

**Town of Acton  
Dog Park Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Date: Tuesday, August 8, 2017  
Time: 7:30 p.m.  
Place: Acton Town Hall, Room 121**

**Committee Members present:** Mike Perry, Rodney Smith, Karen Martin, Bill Alstrom, Betsy Kristl, Clare Siska. Tom Gillispie was in contact via conference call. Committee Liaisons Joan Gardner, Selectman and Cathy Fochtman, Recreation Director.

**Visitors:** Joe Will, Acton Boxborough Youth Soccer, Recreation Commission and Community Preservation Committee.

**1: Meeting called to order** at 7:33 p.m. by Cathy Fochtman.

**2: Introductions:**

Each attendee shared information about themselves and their interest in serving and/or attending the meeting.

**3: Dog Park Committee Charge:**

Cathy read the document aloud and it was discussed. All members were in agreement with the charge. Clare stated the importance of the word “need” in the first requirement, “Consider whether Acton needs or would benefit from a dog park”, as Selectman Katie Green requested its inclusion in the charge. Betsy related her experience and how she initiated outreach to the Town for creating a dog park. Many reasons that Acton needs a dog park were cited. Populations that would benefit include the elderly, disabled, isolated individuals, people with health issues, new to owning a dog, and owners with rescue dogs or puppies who need to teach socialization to their pets for their safety. People on the margins of society need a community that a dog park can provide to be part of something, to provide inclusiveness. The public can benefit from “dog therapy”. Involvement of the Commission on Disabilities was required in the charge and Joan Gardner noted that she is liaison to the COD. Rodney recommended a book by Alexandra Horowitz, “Inside of a Dog”, for members to read. Clare stated that in 2016, a total of 1,600 owners licensed 1,900 dogs.

**4: Appoint Officers - Chairman/Vice Chairman/Clerk**

Cathy Fochtman called for nominations by the members to appoint a Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Clerk. After an extended discussion, individual motions for each of the

positions in the following slate were moved, seconded and approved with the same results: 4 ayes, 0 nays, 1 abstention (4:0:1).

Dog Park Committee Officers:

Chairman: Mike Perry  
Vice-Chairman: Bill Alstrom  
Clerk: Members on a rotating basis.

Clare recused herself from participation in any executive role due to her ownership of a pet sitting service. Betsy recused herself from participation in the role of Clerk.

**5: Town Research Performed to Date**

Cathy distributed a memo that she sent to Town Manager Steve Ledoux and the Board of Selectmen, dated 11/30/16. It detailed dog park discussions between the Recreation Department, Recreation Commission and interested citizens as well as research performed up to that date by the Land Use Department. A chart that lists nine Town properties that could be considered for supporting a Dog Park was reviewed. Cathy assembled and mounted MapGeo maps on a bulletin board to show the committee where the nine potential properties are located within the North Acton, Acton Center/East Acton, West Acton and South Acton villages.

**6: Next Steps?**

The consensus was that demonstrating the “need” for a dog park was the first task to complete, before moving forward with any planning steps. Clare offered to forward a document to the committee for their review that could assist in formulating a justification, “Beyond the Dog Park”.

**7: Future Meeting Dates:**

It was agreed that the committee should meet more frequently than once per month. The next meeting date is proposed for Tuesday, August 22. Cathy will reserve a meeting room and assist Mike in posting an agenda.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Meeting minutes recorded by Cathy Fochtman.

## **Acton Dog Park Committee Charge**

**Purpose:** The purpose of the Acton Dog Park Committee is to consider construction of an accessible dog park in Acton.

### **Responsibilities:**

- Consider whether Acton needs or would benefit from a dog park.
- Investigate and document the perceived benefits and drawbacks of establishing a dog park in Acton.
- Define the characteristics beneficial to a dog park location, consider the pros and cons of potential sites, and identify the most suitable location from available Acton lands.
- Identify elements that would be included in the park (features, design, and specifications). Pay specific attention to accessibility and inclusiveness and to the requirements from potential grant funding sources.
- Identify funding sources.
- Describe the logistics of maintaining and managing the park.
- Engage and educate the public.
- Present findings to the Board of Selectmen.

The Dog Park Committee will be advised by and communicate with Town staff and committees as appropriate, including – but not limited to – the Land Use Department and Commission on Disabilities.

### **Membership:**

The Dog Park Committee shall be composed of five (5) full members (voting) and two (2) associate members (non-voting, except when needed to complete a quorum of members), all appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Both Full and Associate members shall serve one-year terms. The membership will be comprised of Acton dog owners, representing small, medium, and large breeds, as different-sized breeds have distinct needs. Members having a background in canine behavior, such as veterinary medicine, training, or the like, would be highly valuable.

The Board of Selectmen will designate a liaison to the Dog Park Committee.



