash is out of control, there are pizza boxes, beer cans and cigarette butts left everywhere. She stated that you know who held the permit from the night before and she doesn't understand why people are not fined for leaving behind trash. She stated that it's not just us being compliant; it is about the Town working together. She thinks we can do more to get more revenue. She thinks if you had a pop up event with a credit card reader at Brookline Avenue you would be registering people and collecting money. M. Hackel thinks that is a great idea. N. O'Connor stated that we are trying to compile ideas and try to incorporate them. E. Gallentine stated that what we have been doing is, we have a trash truck going out 7 days a week managing 120 sites. She stated that the volume of trash is insane. She stated that we have been reaching out to Recreation Department, it is a different department that provides the permits and it as different department and we have been reporting to them all the complaints. She stated that we do follow up, we take the phone calls, emails and forwards pictures to Recreation. She stated that along with Recreation we are updating the policy around field use and allocation; we are looking at strengthening the language around litter collections and looking at stricter fines.

Sandra Pelkie addressed the subcommittee. She uses Brookline Avenue. She wondered if we could get something like type of sliding fee for those who can't afford it, especially the elderly. E. Gallentine stated that we do that now. She stated that there are issues with urination on top of the trash. She stated that no one takes care of Brookline Avenue and she has taken it upon herself to clean up the beds and put in flowers. There is nothing dangerous to dogs and kids, she weeds the beds and there are bags full of stuff that needs to be picked up next to the dumpster.

Adrienne addressed the Subcommittee. She stated that at Amory some trash containers were eliminated from the park with the logic that she found hard to understand. She stated that if there is so much trash, plus fewer trash cans and you don't have power to collect trash she doesn't understand that logic. E. Gallentine stated that we have moved to trash and recycling hubs with a solar trash compactor at the entrances to park. The solar compactors hold 5 times the volume.

She stated that the reason why we are moving to this model because of the volume of sights and trash cans. It is efficiency, it is safety for the public, and help damage to the park's. She thinks we need a better PR campaign. She stated that where we have the trash problem, is litter spread throughout the park. She stated that the pizza boxes don't fit in any containers we have and in some parks we have put seasonal toters out.

Stuart Sylvestri addressed the committee. He remembers talking about trash to E. Gallentine a few years ago and he thought some party permits include a disposal fee. He has heard people are told its okay to leave trash. E. Gallentine will check with the Recreation Department on this.

Matt addressed the Subcommittee. He has three dogs and at this point he is using Brookline Ave. He understands that the new trash bins hold five times the amount, but most of the trash piles up around the baseball field He walks around and cleans up. He stated that there is no smoking allowed in the parks, but he finds a number of cigarette butts on the ground around the baseball field.

Wallis Ramer addressed the Subcommittee. She stated that over 30 years ago she was ticketed for taking her dogs off leash. She is so excited that after using Brookline Avenue recently there is a real place to take your dog off leash. She wanted to thank everyone who has worked so hard over the years on this program. She stated that it's an amazing program and proven tonight these people tonight are the stewards of the park. They are going around cleaning and picking up trash. She stated that today she was at Brookline Avenue and there was a tractor grooming the diamond putting out lines, she realized we are not supposed to have their dogs off leash while they are maintaining the parks. However, she wanted to point out that other dog owners were not aware of this. She stated that when workers are there if they maybe put up a sign up like parks closed sign, it would help to educate people because people don't seem to know.

A resident addressed the subcommittee. She stated that the workers come and mow during Green Dog Hours and she wonders why this couldn't happen after 1 o'clock. She realizes there are schedules, but wonders if this has been taken into consideration. E. Gallentine stated that the union labor force works from 7am to 3pm and they have staggered the time to best of their ability to minimize overlaps where they can. The athletic field have every specific needs and we are doing the best we can to minimize that.

Willy Osbourne addressed the subcommittee. He lives at 22 Emerson Street. He would like to thank the subcommittee for the great work that has been done so far. He has one issue that concerns him and it relates to Emerson Garden. The issue is the start time of the off leash which is currently dawn. He stated that in summer you can run dog off leash at 5 am, and in the summer and in the winter you have to wait till 7. The off-leash program is noisy and the owners are yelling. He thinks fencing off that little section of the playground will go a long way. He stated that all noise is joyful and fine expect what it occurs before 7 am. He stated that in order to make Emerson Garden off leash Program a better neighbor and provide those in the immediate vicinity some acoustic relief, he is proposing you modify the start time to 7 am on weekdays and 8 am on weekends (which lines up with noise control bylaw). He spoke to a few neighbors and has received strong support and has circulated a petition. He attached the petition with the signatures to his formal statement and provided that to the subcommittee.

