

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission
FROM: Public Works
DATE: December 15, 2020
SUBJECT: Ramos Park Off-Leash Pilot Program

RECOMMENDATION

Staff will present a draft park renovation plan and results of the community input meeting to the Parks and Recreation Commission. No action will be taken.

BACKGROUND

Capital improvement Project (PG-14000) with funding of \$229,000 was approved by the City Council to address park maintenance and renovation needs at Ramos Park in Fiscal Year 2020. The renovation includes replacement of the playground equipment, benches, trash receptacles and drinking fountain as well as accessibility improvements and possible renovations to the large, paved area.

The first community meeting was held on January 29, 2020 where the community raised the issue of off-leash dog parks and inquired about including a dog park in the overall design. A dog park was not an aspect of the original Capital Improvement Project for Ramos, but the community at the first meeting felt it was an issue that needed to be addressed. An on-line community survey followed the first community meeting and a question was added about community desire to include a dog park in the overall renovation plans. Of the 198 residents that responded to the survey, 117 (58%) supported the addition of a dog park to Ramos Park.

During the on-line survey period, several residents next to the proposed dog park location within the park reached out to the City with concerns related to the proposed fencing restricting their access to the park and potential noise from an established dog park. To address these concerns, staff proposed a pilot off-leash dog park area.

Both the community and the adjacent neighbors were supportive of the idea of the pilot off-leash program, and with assistance from the Dog Park Ad Hoc group, city staff has started the process of structuring the pilot program.

Overall Goals of the off-leash dog area include:

- Provide a clearly defined area and time dogs can be off-leash in the park.
- Reduce/eliminate off-leash use of the programmed turf field area.
- Allow the community to continue to use the designated park area for off-leash purposes

- Eliminate the need and cost of fencing for a designated dog area.
- Maintain access to the park from the adjacent neighbors.
- Create an opportunity for the community to be responsible for maintaining the rules of the off-leash area.
- Have a minimal impact on the park.
- Provide areas of multi-use in the park.
- The off-leash area pilot will be conducted with no community promotion.

The proposed off-leash dog pilot is structured in the following way:

- A defined passive turf area in the park adjacent to the programmed turf field is the designated location of the off-leash area. The area will be maintained in its current condition with no fence added. (Exhibit A)
- A sign will be posted at the off-leash area that will show the boundaries of the space the dogs are to be kept.
- A sign will display the off-leash rules. (Exhibit B)
- The sign will also include the times the dog park is available, currently set twice a day from 7-9 am and 4-7 pm or dark (whichever comes first). Only during these times will dogs be allowed off-leash in the designated area.
- A waste bag dispenser will be installed. No trash receptacle will be provided to reduce staff maintenance.
- As an aspect of the capital improvement project a 20' wide native planting buffer with a 42" tall chain link fence will be installed along the frontage of E. Meadow Dr. to reduce dogs or dog toys from entering the street. This work will not be completed prior to the start of the pilot.
- The pilot program will last for a period of 9 months or longer depending on the recommendation of the evaluators.
- The pilot program evaluators will be composed of 9 members
 - 2 dog owners
 - 2 adjacent neighbors
 - 2 field users
 - 2 PRC Ad Hoc members
 - 1 Staff member
- Staff will work with the neighbors and field users to identify the evaluators
- Evaluators will meet a total of 3 times (once every 3 months) via a web call to review the data and make any recommendations/changes to the pilot to make it more successful.
- The evaluators will be required to visit the park 6 times (3 times in the morning time and 3 times in the afternoon) over the first 3 month period for a time span of 15-30 minutes to evaluate the overall use of the off-leash area.
- Evaluators will fill out the evaluation form provided by the City (Exhibit C).
- At the end of the 9 months the evaluation committee will make a recommendation to the Parks and Recreation Commission to either establish a long term off-leash area or to cease the use of the off-leash area.

- The Parks and Recreation Commission will be presented with the recommendation at a monthly meeting and make the final decision on the use of the off-leash area.

DISCUSSION

Staff requests further discussion and input from the Commission on the following items:

- Review the off-leash dog park rules
- Review of the off-leash area times of use
- Review of the evaluation form questions and scoring/points
- Review of the overall 9-month process

NEXT STEPS

- Community meeting to review the scope of the pilot program
- Return to the Parks and Recreation Commission seeking a recommendation to Council to implement the pilot program
- Seek Council approval for the pilot program
- Staff to identify and recruit evaluators
- Evaluation group kick off meeting
- Installation of park amenities (sign and waste bags)
- Start of Pilot program
- Three evaluation committee meetings (every 3 months)
- PRC update during the pilot
- Evaluation committee recommendation
- PRC vote to continue or cease the off-leash area pilot

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The proposed recommendations are consistent with Policy C-26 of the Community Services element of the Comprehensive Plan that encourages maintaining park facilities as safe and healthy community assets; and Policy C-22 that encourages new community facilities to have flexible functions to ensure adaptability to the changing needs of the community.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Draft Off-Leash Dog Park Area Exhibit

Attachment B: Draft Off-Leash Area Rules

Attachment C: Evaluation Form

PREPARED BY

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