**Town of Acton Recreation Department**

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Cathy Fochtman, Recreation Director

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Date: November 30, 2016

To: Steve Ledoux, Town Manager

From: Cathy Fochtman, Recreation Director

Tom Tidman, Natural Resources Director

Matthew Selby, Director of Land Use and Economic Development

RE: Dog Park

The above Land Use Departments have been in discussion with Ms. Betsy Kristl for several months regarding her desire to have the Town create a dog park in Acton. She had been encouraged by the Recreation Department to unite a group of interested citizens. Ideas discussed between Town staff and Ms. Kristl have been exploratory and it had been anticipated that through Ms. Kristl's canvassing of the community, an interest group would form to work with the Town on defining a project. Other citizens, including Ms. Clare Siska, Ms. Karen Sonner, and Ms. Jennifer Chen have recently voiced their interest to the Recreation Commission about discussions of a dog park. Some of them have met on several occasions with Ms. Kristl and are opting to pursue their interests independently.

Steps by Town staff taken to date:

- Meeting with Town Counsel to discuss liability ramifications of the Town creating an official dog park in Acton. The Town insurer, MIIA, has confirmed that dog owners bear responsibility for their pets and rules posted at the site can be used to govern it.
- Identifying potential funding sources for the design and construction:
  - The Stanton Foundation – 100% Design funding, 90% Construction funding
  - Community Preservation Act – has been utilized for constructing dog parks
- A list of potential Town properties have been visited to rate their suitability. Please see attached chart. Neighboring dog parks in Chelmsford and Maynard have been visited.
- The topic of maintenance is yet to be explored.

If the Board of Selectmen opts to create a Dog Park Committee after the December 5 meeting, Town staff will work with the Committee using this research.

Potential Dog Park Locations: 11/30/15

Location	Site	Natural Water Source	Proximity to Utilities	Shade	Parking	Natural Features	Quiet	Proximity to Neighbors	Topography	Surfacing	Distance from Parking
Robbins Mill Recreation Area 61 Canterbury Hill Road 06-1	3.25 acres includes playground and basketball court	No	Yes on street	Trees border-depends on time of day	Yes-Large parking Lot	Grassy Field & Woods Woods-Trees, rocks, logs etc.	Yes NARA Park events at NARA are sometimes loud	Robbins Mill neighborhood and NARA Park	Flat Field Mildly Hilly	Grass Dirt	Close to parking Across the street
70 Quarry Road CS-3	5.02 acres	No	Yes on street	Yes-in woods	NARA Park Upper Lot	Woods-Trees, rocks, logs etc.	Yes	Quarry Rd neighborhood and NARA Park	Flat	Dirt	Close to parking
Morrison Farm/Ice House Pond 116 Concord Road/120 Concord Road F4 34/54 27	32.5 acres/ 17.0 acres	Yes	Yes on street	Yes-in woods	Constructing a parking lot at Ice House Pond	Woods-Trees, rocks, logs, etc.	Yes but busy road	No	Flat	Dirt	Walk through Ice House Pond woods to field abutting pond at Morrison Farm from Ice House Pond parking lot
132 Simon Willard Road E3 24	3.35 acres	No	Yes on street	Yes-in woods	None-Would need to construct	Woods-Trees, rocks, logs, etc.	Yes	Simon Willard neighborhood	Flat	Dirt	No existing parking
145 Great Road, Rear Behind Trader Joe's Plaza F4 37 5	5.02 acres	No	Yes, behind plaza	Yes-in woods	Yes-Parking area behind plaza	Woods-Trees, rocks, logs, etc.	Yes but the plaza is loud and busy	Trader Joe's Plaza and Eastbrook Rd	Flat	Dirt	Close to parking
24 Arlington Street 03 33 E3 8	2.75 acres, 24.94 acres	No	Yes, on street	Yes-in woods	None-Would need to construct	Woods-Trees, rocks, logs, etc.	Yes	Lincoln St. neighborhood	Flat	Dirt	No existing parking
301 Arlington Street F2 A 72	2.69 acres	No	Yes, on street	Yes-in woods	None-Would need to construct	Woods-Trees, rocks, logs, etc.	Yes	Arlington St. neighborhood	Flat	Dirt	No existing parking
279 High St. Corner Parker St. & Adams St. J1-33	2.5 acres within 34.80 acre lot	Yes	Yes, on street	Yes-in woods	No existing parking Parking lot planned for trail to Assabet River	Woods-Trees, rocks, logs, etc.	Yes	Adams St. and Parker St. neighborhood	Sloped	Dirt	No existing parking Parking lot planned for trail to Assabet River
34 School Street, Rear Great Hill Soccer Field & Pond H9 A 1 1	53.62 acres	Yes Pond	Yes, on street	Yes in the trails, no on the field	Yes-Small Parking Lot	Grassy Field & Woods	Yes	No	Flat & Hilly in Woods	Grass & Dirt	Close to parking