

DOG MANAGEMENT IN SAN MATEO COUNTY PARKS COMMITTEE

Building 455 County Center, Redwood City
4th Floor, Room 405

Notes from Meeting

November 21, 2016

Members Present: Nic Erridge, Darrick Emil, Chris Johnson, Rafael Avendano, Aaron Gonzales, Jim Sullivan, Faye Brophy, Christine Corwin

Staff: Marlene Finley, Carla Schoof, Sarah Birkeland

Facilitator: Pat Brown

The meeting started with a brief review of process agreements (see below) and the introduction of the use of a “parking lot” to track issues of interest that are not on the agenda or need more time for discussion.

The notes from the Committee meeting of October 17, 2016 were approved as presented.

There was no public comment.

The Committee then received the following information:

1. **Best Practices for Dog Parks and Trails** (dog behavior) – Maria Eugren, Peninsula Humane Society made the following points:
 - It is prudent that dogs should be on leash until their owners know how they will react in a situation.
 - Those accompanying the dog should pick up its waste.
 - Known aggressive dogs should not be brought to parks/dog play areas.
 - Dog parks and other parks are not areas for rehabilitating dog behaviors.
 - Under-socialized dogs should not be brought into a setting with other dogs – it may make them more fearful.
 - Dogs under 4 months of age should not be in parks because they are not fully vaccinated and they may become fearful.
 - Dog parks should have separate areas for dogs of different sizes.
 - Dog parks should have adequate lighting.
 - Dogs in heat should not be brought to dog parks
 - Dog parks are not the right place for children to be allowed to interact freely with dogs.
 - People should not attempt to take a dog’s toy away from it.

- There should be an emergency number posted at dog parks so people can call for help if a situation arises.

Maria noted that the Peninsula Humane Society website has many good resources.

2. **Service Dogs, Licensing and Lessons Learned** – Lori Morton-Feazell, SMC Animal Control and Darrick Emil

Lori was unable to be present, but Marlene distributed information about San Mateo County's Service Dog Requirements. The key point is that a person with a service animal cannot be asked to remove the animal from a public space unless the dog is out of control and the handler cannot control it or the dog is not housebroken. Business owners and others in authority can only ask two questions:

- Is the dog a service animal that is required due to a disability?
- What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

Darrick distributed information about the Americans with Disabilities Act revised requirements regarding service animals (2010).

3. **Water Quality Considerations** – Brittani Bohlke, SMC Resource Conservation District
Brittani introduced the Resource Conservation District as an independent grant-funded resource with the mission of preserving and protecting vital natural resources. She started her talk about dogs and water quality by making the point that fecal bacteria is a water pollutant and it is essential that members of the public understand the importance of picking up animal waste and discarding it properly.

Currently there is no state or county law requiring dog walkers to pick up dog waste.

Suggestions:

- Decisions about dealing with pollutants should be science based
- Parks should provide convenient, well-stocked disposal stations
- Education/outreach is critical
- Clean up events are very helpful, especially before expected rains.

Chair and Member Report(s)

1. **Confirm the Committee's Mission Statement**

The Committee modified the proposed draft and then unanimously adopted the following mission statement:

“ to provide healthy spaces for humans and canines, to promote positive experiences for dogs and other park users and to protect natural resources in San Mateo County Parks.”

2. **Information about Horse Behavior** – Faye distributed a one-page summary of the Horse’s Fear Response. Horses will respond to fear by stopping, spinning, bolting, bucking or rearing. These reactions allow the horse to avoid or escape the threat. Horses are very perceptive of change in the environment. If a person is around a fearful horse, he/she should stop forward movement and remain in the horse’s visual field.
3. **Dog Friendly Camping** – Jim Sullivan
Jim shared with the Committee his ideas for a dog friendly overnight park at Little Basin. He distributed a printed document with specific suggestions and also told the group he thought a “field trip” might be a good idea.

Input from Alternates attending the meeting

At this point in the meeting, input was invited but there were no comments.

Follow up to the October Meeting

- Community Outreach - Carla Schoof
Carla shared a proposed information card that would be printed for use by committee members when they are talking to others in the community. There were a few suggestions and committee members supported the idea. The hope is to have the cards ready for the December meeting.
- Proposal for sponsoring community workshops
Carla reminded the Committee of the ideas about reaching out to the community with information and to request feedback. The following ideas emerged:
 - a) The Committee should make an initial report to the standing Community Advisory Councils (Fair Oaks, Mid-Coast and Pescadero) about its work early in 2017. Another report should be provided once the committee has proposed policies, so that these groups can provide feedback.
 - b) At least two community meetings, one on the coast and one bayside should be scheduled to let the community know about the planning going on and to catalyze interest and input.
 - c) A survey may be developed about the same time as the community meetings to provide another mechanism for community participation.

Carla will return in December with a proposed schedule of outreach for the Committee’s consideration.

Director’s Report

Marlene Finley distributed updated map showing current dog recreation opportunities. She also presented a revised set of criteria for the work of this Committee, the revision including input from Committee members since the last meeting.

1. Provide a variety of visitor experiences and locations

- Consider front country and backcountry experiences
- Consider on leash and off leash
- Continue to provide areas where dogs are prohibited
- Consider opportunities throughout the County where there is demand

- Consider opportunities adjacent to urban areas/neighborhoods where there is demand for dog walking
- Protect natural and cultural resources and natural process --avoid impacts on sensitive habitat
- Consider the integrity of the habitat – is it disturbed from past uses?
- Consider sensible connections between dog friendly and non-dog friendly park settings

2. Avoid visitor (use) conflicts and conflicts with adjacent land uses (agriculture)

- Consider levels of use, types of uses and size of park/trail
- Consider zoning or uses by day of week and time of day
- Consider adequate parking and facilities for increased demand
- Consider public education such as multi-use trail etiquette training and off-leash walking training (in person and/or online), as well as educational signage about responsible trail recreation.
- Consider a certification process (example City of Boulder, Colorado’s voice and sight tag program) for people who want to walk with their dogs off leash.
- Consider a permitting process for commercial dog walkers

3. Clear (ex: signage), well designed (ex: Parking) and enforceable

- Consider budget and staffing: are they adequate for this additional use?
- Are staff trained to enforce new uses?
- Can we partner with nonprofit organizations and other groups on training and educational signage?

4. History of dog use prior to park acquisition

- a. What types of uses occurred prior to park acquisition/transfer?

The Committee was supportive of this amended list of criteria. It agreed to revisit the list in January and again as the work of developing recommendations is going on.

Public and Alternates Comment on Agenda items

Two representatives from the City of Belmont were present to observe, since Belmont is beginning a similar process of developing ordinances relating to dogs and parks.

Confirm agreements/Reporting Out /Appreciations

- Committee members agreed that the meeting could be summarized as a continuing effort to gather and discuss information needed to develop high quality policy recommendations.
- Appreciations included thanks for the generosity of committee members in giving their time and talents to this process and thanks to staff for supporting the work of the committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 PM.