



MEMORANDUM

Community Services Department

DATE: May 10, 2017

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Bruce Hurlburt, Parks and Open Space Manager
J.P. de la Montaigne, Community Services Director

SUBJECT: Off-Leash Area Annual Update and Bubb Park Modification of Operational Hours and Days

RECOMMENDATION

Review update on the Off-Leash Program and provide a recommendation to the City Council to:

- Permanently adopt the hours at Bubb Park Off-Leash Area to be seven days a week from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. to sunset.
- Recommend the City Council give staff the authority to make future operational modifications for Off-Leash Areas that do not require an update to City Code.

FISCAL IMPACT – None.

BACKGROUND

In June 2014, the City enacted a pilot program to provide Off-Leash Areas (OLA) at several parks. The goal was to provide locations for dogs to socialize with responsible pet owners while minimally impacting other park users. On May 26, 2015, the City Council passed a motion to permanently adopt the Off-Leash Dog Area Program and directed staff to modify the existing ordinance as appropriate. The Council also directed staff to enhance the signs, increase enforcement of rules at the Bubb Park OLA, increase the hours at the Whisman Park OLA to include weekends, and include Rengstorff Park as a seven-day-a-week OLA.

Permanent signs were designed and installed in prominent locations at each OLA. Each sign covers the rules and hours of operation and has a map showing the boundaries of the OLA. Information on the OLA Program is also easy to locate on the City website.

To find it, users can type “dogs,” “off-leash,” or “dog park” into the search bar. Individuals can also use “HOW DO I...” at the top of the webpage with “Off-Leash Dog Area” listed under “LEARN ABOUT....” Lastly, they can click on the “City Parks, Trees and Trails” icon and use the “Dogs in City Parks” link in the left navigation bar. All these routes take the user to the information on the OLA Program. Users can click on each OLA and a map of the area is displayed.

OLA OVERVIEW

Two years after formally being adopted, the program is working well. Staff continues to keep a log of suggestions/concerns from the public. During the past year, staff received 10 entries as compared to 11 entries for the same time in 2015-16 and 59 entries during the pilot year. The 10 concerns from this past year fell into several familiar categories:

- Dog owners failing to comply with OLA hours and days (2).
- Dogs off-leash in nondesignated areas (3).
- Dogs approaching park users and not under voice control of the owner (2).
- Dog owners being unresponsive when asked to leash their dogs and comply with the OLA rules (3).

Concerns reported per OLA:

	<u>2014-15</u>	<u>2015-16</u>	<u>2016-17</u>
• Bubb Park	(20)	(3)	(1)
• Cooper Park	(3)	(1)	(3)
• Cuesta Park	(15)	(3)	(3)
• Cuesta Annex	(3)	(1)	(1)
• Eagle Park	(2)	(1)	(1)
• McKelvey Park	(0)	(0)	(0)
• Whisman Park	(4)	(2)	(1)
• Rengstorff Park		(0)	(0)

Two parks, Cooper and Cuesta, registered the most concerns, though significantly fewer than during the pilot. The OLA at Cuesta Park is available for use all day long, seven days a week. Cuesta is a heavily used park, popular with families and joggers. This, combined with daily use by dog owners, continues to create conflicts between

park users and dog owners. Concerns at Cooper Park were dogs off leash outside the OLA area and dog owners using the tennis courts for their dogs. Use of the Ranger stationed at Cuesta Park to talk with dog owners has helped address complaints at that park.

Staff noted two additional concerns registered at school sites which are not off-leash areas. Concerns were raised at Landels and Stevenson sports fields by parents when dogs were off leash while children were playing sports. Staff forwarded this information to Silicon Valley Animal Control Authority so animal control could visit these sites.

Bubb Park Hours and Days

At the June 8, 2016 Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) meeting, a group of residents presented a proposal requesting the Bubb Park OLA days be expanded from five to seven days a week with evening hours from 5:00 p.m. to sunset being added. The PRC recommended approval of a one-year pilot period and the City Council approved it on June 21, 2016.

The expanded days and hours seem to be working well at Bubb Park. Only one concern was noted of an off-leash dog running through the playground with children present and the dog not being under voice command of the owner. Staff recommends the PRC forward a recommendation to Council for the expanded hours and days to become permanent for the Bubb Park OLA.

Authority for Operational Modifications

Currently, when staff makes recommendations for minor operational changes, these changes must be approved by the PRC and then the City Council. Residents may continue to request program days or hours be expanded at other sites. There may also be requests from residents to restrict days or hours. In an effort to be more efficient and since the OLA program has been successfully piloted and adopted by Council, staff recommends the City Council grant staff the authority to approve future operational modifications that do not require a change to the City Code.

SUMMARY

Mountain View's OLA Program shares park space that is utilized by both the public and dog owners. The program is working as noted by the reduced number of concerns registered over the past two years. The program relies on dog owners being

responsible and abiding by the rules. The majority of dog owners seem to be able to do this. There are a small number of instances where dog owners are not following the rules, which makes use of some OLAs difficult for the public. Unfortunately, this reflects poorly on all dog owners. Staff continues to work with our Rangers and Silicon Valley Animal Control Authority on OLA rule compliance by dog owners.

ALTERNATIVES

- Do not recommend making the changes at Bubb Park OLA permanent.
- Extend the pilot hours and days for Bubb Park for another year to gather sufficient information.
- Leave operational decisions as recommendations to be approved by the City Council.

BR-JPdIM/3/CSD
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