
Hatley Fields and Dog Park Usage

From Emily Graham Nolan [REDACTED]

Date Thu 11/13/2025 9:16 AM

To Makayla Rodriguez <mrodriguez@rollingwoodtx.gov>; Justin Nolan [REDACTED]

Dear City Council, Parks Department and RCDC,

I am writing as a resident of Rollingwood and a parent of a Western Hill t ball player with serious concerns about the dual usage of the Hatley Fields for baseball and as an off leash dog park. Allowing children to play organized sports on a field where dogs routinely defecate is unhealthy, unnecessary, and unacceptable for any child.

Even when responsible owners pick up visible waste, dog feces leave behind microscopic pathogens and parasite eggs that contaminate soil, grass, and dust for months or years. Documented health risks include:

- **Toxocara canis** (roundworm) – eggs persist in soil and are a leading cause of visceral and ocular larva migrans in children, sometimes resulting in permanent blindness or organ damage. The CDC identifies dog parks and multi use fields as high risk locations for this preventable parasitic infection.
- **Giardia, Cryptosporidium, and Salmonella** – these resilient organisms are commonly found in dog feces and cause severe diarrhea, dehydration, and (in the case of Cryptosporidium) prolonged illness that can require hospitalization in young children.
- Pathogenic **E. coli** and **Campylobacter** – both frequently detected in soil samples from parks where dogs are allowed to defecate.
- Hookworms – larvae in contaminated soil can penetrate a child's skin during normal play (sliding into bases, diving for balls, or simply sitting on the ground).

Multiple peer-reviewed studies of shared-use parks have found parasite eggs and fecal bacteria in the soil long after visible feces are removed. Children inevitably ingest or inhale small amounts of this contaminated dirt while playing baseball—through hand-to-mouth contact, dust kicked up during slides, or shared equipment. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the CDC both caution against allowing dogs to defecate on fields used by children, precisely because the risk cannot be eliminated by “pick-up” rules alone.

No parent should have to weigh the benefits of youth sports against the real chance of their child contracting a preventable parasitic infection or serious bacterial illness. Rollingwood's children deserve fields that are dedicated to their safe play, not shared with off leash dogs.

I respectfully urge the City Council to:

1. Immediately end the practice of allowing dogs to defecate on any field used for youth baseball or other children's organized sports.

2. Relocate the off-leash dog park to a separate, dedicated area that does not overlap with children's athletic fields.

Rollingwood is fortunate to have residents who love both their children and their dogs. With thoughtful planning, we can provide excellent facilities for both without forcing families like mine to choose between a child's participation in team sports and protecting their health.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to the well-being of all Rollingwood residents.

Sincerely,

Emily Nolan

