

**STEAMBOAT SPRINGS PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

January 11, 2017

The regularly scheduled public meeting of the Steamboat Springs Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order at approximately 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, January 11, 2017, in the Citizens' Meeting Room, Centennial Hall, 124 10th Street, Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

Parks and Recreation Commission members in attendance were Chair Alan Koermer, Vice Chair Doug Tumminello, Frank Alfone and Kady Watson, Holly Weik

Absent: Dave Kleiber and Sarah Floyd

Staff members present were Director of Parks, Open Space and Recreational Services John Overstreet and Staff Assistant Ally Press.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None.

Approval of Minutes: December 14

Commissioner Alfone: Delete the duplicate sentence about the meeting adjourning on the bottom.

Commissioner Tumminello moved to approve the December 14, 2016 public meeting minutes as amended; Commissioner Watson seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Interactive Design Discussion on Proposed Dog Area at Rita Valentine Park

John Overstreet:

We've been working with Steamboat Digs Dogs for about the past month on the this area. They approached City Council the middle of last year to get the dog ordinance changed and amended in certain areas, and they wanted to propose something different at the park.

Kathy Connell, Steamboat Digs Dogs:

We're a group of around 35 people, most of whom are dog owners and lovers. We've had a few people on our team who are not necessarily dog owners or dog lovers and have concerns about dogs in Steamboat. We've been meeting for around seven months trying to deal with this situation – how to provide recreational activity for dogs and their owners; how to

protect the public from dogs; how to deal with dog waste and some of the issues we have with dogs.

Tonight we're here to talk about Rita Valentine Park. Per our city ordinance, Rita Valentine Park is considered an off-leash dog park at this time. So we're not talking about doing a new dog area; we're trying to take a look at our one existing off-leash dog park and how to make it better – not just for the users but also for the neighbors. This area is a very sensitive area. I personally knew Rita Valentine, and having this area be open space and her love of dogs – what's happening now couldn't be better for what Rita had envisioned when she worked to get this land and make it a park. Many members of our group have been out at the park talking to the users about what their problems are and how it could be better. We've also been talking to the neighbors who have great concerns about the impact of this park on their neighborhood.

What comes forth initially is the problem with parking. There's a road in, but there really is no area for the cars to move off to provide more parking. So when there's a lot of people using the park, it's impacting the streets of the Anglers neighborhood. If I was in that neighborhood, I would have concerns about that around public safety and the safety of my family and animals. So one of the things that we began doing is looking at how we can improve this area with parking being part of that. Last meeting, we had Josh who is our landscape architect show you some concepts so we can get input from you and the public.

Another area that was an issue was that there's no water available. If you've been up there, you'll see a picnic table with lots of jugs of water. It's just kind of tacky and unsightly, and no water exists in that area. So one of the things we looked at is how we could provide a water feature. Many other areas in Colorado provide such features for their dogs to play in as well as drink.

The natural environment of these trails is beautiful, but we have a congestion problem at the beginning of the park where all the dogs congregate when they get out of their cars. They can become very intimidating for anyone walking through the park or anyone who has a small, sick or elderly dog. So what our group looked at is when the dogs come, how can we move them out to the park so they're not all congested there. There is a natural area in that park that's kind of a big hill, which we call Mutt Mountain on the plans. We'd like to have a bench up there where we can play fetch with our dogs and watch them run up and down while we sit there and enjoy the outdoors and the fantastic views.

Parks and Rec staff has said there's some issues on the trails when you come in there, and we want to leave most of it very natural and open space. That was Rita Valentine's vision. But these heavily used trails that go around, can we improve them so they don't become mud pies?

The other issue is dog poop. Staff said it works when you're all picking up the poop, otherwise it's hard on us because there's so much of it and it's heavy. So we have found a foundation that is looking to fund the idea of installing a dog waste composting station at both the Humane Society and at Rita Valentine. We have that person here who can talk to you about the specifics. These are very exciting because they have the capacity to create some form of energy. So if staff ever looked at the idea of putting a restroom there, conceivably the dog poop could make that light happen without the need for electrical. These are the kind of things we're trying to look at to have less impact.

Shade and Trees: Can we get some trees up there and have it look even nicer? If I lived in that neighborhood, I would be very interested in that.

As we have explored the issues of the lack of any trails or available recreation areas for dogs off leash and the impacts, the one consistent thing also true of the neighbors in Rita Valentine Park, everyone is afraid if we make any improvements it's going to increase traffic; nobody wants that in their neighborhood. I understand that. So part of our overall holistic plan is to say how throughout Steamboat can we create some areas in each park that people can play with their dogs off leash at certain times so we don't have our one off-leash park.

