



Item No. 5a Town of Atherton

PARK AND RECREATION COMMITTEE – REGULAR AGENDA

TO: PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE

FROM: SALLY BENTZ-DALTON – PARK MANAGER

DATE: MARCH 6TH, 2019

SUBJECT: OFF LEASH DOG AREA DEFINITION AND DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION

Christine David and John Davey will present more information about the definition of an off-leash dog area and the committee will discuss further. A motion could be made to request further information or research to move forward. The information below is from the Holbrook-Palmer Park Master Plan 2015.

Park Features (PF)

PF1: Off-leash dog area (20,000 s.f.) includes fencing, decomposed granite surfacing, signs, benches, litter station and water.	\$247,463
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OFF-LEASH DOGS

New site elements that were suggested were limited, with an off-leash dog area being the only major request, with 24% supporting off-leash dog use anywhere in the park, and another 44% supporting it in a designated area, for a total of 68% of respondents. It is worth noting that although the park open house was held during a dog event, only 7 surveys were completed that day on site. There were also many comments written on comment cards and posted bulletin boards at Open House information stations. Currently, the park allows dogs, but they must be leashed. An off-leash area would fence part of the park (at least 1/2 acre of space is suggested) and would allow dogs to run freely within the area.

DOG EXERCISE AREA

Over the last 10 years, more communities have formally recognized the need for off-leash dog areas in parks. There are no community standards for size and amenities, however there are considerable design guidelines available. In Holbrook-Palmer Park, current ordinance requires dogs to be on a leash, although many owners allow their dogs off-leash, particularly on the sports field.

The solutions to this problem vary from eliminating the restriction, to providing designated hours of off-leash use, to providing an enclosed off-leash use area. The size of local off-leash areas ranges from 1/2 to 1 acre in size, with a variety of configurations and surfaces. Due to the impact of concentrated dog use, traditional turf grass has a short life. Decomposed granite or wood mulch provide a more durable surface requiring less maintenance. A location for a designated off-leash dog area is provided in this Master Plan, based on input from town residents, Parks Commission, and City Council. Further details for construction would need to be developed in the future when and if the Town decided to move forward with such an area.

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North Lawn: This northeastern quadrant of the park is currently open space for passive recreation, picnic, perimeter walk and arboretum tree collections. The lawn area could be utilized for organized fitness classes. Sand volleyball could be integrated at the lawn perimeter by reshaping the shrub/lawn edges with little or no loss of lawn area. This area also has the potential to integrate an enclosed or open off-leash dog run with minimal loss of open space. Most of the dog area could be accommodated within the tree understory.

Off-Leash Dog Area

Off-leash dog use was the greatest single requested new use in the park (83 of 137 survey responses). The majority supported off-leash dogs in a restricted area. To provide an enclosed area for dog exercise and not encroach onto current park use spaces, the area near the *Jennings Pavilion* parking lot provides a mix of shade and sun. Located between the preschool and tennis courts, the site is accessible from the perimeter walking path and parking lot. Separate small and large dog areas with separate unleashing entrances are suggested. The ground surface could be either decomposed granite or wood chips, or a combination of both. Decomposed granite has a higher installation cost but will require less long-term maintenance. Mulch is less expensive, but must be rejuvenated more frequently, and tends to be less sanitary. A five-foot high perimeter fence is suggested and should be of a character consistent with the existing fences at the park. Low shrub masses outside the perimeter fence are suggested to provide some screening from the adjacent walking path.

The Master Plan shows the latest recommendation by City Council and the Parks and Recreation Commission where the off-leash dog area could be located. If and when the Town chooses to implement this type of facility, it would still have the mandate to implement hours of use and would need to complete a more detailed design plan for the area before construction, including type of ground cover (lawn, decomposed granite, mulch, or some combination), whether to separate large and small dogs, the design of fencing to be used, and other site amenities, which may include dog mitts/pet litter stations, tables, benches, signage and/or dog drinking fountains.