Sherman Telchman addressed the subcommittee. He stated that it's a remarkable privilege to live in Brookline and to be part of the program and have service you provide. He lives opposite Coolidge Park. He stated that the times he is there is he sees an extraordinary community, but he has been a number of times encountered when people anonymously complain about off leash and the police have shown up to tell us we have been reported. He stated that if people are going to complain about any behavior at Coolidge, he would like to know who they are. He isn't sure if this is just harassment. He stated that the interactions he has had with the park rangers have been extraordinary and he would like to commend David Chung the animal control officer. He discussed the interaction he had with him regarding a vicious dog. His thinking is that at Coolidge itself, they are willing to tax themselves to put a fence up adjacent to the tennis court. He stated that the abutters have no issues with considering this. He stated that fencing off an area will allow for dogs can be off leash beyond the time restrictions. E. Gallentine stated that it would be interesting to talk to the neighborhood more about something like that. He thinks the budget is out of whack; he thinks there should be a way to subsidize this in a meaningful way. His remediation is that we go to go to dog shops on Harvard, the groomers any places that could support this program and ask for sponsorships. He agrees with sliding scale, but from his point of view 100 dollars is ludicrous and thinks this program should not be running at a deficit. He would be more than happy go to these business enterprises and ask for support. N. O'Connor stated that David Cheung is the animal control officer and with the Police Department. She stated that she is Very interested in following up with those sponsorships. S. Telchman discussed fining permit holders for leaving behind trash and wondered why we can't have a larger dumpster to dispose of the pizza boxes/larger trash. A. Cassie and Sherman Telchman discussed the Green Dog Tags.

Amy Traverson addressed the subcommittee. She wanted to second the idea for an enclosed area at Coolidge, she thinks it is a completely unused part of the park. She would love to have legal evening hours.

Vicky Solar addressed the Subcommittee . She is a non-resident and loves being part of this program. She is wondering if the Friends of the Green Dog Program wouldn't be the type of support to use for the pop-up to get the people registered. She stated that there are frequent closures because of groups of people permitting at Harry Downes, however most times she goes there and there is never any athletic activity taking place. She thinks communication needs to be a little clearer. She stated it not infrequent there is no athletic activity. E. Gallentine stated that Alex posts what we get from the Recreation Department, but stated that that maybe something she can work on with the high school so we can release those hours. A. Cassie stated he has been getting similar issues and he spoke with the athletics director and some of this will be unpreventable because of back up fields, but A. Cassie calls him regularly to get updates from him. She has noticed dog walkers at Harry Downes and wants to know if they need to register. E. Gallentine stated that they are supposed to register and they are not supposed to have more than 3 off leash dogs at one time.

Gordon Bennett addressed the subcommittee. He supports Willy OSbourne's proposal. He stated that Emerson is a garden, surrounded by homes and it's an intimate small space. He stated that the dog owners tend to congregate in the same place and this has caused compaction. area. He

would like to see this issue addressed in the rules, so owners are aware of the damage they maybe causing themselves.

A resident addressed the subcommittee. She believes that accountability is an important thing. She wanted to point out that there is aggression and there are dog interactions, and she thinks people need to learn the difference. She thinks the dog run is a great idea, but to her if there is only one it's a big concern to her.

Tom Johnson addressed the subcommittee. He thinks the survey reflects the sentiment of most of the users and ideas highlighted tonight. He knows it's a challenge with trash cans, but there is a direct correlation between removing a trash can near a bench/picnic table. He thinks the program is wonderful and E. Gallentine is fantastic. He isn't sure how much benchmarking is done comparing costs most to other cities. He wonders how 100 dollars compares to other cities/towns.

J. Bain stated that we heard a lot of great ideas/information tonight and everything has been recorded. J. Bain stated that it is a great program, he heard the issues about trash loud and clear, he is grateful for the turnout tonight and the subcommittees ears are open.

A timeline was discussed.

Meeting adjourned.