Raising Money: We're working very hard. We've come to the city and said we're going to raise the money for this. We're becoming a 501(C)(3) so people can get a tax deduction from donating to us. We're very excited about grant possibilities. Beneful, who is with Purina, has given a lot of money to other towns who have developed their dog parks. We are in contact with them, and we feel if done right with the city there's no reason they won't help us, too.

Beyond capital development, we are going to develop a maintenance endowment fund so we can fund dog biodegradable poop bags.

I was just talking with our chief of police Corey Christensen about our dog license program. Right now it's pretty dysfunctional. It's \$5, and people who register their dogs get nothing for it. We were talking about what if we raise those prices to \$15 a year and we provide x amount of biodegradable bags, as well as offering free courses for dog owners on recall training and voice control. We have a whole separate education component that I'd like to discuss at a later time.

Tonight, the goal is to get commissioner and public feedback about Rita Valentine Park.

Josh Anzulewicz:
Recapped ideas for the park:

Seating, shade, more parking, trails, water.
Use natural materials and try to keep to the open-space vision as much as possible to complement the views of Mount Werner and Sleeping Giant.
Access for wheelchair users via concrete walk.
Fenced dog area with agility equipment separated into areas for large and small dogs.

Double basin water fountain for dogs and humans.
Shore up the main loop that's most used; put crushed road base on the most heavily-used trails.
Utilize boulders for play features.
Access Mutt Mountain from the side and front. Use railroad ties as steps to go up. Have two benches on top that look back at Mount Werner.

Connell asked for feedback on whether the shelter area in the plan is too close to the entrance; does it need to be moved further down to help disperse the dogs?

Commissioner Koermer reiterated that this is part of the public process; no decision will be made tonight.

Connell clarified that the revised ordinance indicates that dog-related issues need to go through the Parks and Rec Commission, which will in turn make a recommendation to City Council.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Sydney Condon, 3rd Street:
Asked for clarification on the fenced-in area for dogs; Anzulewicz said the entire area is 7,500 square feet and it would be separated into areas for large and small dogs.

Don Valentine, Anglers Pond:
Right across the road from the park. I've been here 55 years. My wife Rita and I got those two pieces of property here; we didn't own them, but we the owners very well. Rita was on the City Council and a great lover of animals. She had this idea to try to get this donated to the city from these two owners. Someone from the city said that these were two failed subdivisions that people walked away from; that was not true. Both of the people were strong, wealthy people. My deceased wife and I worked with these people, and they donated the land to the city.

So it ended up as open space. Rita's idea was always to make it some kind of open space thing with dog runways and dog graveyards and leave it as open space. It's a highly used area. Every single month of the year there will be two to fifteen cars in the parking lot that's there. There have been several other proposals for the property: high school, police station. I went to that meeting with the police station. When I got

done speaking, everybody stood up and thanked me. The point is: The original idea was open space in the middle of this town. How many towns of this size have open space like this in the middle of them?

Yes, there should be some things done to it – like this proposal that is here now. There's water and sewer there; if you needed to build a water fountain for dogs or a public restroom there, those are the kind of things. Some trees could be planted and things like that. The parking definitely has to be enlarged.

I would like to propose as much as 75-\$100,000 for what you want to do here. There is a Rita Valentine fund; I believe it has \$22,000 in it. I don't know how to get it out of there; if somebody can get it out of there, I'll match it and add more.

All these proposals I think are mostly good ideas.

Jack Trautman, 605 Meadowbrook Circle, Routt County Riders:

We for the most part build multi-use, sustainable trails that are used for dog lovers, bikers, hikers, equestrian, and skiers and snowshoers in the winter. When we have muddy trails that people will make worse, we say those trails are closed; you can't use them at that time of year when you will do damage to the trails.

The one exception to our multi-use trails is NPR, the downhill trail at Emerald Mountain. That was both to accommodate a newer type of biking and also offload the multiuse trails of high-speed descenders. So it was as much a safety issue as it was to give a new experience for beginning downhill riders.

Trautman wondered if the proposed trails would remain multiuse or be exclusive to just dogs.

He indicated his experience with dog parks and usage in Fort Collins, Loveland and Boulder. He recounted his recent experience in Boulder at a dog park with fenced-in areas for large and small dogs. All dogs were leashed.

Trautman: In this community, we can build off-leash dog trails, and people say what's the big deal? We have them everywhere. There's no enforcement. So I don't get what the big deal is. Unless we get a community of dog owners who recognize the leash laws, I don't know why we would give them something they already have. They're not going to use it. There will be a group of people who do obey the leash laws and will use these trails, but they will be multiuse trails. My experience as a dog owner is that off-leash dogs and bikes don't mix. Even the best of voice controlled, sight-controlled dogs can't resist chasing a bike. So as we continue to use these trails for cyclists, how do we create a multi-use environment? Fort Collins, Loveland and Boulder have fenced-in dog parks. People love them. There's no bikes, horses or runners in there.

