



## Acton Dog Park Committee

Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, February 26, 2019  
7:30 p.m.  
Room 121, Town Hall  
472 Main Street, Acton, MA

### **Present:**

Clare Siska, Chair  
Tom Gillispie  
Mike Perry  
Karen Martin  
Fred Kinch

**Absent:** Joan Gardner

### **1. Opening**

Chair Clare Siska opened the meeting at 7:31 PM.

### **2. Regular Business**

- A. Approval of Meeting Minutes – The meeting minutes from the Acton Dog Park Committee on January 22, 2019 meeting were reviewed and approved unanimously.
- B. Current Land Options and Brainstorming alternative options
  - Main Street- The committee discussed the pros and cons of the site. Discussion about whether or not the dog park could be built before the Acton Housing Authority timeline and then closed when the septic needed to be completed or the option of a smaller park and then adding the additional dog park when the project was complete. The biggest challenge is the long timeframe.
  - Great Hill- The committee discussed improving Great Hill for dog owners and dogs by formalizing signage, soccer use, and parking.
  - Wood Lane- the committee would like to keep open as a potential location.
  - Other- Robbin's Mill was discussed since it is flat and has parking, trails, and water.
  - Wetherbee- Fred asked whether or not an option. The current understanding is the land is leased to the state.



Fred made a motion That the Committee pursue, as one alternative, improvements to Great Hill to make it more friendly for dogs and dog owners. The motion was 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mike and approved unanimously.

Action Item- Clare will contact the Land Resources Department to set up a meeting with Tom Tidman and Selby to explore all the current land options and potential land options owned by the town after March 12<sup>th</sup>. In addition, Clare will follow up with John Watlington since he indicated there were other properties the committee should consider. In addition, the committee needs to ask the Stanton Foundation if they will consider multiple dog parks or a phased in approach. Karen will speak with John L if possible.

Define Next Steps/Draft Timeline- the committee discussed meeting with the BoS in the fall. Joan will be asked to brief the BoS and the town manager of the current status of the work to find a location for the dog park by the end of April. The March 12<sup>th</sup> meeting will be devoted to preparing for the meeting with Tom and Selby and discussion fundraising.

- Fundraising- Clare proposed two fundraising ideas- First Aid Training for Dogs and a Dog Yard Sale.
- Bark and Brew Review- everyone including the dogs enjoyed the event. \$680 was raised. Clare has written a thank you email to the Powder Mill Animal Hospital. Fred suggested an article be written. Clare will write and Fred will send pictures for the article.

### **3. New/Special Business**

- New town templates for agendas and minutes have been uploaded into Google Drive for use.
- All committee members will visit Robbin's Hill to survey the area.
- Discussion ensued about developing an official logo for the committee.

### **4. Citizen's Concerns-** Joe Will mentioned the new templates for meeting minutes and agendas.

### **5. Adjournment**

At 9:02 p.m., it was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.



## **Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting**

- Meeting minutes of January 22, 2019;
- Agenda for February 26, 2019;
- Email from Clare Siska from Saturday, February 19th



Tom Gillispie &lt;tgillispie@gmail.com&gt;

## Dog Park -- thoughts on moving forward

Clare Siska &lt;clare.siska@gmail.com&gt;

Sat, Feb 9, 2019 at 6:49 PM

To: Acton Dog Park Committee &lt;ADPC@acton-ma.gov&gt;, cfochtman@gmail.com

I've been thinking a lot about where we go from here and, rather than douse you with all of this on Tuesday, I decided to write it all out (helps me, too.)

I'm not in any way saying "this is the plan." These are my ideas which I'm running by you for your opinions and as a starting point for discussion.

PLEASE DON'T RESPOND IN EMAIL OR DISCUSS OUTSIDE OF MEETING.. Just give it some thought. Thanks.

