

Gautho, Julia

From: Kathy Macdonald <kathymac928@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 24, 2024 1:15 PM
To: City Council
Cc: Dave Montgomery; Kathy Macdonald
Subject: Agenda Item for Meeting 7/25/24: Proposed One Hour Off-leash period at Monterey Ave. park

Dear Members of the City Council,

I am writing in support of a 60-day pilot program for one hour each day of off-leash dog play at Monterey Avenue Park. Ideally, the appointed hour could be designated from 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm during winter (once the clocks change for Daylight Savings Time) and set forward in the spring to a later hour, such as 5:30 - 6:30 pm (again, corresponding with the time we change our clocks for Daylight Savings Time).

The reasons for our request for a daily one-hour off-leash period are many, but let me summarize my own reasons for this simple request below:

1. Monterey Avenue Park is very convenient for many of us in the community to walk to with our dogs, and if we need to drive, parking in the lot is easy.
2. I do not have human children who use the park for playful activities, but I have a furry four-legged "child" who loves to play and run. I would like to use our "community park" to have a brief, one-hour period of fun with my dog and let her play and run around with her dog buddies.
3. Dogs LOVE to run after balls or play chase with each other on grassy fields, like Monterey Ave. Park.

If anyone suggests those of us with dogs should use the "dog park" located off the frontage road adjacent to the skate park, it is not conducive to dog play, and the sound of the skateboards scares some dogs. Similar to the "dog park" in Aptos, it is covered in bark and many dogs do not want to play or run around in it. "Dog Parks" are also widely known for having dog fights, because many people don't pay any attention to their dogs when they are there.

Compared to a "dog park", our group is very interactive with our dogs and proactive about asking newcomers if their dogs are friendly -- as we have a friendly dog group, so we do not want any dog fights. Most people who have aggressive dogs know to keep them on a leash, and when we see people walking their dogs on leash around the track we respectfully call our dogs in from playing to leash them up so they do not try to meet or play with the leashed dog.

4. The friendships that have formed at Monterey Avenue Park when our dogs are playing with each other give us a real sense of community. Many of us are single, retired, and living alone, and this one hour a day is a highlight for many of us. Watching everyone's dog run to greet each other (as well as the humans!) is such a joy! Even the dogs that are lap dogs, and don't want to run after balls or each other will run across the field to be happily greeted by the dogs and the people! We even have a lead singer of a band who sings unique songs for some of the little dogs (pugs and french bulldog) as they run to our group! We all chime in to the song to welcome the dogs!

5. Our small dog community that has formed is very special. We have doctors, nurses, physical therapists, contractors, musicians, retired engineers, professors and teachers. When anyone in our group has a surgery or is ill, we look after each other and create meal trains to deliver food, and also walk his/her dog. It is a wonderful group of people that would never have met unless through our dogs playing together at the park! It brings the dogs and the people joy to be together at the park! It provides a time and place to not only allow our dogs to play with other friendly dogs, but we often have interesting conversations on a variety of topics! Several of us get together now for dinners and birthdays -- we have true friendships because of meeting through our dogs playing at Monterey Avenue Park!

6. Our group is VERY RESPONSIBLE and engaged with our dogs while there. We point out when someone's dog is pooping, or we go pick up that dog's poop as well. We stay off to the back end of the park in case there are people using the baseball diamond. Our dogs are happy to just run after their balls and after each other in that back area of the park.

Asking for just ONE HOUR a day to allow off-leash dog play time seems incredibly reasonable to me, and I hope you agree. We only use a small portion of the back area of the park, far from the baseball area.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Macdonald
cell: (650) 269-1113