The challenges I think with this design are ones of multi-use. How do we educate this community to obey the rules for dogs on leash just like other users obey the rules in our community.

I hope we can make this work in a way that accommodates all users and doesn't create dangerous situations.

Connell: We want to make sure we're keeping multi-use trails.

Trautman recommended education for dog owners to ensure they leash their dog in leashed areas before they let their dog run off-leash.

Trautman clarified with Connell that off-leash dogs would not have the right-of-way over bikers in the Steamboat Digs Dogs proposal. He said that the document in the last meeting indicated that dogs would have the right-of-way over bikers.

Valentine reiterated that this is a unique opportunity to have open space for dogs in a town this size. There are plenty of bike paths all over town. There's no elk over there that are going to be bothered, so why can't the dogs be off leash.

Connell: We feel that there are potential conflicts for wildlife, and we feel signage and communication is really a part of this program. While moose don't tend to come where there's a lot of dogs, there might be a time in the early morning when the moose are up there. One of the things our group is doing is looking for more interactive signage so that in the event that the four moose that are over at Don's house cross the street and come into the park, we have a system set up so people know not to take their dogs off leash while they're there. We've been working with Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Wildlife is something we all have to learn to live with.

Susan Sullivan, 2430 Val D'Isere:

Given the size of the open space we have, I would like to see the fenced areas a little bigger – especially the small dog area. Most of the activity is to the left of the walkway, so there's a lot of open space on the right side where we could make the area bigger.

Kathy DJ Edwards, 737 Anglers Pond:

Personally, I've seen very few bikers there over the years. Josh mentioned something about agility equipment within the fenced area. I took my pup to an agility arena. It has a certain kind of gravel or base. Dogs have to stay on leash while other dogs use the agility equipment. I think there might need to be some signage as to how to work an agility area. Talk to someone in the field about how to build an agility area; or maybe not have an agility area.

John Ayer, 875 Pahwintah Street:

I want to speak on behalf of the less visible small dog community. My wife and I have been exercising our small dogs for 39 years around town. I would like the commission to look at a different alternative for small dog owners. I think a good candidate would be the fenced-off area in the pocket park at Fetcher Pond, which I believe is under the maintenance responsibility of Steamboat Water and Sanitation; it might require a partnership. This represents a very low initial and subsequent cost alternative for small dog exercise. It has all the desired attributes: shade trees, picnic tables, water, restrooms, waste bag stations, turf grass with permeable soils, enough size so you could close areas for turf rebuilding and restoration, Core Trail accessibility.

The small dog community is large in this town. They enjoy the same type of exercise as big dogs, but off leash, it does represent a user conflict. Some small dog users are comfortable intermingling with the big dogs, but many of us aren't.

Many small dogs have an alpha attitude, and when passing big dogs there can be confrontations. It's intimidating for the dogs; it cuts down on their sociability.

I think that this alternative either as an addition to the small dog area in this plan or as a replacement for it – I think that pocket park at Fetcher's Pond is ideal.

The usage of the park by visitors and locals for picnicking and ball throwing and things like that is negligible. The use you do see is when people sit on the benches underneath the trees and are on that grass with their dogs. I think it's an ideal alternative, low-cost situation for the city and the small dog community in this town. It could be implemented fairly fast, and I think it would be a really good thing for us seniors and other small dog lovers to have.

Glen Trailer, 593 Sand Hill Circle:

I run a business called Ski Butlers. We are the proud sponsors of Rita Valentine Trail. I just really want to say I'd like to be part of this process however we can. We'd like to keep our sponsorship. We're here to support. I want to make sure this is defined and developed for multiuse so that in the future it is not developed as anything else like a Fire Department, Police Station or affordable housing. I think this is very important. Make sure that you phase this out appropriately, make sure that where we start and where we finish is exactly in line with what the community wants.

Hugh Alexander, 1052 Longview Circle:

Our back yard faces the park. We're here to support the efforts that have been done as part of the neighborhood.

A couple suggestions:

Be bold, and address the City Council on the issue of the status of Rita Valentine Park. It's about time that action is taken to make it an open space park.

Because the parking lot is currently full a lot of the time, now there's cars parking on Longview and coming in at the end. So I would say the trail off Longview is now a permanent trail because it's now used year round. I would like to have some discussion on what could be done with that trail. Possibly you could put four or five cars the way the grading is currently done and make that an entrance so there's another way into the park. As far as a bike trail an all usable trail, I would recommend one going from Hilltop to Anglers. Even though the bike enthusiasts have suggested that the park would be used for bikes, that hasn't been the case with the exception of people transferring from Hilltop over to Anglers. As far as the size of the enclosure, I don't think it needs to be large, but Rita Valentine being the way it is, you can make it as large as you want. It's also time to be bold and to recommend that Kersey Turner and Rita Valentine be designated as one park, Rita Valentine Park, and as open space. The M&K property can probably stay the way that it is because with the contours of the property, building isn't going to be occurring on there anytime soon. It would be nice to also have that designated.

