

To: Mayor Walker
Members of the Hallowell City Council

From: Kate Dufour

Date: Tuesday, Oct. 1, 2019

Re: Summary of the Public Meeting on the Temporary Dog Park Closure

On Sept. 19, 2019 a public feedback gathering session was held to response to residents' concerns over the Council's decision to temporarily close the dog park for public health and safety reasons. Based on the feedback received during the meeting it is obvious that the dog park is a valued municipal resource that fosters opportunities for socialization, both of human and canine variety, encourages the development of lifelong relationships and inspires community spirit and pride.

After an hour of conversation, the attendees coalesced around the following constructive and collaborative recommendations:



- Purchase and install dog waste stations, with bags, “right-sized” trash cans and appropriate “leave no trace behind” signage throughout the park. One of the stations would be located near the enclosed dog exercise area and two additional stations installed near the benches around the park’s green space. (Costs of these stations range from \$200 to \$400, plus the cost of the bags.)
- Increase the frequency of trash pick-up during high use periods (e.g., weekends, holidays, summer months, special event days, etc.).
- Identify a point person to receive complaints, feedback and suggestions and to act as a liaison between city staff, dog park users and the council. (One suggestion that was forwarded in advance of the public meeting was to utilize the city’s recreation committee or other existing volunteer group. No need to reinvent the wheel.)
- Hold semi-annual clean-up events and invite all park users and volunteer groups to participate. (On that note, Councilor AuCoin has offered to host such an event in October.)
- Establish a fund and collection method allowing interested parties to make voluntary financial contributions to support and fund the purchase of dog waste stations, materials, clean-up events and on-going maintenance.

- Use the City Clerk's licensing reminder postcard to inform dog owners of the park maintenance fund and scheduled clean-up days.

In an effort to move the conversation forward and potentially reopen the park before the year's end, I am brazenly recommending that the Council:

1. Sanction Councilor AuCoin's clean-up event, and once completed allow the dog park to reopen;
2. Direct a council committee or other volunteer group to identify a dog park point person and develop the process necessary to address issues as they arise;
3. Direct staff to create the process necessary to implement a voluntary dog park maintenance fund; and
4. Direct a council committee, staff and recreation committee members to meet to develop a plan for funding, acquiring and installing at least one dog waste station before April 1, 2020.

On a park related note, I was also asked to address with the council the lack of fencing around the basketball court located in the park's parking area. Users are concerned that they may get hurt when trying to receive an errant basketball down the overgrown gullies that flank two sides of the court's perimeter.

Finally, thank you to the citizens of Hallowell, city department leads, Mayor Walker and Councilors Circo, Frett and Wynne for taking the time to attend the meeting and provide feedback. It was a valuable and informative exercise.