

PET-FRIENDLY TASK GROUP

12:30 PM | JANUARY 26, 2022

1. OPENING OF MEETING

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michelle Warner, Pam Hertel, Scott Mills

MEMBERS ATTENDING REMOTELY: Abby Block, Michelle Gentine, Betty Ackley, Laura Berchem

MEMBERS ABSENT: Molly Talaska, Andy Heyn, Kristine Potter

STAFF/OFFICIALS PRESENT: Mayor Ryan Sorenson, Joe Kerlin, Ofc. Kevin Post

1.1 CALL TO ORDER

Chair Laura Berchem called the meeting to order.

1.2 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

2. MINUTES

2.1 No minutes to approve from the October 27, 2021 as there was no quorum present.

3. PUBLIC FORUM

3.1 Limit of five people having five minutes each with comments limited to items on this agenda.

No one spoke

4. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION ONLY

4.1 Community Assessment

Michelle Warner gave a high-level overview of the results. The summary included the following information specific to City of Sheboygan residents:

- 85% had a pet, 15% did not
- Of those who had pets, 63% reported owning at least 1 dog and 27% at least one cat. No other pet category was over 5%.
- Regarding opening more parks to pets, the number of times a park was ranked in a respondent's top 5:
 - Evergreen - 313
 - Deland/North Beach - 304
 - Vollrath - 291
 - South Beach - 223
 - Fountain - 212
 - Kiwanis - 192
 - King - 136
 - End - 129
 - Cleveland - 116
 - Veterans - 107
 - Roosevelt - 105
 - Rotary - 90
 - Optimist - 81

Key Takeaways:

- There is a general consensus that no laws are currently enforced, so many responses were in reaction to what is happening now as opposed to a theoretical world of new policies.
- There was a significant emphasis on loose dogs, unleashed dogs and general bad citizen behavior no matter the location, and in many responses that overwhelmed any distinction of whether things were taking place in parks or in neighborhoods.
- Ongoing theme of lack of a pet friendly culture. Many new residents commented on how bad it is in Sheboygan for pets.
- There was not a single positive statement related to current off-leash areas. In fact the reverse was true with many commenting on how unusable they are - Lakeview Park dog beach and Wilson Dog Park in particular - leading to frustration about lack of spaces to take dogs.
- Significant support for expanded dog access... as long as it comes with responsible owners and leash laws.

Behavior Specific Takeaways:

- Loose and unleashed dogs are a huge issue in terms of safety, nuisance and animal welfare. Many requested an animal welfare officer. Anger, frustration and a willingness to take things into their own hands were also expressed.
- Several respondents cited dogs chasing and attacking people and other dogs as a significant issue.
- Poor pet culture was often commented on and there were many calls to begin or increase registration drives, vaccination rates and general animal welfare awareness (including outdoor cats).
- Many requests for signage, education, and the City's overall commitment to owner responsibility so pet-friendly advocacy does not turn into a human-unfriendly world.

Key Takeaways: Park Specific

- Far more respondents advocated increasing **safe** access for dogs in the City of Sheboygan than those who would like it to remain the same or be reduced.
- Many calls for allowing dogs on beaches in areas where families do not gather and additional dog parks.
- A sense of frustration and even anger over the state of current off-leash areas: a) that they don't exist any longer (Lakeview Park dog beach); b) exist on toxic or woefully unmaintained land, with many comments specifying burrs at Wilson Dog Park, flooding at Pigeon River, the lack of a beach at Lakeview, confusion over Evergreen restrictions

and general frustration at what is seen as giving dogs and their owners solely throwaway/unusable land.

- Very strong support for leash laws and waste disposal at parks (and everywhere.)
- Many responses about keeping dogs away from playground equipment and other practical solutions to expanding access.

4.2 Mars Corporation grant

Will discuss at next meeting.

5. CLOSING OF MEETING

5.1 Next meeting date: Wednesday, October 27th

5.2 Adjournment

Motion by Michelle Warner, second by Abby Block to adjourn. Motion carried.

Due to no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:38 pm.