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION

Commissioner Alfone:

For staff, other than the designation of an off-leash dog park, is there any other official designation for Rita Valentine?

Craig Robinson, Parks, Open Space and Trails Manager:

At this time, it's classified as a park. It's park land.

Alfone confirmed that it's also indicated as an off-leash dog park.

Alfone wanted clarification of the various parcels in the area.

Robinson: On our plat and the maps that we use, we have two parcels: the 40-acre Rita Valentine Park parcel and what we have called the Kersey Turner parcel, which is a 35-acre parcel. There were roads platted to go through there at one time. There's water mains going through there. It's maintained and managed as open space, but I do not believe it has a designation. It is not designated as park land. It could be developed and used for anything at this point in time.

Alfone confirmed that the proposed improvements are all on the Rita Valentine parcel.

Tumminello said he thought that this proposed use of the Rita Valentine Park area is most consistent with what the city's view is for that park as well as what the founder's vision was. He suggested putting this proposal through as a master plan, which is ultimately approved by the city. This would make it a recognized amenity as an off-leash dog park with these other structural amenities that are added to it. All three parcels could be combined.

Tumminello: I think something that should be taken seriously is the trail development within the parks, so the social trails that are currently there are developed and well maintained. They are useful trails for multiple purposes. I'm sure Steamboat Digs Dogs could work with Routt County Riders on doing that.

Koermer: We obviously have multiple user groups interested in possible amenities for this park: disc golf course, social trails, dog park... What I think we need to do as a commission is make sure the word is out there through this public process so if there are any other user groups with potential ideas for this parcel that their voices are heard. Because as we move forward with this and present this to City Council, I think there's a great opportunity here to utilize the assets that we have at Rita Valentine Park to provide amenities that this town does not currently have. There is a lot of biking traffic that goes through Rita Valentine Park – people coming from Hilltop going down towards Anglers. So there may be a need to work with RCR and the city to ensure that we've got a commuter trail that's maintained and hopefully doesn't go through the area being

identified for a dog park. There's going to be conflicts, but how do we limit that conflict? In a town where there's a lot of recreational opportunities, conflict happens. Being able to mitigate that I think is instrumental to this process. That is going to potentially require some re-evaluation from Josh on these plans. Is there way to align a good trail through there and also to maintain and complete these trails that are specific to the dog park.

Thank you Mr. Valentine for your comments and for the statements you made related to contributing funds to Steamboat Digs Dogs. The big elk in the room with a lot of Parks and Rec stuff is how do we budget for it. It sounds like you're on the right path here to obtain funding to make something happen at this parcel.

Alfone: I think Steamboat Digs Dogs has done a great job of getting out there. I counted two articles in the paper so far. Today there was a public service announcement in the news briefs. The city website also had a nice article about this. So I think engaging the public has so far been good. I'd like to see that continue. I'd also like some input from Craig and other commission members on the next step. I don't want to slow this down; I think it's a good idea with good momentum. There's certainly a lot of details we need to work out, but I'm a little concerned that we're sending these folks away without any direction. What's the next step?

Robinson: What we talked about was summarizing the comments from tonight's meeting and providing that to the commission as well as Steamboat Digs Dogs so they can make any changes to improve their plan. I also agree with Alan that we want to make sure that all the user groups in the community have a say. At the end of the day, this is a master plan for the park moving forward. I think Council would ultimately be adopting that plan through the process if it makes it that far and everybody is onboard.

What we'll need is once there's a finalized plan, we'll need price estimates, final design and all the logistics it takes to build the park. It doesn't happen overnight; it's planned; it's timed. We need to understand what we're being asked to do from a staff perspective, then that needs to be heard by Council. We need clear identification of all those things before we get to the highest level of bringing it to Council.

Alfone: So what's the next step? Do we talk about that compiled information at the February meeting?

Robinson: As quickly as Steamboat Digs Dogs can turn around with revisions as necessary, we can get them back on the agenda.

Tumminello confirmed that the agenda would be to go over a finalized, structured plan. We would then vote on that, and through that vote we would give a recommendation to City Council.

Connell: Because we've all had experiences with miscommunication, I think it's incumbent for you to hear our position. That is: This open space was given to the city with a vision for it to be open space and involved with animals. I think when we let all the other users know, which we're already doing right now, it's really important that we're not saying c'mon, users, who has an idea of some use for this park besides this? I strongly think that is the wrong way to approach it. I think we need to honor our history and the people who have given to our community, and I for one am very resentful when people see something and immediately want to develop it. We have somebody who donated land; they wanted it to be open space; they wanted it to be involved with animals. There's got to be a damn good reason that we would do something different.

