

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report



Meeting: April 13, 2023

From: Public Works Department

Subject: Establishment of an Off-Leash Dog Area in a City Park

Recommended Action: Provide direction to staff for establishment of additional off-leash dog areas within public parks.

Background: The City of Capitola has an established off-leash dog park at McGregor Park. Dogs are currently permitted on leash at Monterey Avenue Park, Noble Gulch Park, Perry Park, Soquel Creek Park, Jade Street Park, and Esplanade Park.

On September 22, 2022, the City Council was presented with a community petition to establish an off-leash dog area in Monterey Avenue Park. Public Works staff notified residents and owners within 500 feet of Monterey Avenue Park, and seven members of the public spoke in support of the petition.

Monterey Avenue Park is currently used by New Brighton Middle School on weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. for physical education classes and after-school team activities. The field is also rented by youth softball and soccer sports leagues from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. during the week and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturdays. During the September 22, 2022, the City Council directed staff to work with the community to explore alternatives to the Monterey Avenue Park proposal, due to conflicts with current park uses.

Discussion: Staff met with representatives of the community group in October and November of 2022 and presented the following options for off-leash dog areas (Attachment 1):

Noble Gulch Park:

This park was previously identified as a potential off-leash dog area in 2007. Staff proposed collectively identifying modifications to the rear dirt area to better accommodate off-leash dogs. The community group declined this proposal due to the lack of turf (creating muddy conditions) and proximity to the roadway.

Monterey Avenue Park:

In consideration of other park uses, any off-leash dog area in Monterey Park would need to be fenced. Staff proposed two locations to minimize impacts to current park uses. Option A would enclose an approximately 9,000 square foot area in the northeastern corner of the park, closest to Monterey Avenue. Option B would enclose a small, approximately 6,000 square foot area in the southwest corner of the park, closest to New Brighton Middle School. Both options would require the purchase and installation of fencing and regular maintenance of the dog park area (disposal receptable, bags, etc.).

The community group subsequently presented staff with an alternative to the staff proposed areas in Monterey Avenue Park (Figure 1). This alternative would require adjusting the established walkway, planting turf in the previous walkway footprint, in addition to installing fencing and ongoing maintenance.



Figure 1. Off-leash dog area as proposed by community group

On Wednesday, March 29, staff held a virtual community meeting to provide information and solicit feedback from the community. Residents and owners within 500 feet of Monterey Avenue Park were provided with notice of this meeting. There were 15 community members in attendance. The meeting resulted in generally positive feedback from dog park users, along with concerns from community members. Particularly noted was the need for noise dampening between the proposed dog park and adjacent homes and concern of an increased intensity of park use, both inside and outside the off-leash area, by non-responsible dog owners. Questions were posed regarding park hours, enforcement of use, and the possibility of temporary fencing prior to the establishment of a permanent fenced dog area.

In preparation of this report, Staff evaluated the proposed off-leash dog area in the field and developed the following schematic to scale with the existing soccer field striping (Figure 2). Based on this evaluation the enclosed dog area would be considerably smaller than the proposal brought forward by the community group.



Figure 2. Sacle Drawing of Off-leash Dog Area

Staff have been in contact with Soquel Union Elementary School District (District) regarding a fenced dog area in Monterey Park. District representatives have indicated that they are not in support of any off leash dog areas in the park due to the potential of excessive barking and increased dog waste interfering with student and District staff use of the park area.

Based on the existing uses in the park area and District feedback, staff does not consider a fenced-in dog area, as proposed by the community group, a compatible use in Monterey Park.

Fiscal Impact: If directed to move forward with establishment of an off-leash dog area, staff would incorporate the project into the FY 23-24 budget. The cost for establishment of the option featured in Figure 1 in Monterey Avenue Park is estimated at \$25,000. Costs of alternative options presented would vary depending on location and scope.

Attachments:

1. Staff proposed off-leash dog area locations

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