



Medicine River Animal Hospital

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Dear Vice-Mayor Kerr:

It was brought to my attention that the plans for the new Madeira Beach Dog Park does not include a small dog section. I feel that this would be a big mistake and a huge safety concern for our small dogs. I would think that the small dog population in this community would outnumber the large dog population. Many of our residents live in condominiums that have size restrictions on pets.

I personally caution my pet owners about dog parks because they come with a lot of risks. There are many contagious diseases and parasites that can be easily transferred at dog parks. Not all dog owners are responsible pet owners that keep up with vaccinations, parasite preventions, etc. However, my biggest concern are dog fights. I have worked as a Veterinarian in Pinellas County for the past 24 years. I worked at the Emergency clinic many years ago. I have treated multiple dogs that have been severely injured by dog fights at our local dog parks over the years. I have even lost patients as a result of dog fights from a dog park. So, I always warn my clients to use caution when visiting dog parks.

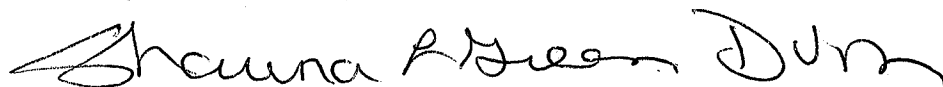
I wish dog parks were safer because there is no doubt that the exercise that dog parks offer our pets is very beneficial to their health. Let's use the greyhound for example, these dogs love to run. I have many greyhound patients and they are not an aggressive breed. However, if you give them a small dog to chase and they catch it, it will likely not end well for the little dog. Also, no one truly wants to be involved in a dog fight for many reasons. Large dog owners do not want their dogs to hurt another dog. Vet care is very expensive, especially emergency vet care. It is usually the owner of the larger dog or dog that attacks that is held accountable for any medical bills as a result of a dog fight.

Dog fights are going to happen even with large and small dogs separated and often do. Unfortunately, hormones and behavioral problems due to lack of socialization and training are huge contributing factors. I fear that the number of dog fights will greatly increase without a separate small dog section. Veterinary care may be limited to the local emergency veterinary hospitals. Unfortunately, there is a nationwide veterinary staffing shortage. Covid has taken a toll on the entire veterinary community. I am the only veterinarian on Madeira Beach. I do not take walk-in emergencies. I have a very limited number of sick same day appointments and often have to refer sick appointments to other available veterinarians or the emergency clinic. As a vet, I never like to be put in a situation where I cannot help a pet in need. The other local veterinarians are also overwhelmed with limited appointment

availabilities. The closest emergency clinic is a 20-30 minute drive. Emergency wait times can be long. Anything that I can do to decrease the demand on us veterinarians is important. Most of all I do not want to hear or see any small dogs get injured because of the current plans.

I truly hope you will reconsider adding a small section for small dogs only so that they may enjoy the freedom to play without the risk of being injured by the larger dogs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Shawna L Green DVM". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'S' and a distinct 'DVM' at the end.

Shawna L Green, DVM