Tumminello: That's why I think there needs to be a master plan for the park, and this presumably is the master plan. Then you have a plan which has been vetted and which has been effectively codified by City Council, which gives the park a certain, defined, guaranteed use. I think that then serves your purpose, which is to maintain the park as open space with an off-leash dog focus.

Robinson: So there's a work session scheduled for January 25. If we're ready, we can come back and have another public meeting. Then on February 8 is a regular meeting where you're able to make motions.

Connell said she didn't think the group would be ready by January 25 because they likely won't have met with neighbors by then. She will keep staff informed.

Off-Leash Dogs at Whistler Park

Robinson: John worked with Kathy on this one as well. The city has a small parcel of land it owns at Whistler Park. The proposal is about having a trial period for off-leash dog recreation during the winter months when the park is not receiving its normal use.

Connell: Right now, most people at Whistler Park in the winter are there with their dogs off leash recreating. They access through the city land, and they go onto the land that's owned by Mount Werner Water and the school district. Right now, that is illegal. The reason we went through the changes in the ordinance is to allow Parks and Rec to at least be able to give temporary trial programs to see how it works if we were to allow that to become legal. People could do what they're already doing. Most live in the neighborhood; some of us drive from further away and we park our cars there. The city does not plow the parking lot, so we park on the street. If I was a neighbor – particularly the neighbors right across the street – I wouldn't like that. We're proposing that we look at the idea of opening up the parking lot – plowing it enough so that you could have two lanes of

cars so that people like me who go down there every day will park in there and not on the street.

We're also proposing that this start at 6 a.m. and end at 6 p.m. to lessen the potential for wildlife conflict. Chris from CPW liked the hours because wildlife usually comes down to that water in the very early morning, and they're there at night again. We want the trial period to stop on April 1 for mud season. We will at a later date be coming with how we can access off-leash areas on a more permanent basis, but this is a temporary trial only.

We are very concerned that this will not work if we don't allow the plowing out. I have talked with David at Streets; he said he felt he could help us open it up, but he is really challenged with staff and equipment at this time. So it would be incumbent upon us to contract out to be able to keep that clear enough so people could park.

So we're asking you to give thoughtful consideration for this to become legal. We're already doing it. We're illegal now.

I know there's some people here from the neighborhood who have concerns, and I think it's really important that we hear them as we continue down this path.

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION

Alfone declared that he is the general manager of Mount Werner Water and Sanitation and indicated that he would recuse himself if the conversation turned to the parcel owned by that entity.

Connell pointed out on a map where the proposed off-leash zone would be.

She pointed out where cars currently park and turn around and indicated where the group thinks there should be no parking.

Connell: In the winter, the majority of people walk into the park. There's multiple trails out there. Some people will enter the park by Creekside Condominiums where the road ends. We do not seem to have many people parking in that area that I know of. We've been very successful this winter keeping the poop off all the trails, and we've heard that staff agrees. Connell pointed out the location of the one receptacle. She showed the route she takes through the park, all of which is not on city land. She indicated which parcel is owned by which entity.

Connell: The boards (of the school district and Mount Werner Water) have taken no action. I've talked with Brad Meeks; he indicated they just don't want to have any expense.

Tumminello: Have you thought of any metrics to be applied to this trial? What defines success and what defines failure?

Connell: We have not. I certainly think neighbors are our biggest proponents or opponents. If there are issues that come up, I think they're

coming from neighbors. But I have not come up with metrics, and we can certainly try to figure out something.

Tumminello: If the bigger picture is off-leash areas throughout the city, how do you define whether that's a successful program?

Connell: We have to look at all users and make sure we're accommodating everyone. Dog users are as big a group as the bikers and as parents with their kids. We all can't be in the same area. There is an area in the park with a playground. We recognize that having dogs off leash around there would be an accident waiting to happen. It's happening, but we don't want to be proponents of it. When we do this longer term, we're going to have to look at how we get dogs in and out of here without conflicting with other user groups, including teams. Chamber has not found a place for all our out-of-town teams to practice, which has overstressed our pocket parks. Sooner or later people are going to decide that they want their parks back. Meanwhile, we need the business.

Alfone: Has David with Streets agreed to plow?

Connell: He has agreed to open it up but not to maintain it. We don't know yet. We have to work out the plowing situation. We should know that by the next meeting.

Alfone: Would you install any type of temporary signage that tells people that this is a trial program and it is in fact okay to have your dog off leash?

