

West Stockbridge Dog Park Committee - Regular Meeting October 21, 2023

Present: Michael Bolognino, Heather Hicks, Roni Kramer, Renee McCormick, Paige Orloff, Lorri Santhay, Jana Sax

Absent: Sharon Vidal

Jana Sax called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m.

Michael Bolognino offered a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Roni Kramer seconded the motion and all present voted to approve.

Mr. Bolognino and Ms. Sax reported on their appearance at the Select Board meeting. Board members were supportive of the efforts of this committee and approved the West Stockbridge Dog Park Committee as an ad hoc town committee. Marie Ryan agreed to be the town employee contact for the committee, for example for the purposes of applying for grants.

Renee McCormick asked if we are connected with the town's Parks & Recreation committee, and Ms. Sax and Mr. Bolognino noted that we are a subcommittee of the Select Board, not of the Parks & Recreation committee. Ms. Kramer asked if not being part of Parks & Recreation will impact maintenance needs for the park, and Ms. Sax explained that town involvement with a future dog park will fall under Parks & Recreation although the operations of this committee do not.

Mr. Bolognino noted and Ms. Sax and others agreed that the committee should speak with Curt Wilson about working with the town for maintenance for a future dog park. Ms. McCormick asked if there are others we should involve in discussions early on. The group agreed to invite Mr. Wilson and make a list of others who should be invited to meet with this committee. Ms. Sax and Mr. Bolognino suggested we develop questions for Mr. Wilson and the Parks & Recreation committee as opposed to inviting them to a meeting with just an open discussion.

The group discussed possible locations for the future dog park, including Card Pond which was mentioned by Andy Potter at the Select Board meeting. The group discussed potential site visits but agreed other needs must be met prior to site visits, including reviewing town zoning maps, finding out which zones would allow a dog park, and identifying town-owned properties. On this last point, Mr. Bolognino mentioned that we can ask Cait Graham from Parks & Recreation for properties they have identified as possible sites. He will keep a running list of locations in a Google doc. Other issues identified as significant are parking, total acreage, and water access.

Renee McCormick reported on research into other dog parks. She and Ms. Vidal investigated four locations (2 in MA, 2 in Westchester County, NY): Pilgrim Bark Park in Provincetown; Captain Jack Peterson Memorial Park in New Bedford, MA; the Port Chester, NY dog park; and Paws Place in New Rochelle, NY.

All of these parks had in common:

- They are formally named (i.e., in honor of)
- Signage
- Website
- List of rules
- Large/small dog areas

Other varying attributes or requirements:

- One had a time out area
- Varied in requiring dog license, Immunization records, neutered or spayed
- No dogs under 4 months
- Not sick or suffering parasites
- Children under 16 supervised, no toys or strollers
- No food, no smoking, no beverage, no dog treats
- Associated with Parks and Rec in their towns
- Dog park websites communicate town dog requirements eg licensing
- one had budget of \$15K/year
- all had fundraising, some with ability to donate online
- some are 501c3
- commemorative bricks are popular fundraising
 - The group discussed other similar fundraising tactics like plaques on benches, and noted that there no similar memorial/honorary markers in raising

The group discussed limiting the number of dogs per membership and maintaining a separate fee and regulation structure for dog walkers.

Ms. Sax noted that the Brewster, MA park has a misting fire hydrant dedicated as a memorial (another fundraising opportunity).

Ms. Santhay suggested that the town's dog license fee could include a small surcharge to support the park.

Paige Orloff suggested that agility or other training opportunities could be offered at the park both as a source of revenue and marketing. Other sources of support mentioned included local clubs with kids who want to volunteer and Lions club or other similar organizations.

Ms. Kramer and Ms. Santhay presented their research on funding sources. They described the work of the Stanton Foundation which has funded 40 dog parks in MA. They noted that the deadline for the foundation's next design grant is Dec 2023, and that their funding may be ending. Ms. Kramer is going to follow up with them to find out, and Mr. Bolognino asked that she coordinate with Marie Ryan in order to have an email come from the town rather than a private citizen. Other funding sources identified include the Doris Day Foundation and Benefull. Heather Hicks noted that she has and will continue to communicate with State Rep. Pigniatelli about possible state funding.

Ms. Kramer will look into the 501 c3 non-profit process and connect with other local organizations that have done it successfully.

Ms. Sax noted that Andy Potter mentioned the Community Preservation Act at the Select Board meeting. Ms. Santhay noted that lots of towns have used CPA funds to support dog parks.

Ms. Santhay noted that some of the Stanton Foundation-funded dog parks have offered their expertise to others. Mr. Bolognino suggested we identify someone from that category to invite to a meeting as a resource. Ms. Sax noted that her contact at the Brewster Dog Park was extremely helpful. Mr. Bolognino added that the owner of local business Love Us and Leave Us was instrumental in the development of the Pittsfield dog park and is very knowledgeable.

Ms. McCormick had to leave the meeting at 10:53 a.m.

The group agreed to next meet on November 11, 2023 at 10 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 11:02 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Paige Orloff