General thoughts:

- Reminder that we CANNOT consider conservation land, which generally has permanent legal restrictions on it. Exception might be something like Wood Lane, which is designated both conservation and recreation. Great Hill, too? This considerably limits our options.
- We cannot wait for Main Street as our one and only choice. It's too far in the future and too many gates to get through first.
- I think we need to give up on the idea of one HUGE dog park. That was partly born out of the initial idea of using Great Hill, bolstered by research. I don't believe that kind of land is going to be available in Acton.... with one exception:
  - I don't think we should give up on Great Hill yet. See PROPOSAL below.
- If we are not trying to replace, but just add to, what already exists, then one or more smaller parks could meet the need
- Acton is a sizeable town with traffic issues getting back and forth. Smaller parks situated in key areas of town might be more reachable for more owners, and therefore more helpful.
- Smaller parks might raise less objections from abutters.
- Many successful dog parks are smaller than 2 acres.
  - There are 43,560 SF in an acre
  - See image below from Stanton



### Proposal:

- Create a comprehensive plan for 3 Acton dog parks to meet the needs of the different areas of town:
  - South Acton (Great Hill)
  - Central Acton (Main Street -- preferred -- or maybe Wood Lane)
  - North Acton (location TBD)
- Plan should address funding, time frame, development, and ongoing oversight.
- Present to in a public forum no later than September, tweak plan, then present to BoS in time to request CPA funding in November (earlier would be better so we can start raising funds before CPA deadline)

- **Phase 1: Great Hill:**

- Formalize Great Hill as Acton's initial dog park
  - NOT Stanton-funded (no water requirements)
  - Land use dept / town would need to officially abandon it's use for soccer
  - Change parking area sign from "reserved for playground use" to "reserved for dog park use"
  - Keep design costs to a minimum -- use in-house resources
  - Fence off a 1/2 acre section, closest to the parking area, for small dogs and dogs that require enclosure.
    - Ensure that area does not block access to upper field or to side trails
    - To address wetness, introduce water-absorbing trees that would also provide shade -- weeping willows absorb water and grow quickly.
    - Water can be brought in by users as done at Maynard's dog park
    - Build a handicapped-accessible walkway to this area (only) and maybe inside it (across or around perimeter)
    - Include benches (one from Powdermill fundraiser)
  - Keep the remainder of Great Hill open and unfenced for remaining dog users.
  - ? Fence across front of property to keep dogs from running into parking lot necessary?
  - This will require engaging with current users and land stewards to try to win them over. Reminder: This is public property -- they don't own it!!!
  - Natural Resources would need to approve plan, esp. introduction of trees.
  - This would address the immediate need, keep momentum going, allow us to prove feasibility and good stewardship, hopefully rally much-needed participants to help us build another site
  - Raise more \$ this summer, funds from CPA in the fall, and request maintenance funding via increased dog license fees in next year's budget plan (April 2020 town meeting)
  - Could be built in summer / fall 2020 (or sooner depending on cost and how much \$ we raise)
- **Phase 2: North Acton, Location TBD**
  - While building out Great Hill, start scoping out North Acton locations, talking with abutters, finding funds, etc. Goal would be to have a North Acton park "online" in 2022.
  - ? Stanton funding?
    - investigate whether Stanton might be likely to fund more than one dog park in a given town
- **Phase 3: Central Acton**
  - During Phases 1 & 2, continue working towards our "flagship" location main street, funded by Stanton, in cooperation with AHA
  - Investigate Wood Lane as second option if Main Street falls through

Of course, the big challenge will be how to pay for all of this. Fencing, walkways, ground cover, and parking are probably the most expensive items. What we can do will be strictly tied to what we can raise -- from Stanton and outside of Stanton.

On a related note, I would also like to invite each of you to come visit my yard for 2 reasons:

1. My entire property is about 2/3 acre, so the back yard is maybe 1/3 acre. You can see that it's not really that small, when you consider it would not be used for ALL of the dogs in Acton that would need a dog park at one time.
2. You should also consider how my yard has been utterly destroyed by about 10 dogs playing on it every day for the last year or so. This is long-established turf -- I've owned my house for over 22 years -- and will give the committee food for thought re whether established grass is feasible ground cover. Just let me know when you're available to pop by.

I have not yet received a response from John Watlington.

See you Tuesday.

Clare

**Clare Siska**  
**clare.siska@gmail.com**  
**978-457-3997** \*Note new personal cell number!

"Do the thing and you shall have the Power."  
~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