Connell: I think we would have to. I wanted to have No Parking signs down there, but they can't be placed in the winter. Those of us who are down there regularly have thought of putting stickers on cars.

Alfone: What sort of public outreach/notification would be given to the community letting them know that this is a trial period and this is where you need to go. I'm sure you'll have some comments from owners. But have you thought about that yet?

Connell: We have thought about that. I think between having signage down there and the public process here there will be some coverage in the paper, but we are not interested in bringing people from other areas to this park. We're going to be coming to you with other park ideas because we want to spread it around. All neighbors around all parks have the same problem: They're concerned that opening that door is going to have a flood of more dogs and more people.

Alfone: So it will be more of a soft opening.

Koermer: With the plowing of the parking lot, any ideas on where the funding would come from?

Connell: Right now, without even being a 501(C)(3), we've raised almost \$5,000 from our GoFundMe account. We have a long list of people who are waiting to contribute to Steamboat Digs Dogs. The 18th is when we get the final approval from the Yampa Valley Community Foundation.

Koermer: So it would be self-funded.

Connell: Yes. I think we're going to have to do it to be able to get you guys to say yes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Susan Pollis, 1535 Meadow Lane:

I think Kathy has touched on all of our concerns: parking, having people come from all over the city, dog waste, conflicts with other users including kids and teams. The additional dog population would worry me. Number one though would be the parking and congestion. In the summertime, that parking lot is full and the overflow comes into our neighborhood. I think that needs to be addressed.

Don White, Meadow Lane:

My biggest question is behavior. People do not use the parking lot even in the summertime. They won't go in there even if you plow it. I don't see that working. They're just going to drive up and park. Enforcement is the only way people will use the lot.

Temporary becomes permanent. That's my biggest issue. If somebody says I have a park, I have access, that becomes a permanent part of their brain. The only way you eliminate that is you have to go through enforcement. We know enforcement didn't work before because that's where Steamboat Digs Dogs started this whole process.

Kathy, you mentioned that the park is cleaner. It is not. It is worse. You can't see the dog poop because of the snow, but I see it every day. It has gotten worse.

There's a lot of things involved with this park, and you need to think about when you do something temporary, you do something permanent.

Lacrosse has taken over the park in the summer, even though this park was supposed to be a neighborhood park.

You started a process of making a very good idea with your plan. You're bypassing that without really thinking about the bigger picture of what the end use is. If you do this little step, it's going to become permanent.

What if I have a fire or an accident and I need an emergency vehicle, and they can't get around because there's no room.

Terry Ostrome, Across from Don:
Reiterated Don's points.

Park has been taken over in the summer by teams. There are signs on the road where we live that say No Parking, but people still park there. Come spring thaw, there's an unbelievable amount of dog waste in the park.

I'm a dog lover, and we used the park all the time with our dog until a couple years ago.

I just worry that the second you plow the parking lot and say everybody's welcome to come down, it's overrun and inundated.

It's a horrible corner with the hill.

The parking lot would be a wonderful thing if people would use it.

It's an absolute mess in the summer. I don't know how much this would affect it in the winter; I'm just concerned with opening that up to the general public.

I know there's limited places you can take dogs in the winter, so I support the thing if it could all be worked out and people will pick up after their dogs, which I don't think will happen.

But it's tough; it's just a congested little area.

Chris Middledorf, Colorado Parks and Wildlife:

I want to commend Kathy and their entire committee. They've reached out to our agency on multiple occasions. We've had some very good conversations. They realized up front that there's certainly conflict between wildlife and pets in town. That's a big concern for us. The community values wildlife; we don't want to see anything happen to a moose, elk or any other animal. Even more important is the safety of our community. We've had some issues in the past with moose and dogs and people being cornered in their houses. I think we need to think about these parks and trails as they come online very carefully. Kathy and I discussed the possibility where as they bring up parks or trail segments to be open to dogs off leash, we prioritize it based on the probability of wildlife conflicts. There are certainly trails and parks that we have more wildlife frequenting. But any park or trail in town we could have a moose on at any point in time. I just think we need to be very deliberate when it comes to having dogs off leash.

You mentioned earlier this evening about what kind of things we can do to mitigate the problems. I think we could look at spatial and temporal closures; temporal being seasons and times of day; and spatial in places like Whistler at Walton Creek having only half that park open to dogs off leash. Again, the key component is enforcement. Who is going to be there to keep those folks from going further out. The reason I bring up Walton Creek is that's a corridor that moose really favor. To the south of Whistler Park, we do have elk that are coming down into their winter range, and right now is a pretty critical time. Having dogs mixing up with elk is something we don't want to happen. So having that southwest parcel be protected I think would be beneficial to wildlife, and that's something we can continue to work on with the committee.

Conceptually, I like the idea of fenced-in dog parks where responsible dog owners who don't have a pet that is well disciplined that they can't control can actually go into a fenced area. We do have moose that come into the Rita Valentine area frequently; occasionally, we see some elk there too. Again, I think the primary component here is enforcement. But when we have places where dogs are off leash, I think we're going to have some conflicts. But I think we can work through these issues. If you have any questions for Parks and Wildlife, I'm always available. I've been speaking with Craig Robinson about this and other issues, and we always have an open dialog any time.

Greg Coler, 1580 Meadow Lane:

This is a tough decision for us to make. I walk my dog in that park every day. I see what Don and Terry are talking about. The point I would like to make about dog waste is there are people around there picking it up. We pick it up and try to take care of the park. Your staff has noted it as one of the cleanest parks around.

If you have an owner that won't pick up after his dog, it doesn't matter whether a dog is on or off leash. I think most people who use that park with their dogs try to take care of it.

As far as the parking issue, if you put the No Parking signs up and make it more difficult for people to park on the street, and you open up the parking lot, maybe people would tend to park there.

You've also got a school area there that's got plenty of parking for that park.

I understand we don't want a million people down there with their dogs because that's going to make it tougher on everybody. But maybe we can see how it goes. Quite frankly, I do walk around with my dog off leash in that park a lot. I have him on leash until I get to the park. I would just like to do this in a legal manner.

I did have a rather serious discussion with an animal control officer at one time. She pointed out the fact that Whistler Park is designated as a sports park with lacrosse and rugby and soccer going on there. Is that the direction we're taking with this park? That kind of rubbed me the wrong way because I think this was designated as a public park for our neighborhood.

We need to designate this park as to what it's for and what we can or can't do with it.

If we can get across the park to other areas to walk our dog off leash, that's what I would like to see – at least some trial method to see what happens in our neighborhood.

Koermer asked Robinson for information on the park's designation.

Robinson: I don't believe we have an official designation. It would definitely be classified as a neighborhood park in the true definition that of what National Parks and Recreation Association uses. Unfortunately, with

Steamboat, the way we've done things and what Kathy was alluding to, we are enthusiastic about having sports teams in our town, and we don't have the sports complex that many communities have. So we end up with many facilities that don't have adequate parking like Ski Town Park, our heaviest-used park with the most diverse sports and the most amount of use all summer long, and there is no parking lot. Memorial Park downtown has a very small parking lot, and it's one of the most heavily used youth sports soccer fields. Lacrosse is at Whistler. It hasn't been officially designated that way; it's just our use is challenged.

Connell: May I just make one closing statement as a public person, not a committee member: We're right to the point where we know we've got to make some changes. We can go on as we're doing being illegal every day we take our dogs down there and working hard to clean up after it. We're asking for a trial; not to put a big article in the paper. We're asking for a trial to say: Let it be legal for us to walk across there and be with our dogs off leash in the winter till April 1. I was trying to work on helping the parking situation with the neighbors. I'll still go down there every day, and I'll still park, and I don't have a choice but to park on the street. But I'm not going to stop going down there. I do feel the bigger picture for Parks and Rec and our City Council is we have to take a broad, hard look at our parks and what we're doing globally master plan-wise. We have to face these big nuts like if we're going to attract recreation, are we still going to squeeze out neighborhood parks.

Dogs aren't going away. They are populating just as much as we are populating, and we're growing here, too. This problem is only going to become worse. What we're trying to do is softly let the community know that we all just want to be in our neighborhoods to be able to walk with our dogs and play with them. We hear the wildlife concerns; we hear the parking concerns; but we've got to start somewhere. So we're saying temporary, and I think we're all dedicated to try to work with it.

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION

Koermer: This was on our agenda as a discussion; no motions or voting to be decided on or anything.

Alfone: Have you vetted this with Chief Christensen?

Connell: Yes. He said he couldn't be here tonight. I talked to him at about 3:15 today, and I told him what we were proposing. I asked him if he had a problem with it; he said "I don't have a problem at all with this." But, you need to check with him. He is very supportive. He knows it's a ridiculous issue; that's why they're not enforcing it right now. I agree with the neighbors that there have been times of dog poop, but we're working very hard on it. A temporary trial means it can be revoked if there's problems.

Alfone: Staff is picking up more waste in the dumpster, which to me means people are picking up more waste. I kind of align this to: If you build it, they will come. Even though you're going to open with a soft opening, if the word does get out, and you see a great influx of people there, there could be some traffic issues, emergency vehicle issues, parking issues. Before I would make a recommendation to Council, I would want to make sure that Chief Christensen understands that what comes with this might be additional patrol, additional enforcement, and he's okay with that as a trial period. I'm not against this; I just want to make sure everyone understands what potentially could happen. I think when people hear about it, there's going to be more people going there, which is going to lead to potentially more problems. If everyone's on the same page, and everybody's working together to see if it does work, I would certainly be in favor of the trial period.

Don Whit wondered about conflicts with Priest Creek based on the fact that it's so easy to get over the fence with all the snow.

Tumminello suggested that there could be signs that say off-leash on trails, on leash elsewhere on the property.

Paula Silverman, Fish Creek Falls Road:

We've thought about where we would put signs. On one side of the sign it would say: You Are Now Entering an Off-Leash Space.

On the opposite side of the sign it would say: Please Leash Your Dog.

So those are types of signs we've talked about having there. Other signs saying: Test Area; Please Be Sure To Pick Up After Your Pet.

In terms of brochures, we've looked at how we're letting people know. Part of the cost our group would be taking on is to help develop with staff and CPW what should be in this brochure.

Then taking key points from that and making marquis.

Spring is a big time for cleanup that we will do. We need to find a way to have a repercussion for those owners who don't pick up after their dogs; it doesn't make a difference if they're on leash or off. We've all talked about taking a more educational approach where we talk to people and say: You really do need to clean up after your pet.

I've given people bags. If our group does that, that does spread and helps with the situation.

Tumminello: Maybe when Steamboat Digs Dogs is an up and running 501(C)(3) they can enter into an agreement with the city where they would patrol parks to clean dog poop or what have you.

Silverman: We're looking at getting different groups to come out in the spring and fall to help do cleanup.

Connell reiterated that they just want to try it on a temporary basis as quietly as possible; she acknowledged that there will probably be a newspaper article about this.

Koermer: I think there's a valid point with temporary status potentially having a hangover. It might be April 1, but people may still think they can utilize the park into late April and May. So enforcement will become a very relevant topic for Chief Christensen and Parks and Rec staff. I think one thing that would really bring the community together is if there was a sort of river cleanup initiative but for the parks with dog waste. When the snow melts, there's a dedicated day where everyone who uses a park or is willing to volunteer their time does a massive cleanup. I see this as an opportunity to test something out, but I do have concerns that temporary may become permanent.

Tumminello reiterated his concerns over lack of metrics.

Koermer: So with the help of SDD and staff, we'd have to develop metrics to measure what exactly the goal is:
Off-leash park users, interactions with wildlife, neighbor complaint, how much waste comes out of the park.

Tumminello: I don't want to see this being billed as a test when it's really just a wink and a nod that we're changing the law so this becomes an off-leash park. Then temporary does become permanent. If it's a test, it needs to serve a purpose.

Koermer: And it's happening already.

Connell: And it's happening in every park. There is not a dog owner in this town who's not taking their dog off leash to recreate with it because it's a need for the dogs and the dog owners. So what our police have recognized is that after the super enforcement period of time, maybe that was creating issues, so they've backed off except when there's a complaint or it's obvious. In every single area of town, people are doing this. The idea is that seems like a lousy way to treat your citizens and the dogs. That's why we're looking at the whole picture. We're just looking at a temporary thing here. I personally don't know how to measure it other than neighbor complaints, cars, misuse.

Koermer asked for information on citations for off-leash dogs in that park; Robinson will check with Police.

Alfone: As I see it, it's a request to go from an unofficial off-leash park to an official. Based on what additional complaints, comments, concerns, poop might be out there, you're going to learn something from that. It may not change at all, or you may have 25 calls within the first week of some

parking violations. With that information, then you can determine was this a good test or not a good test. As for up-front, measurable metrics, I don't see it being even possible. I think something needs to happen, and this is the attempt to get something started. But it happens all the time right now. It's unfortunate, but it is what it is. Let's make it an official designation, give it a test period, and see what happens. I hate to sound so nonchalant about it, but I think that's what you're asking.

Robinson: To clarify, the language of the new ordinance states that it can be approved with a recommendation from the Parks and Rec Commission, and it can be withdrawn with a recommendation from the Commission. City Council has final authority. If a problem is identified and it's not able to be resolved, that privilege can be revoked.

Connell requested that this be put on the February 8 meeting agenda as a voting item.

User Groups

Alfone: We had discussed several meetings ago designating commission members to certain user groups and interacting with them as the face of the Parks and Rec Commission. I still firmly believe we should try to do that. Should we put that on a future agenda?

Tumminello confirmed that those user groups were approved.

Tumminello: Now I think it's a matter of just rolling it out.

Alfone: I was looking at the goals for '16, and it's out front to be more open and get out in public. And when do we need to start thinking about 2017 goals?

Ally Press will put reviewing the user groups and addressing current and future goals on the agenda for the next meeting on January 25.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Tumminello moved to adjourn the meeting at approximately 7:59 p.m.

Commissioner Alfone seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.