CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS
STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: November 20, 2012

To: Honorable Mayor & City Council

From: Steve Zoet, Director of Community Services

Subject: Request by Vice Mayor Mirisch for an Update on Possible Locations for an Off-Leash Dog Park

Attachments: 1. Aerial Photographs of LaCienega and Roxbury Parks

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INTRODUCTION

The community's desire for an off-leash dog park has been brought forward to and discussed with the Recreation and Parks Commission on numerous past occasions. Due to higher priority needs and the lack of identified and approved funds, discussions did not advance beyond the exploratory phase.

Vice Mayor Mirisch has asked for an update on the status of these discussions and a presumed desire for a recommendation that City Council may wish to assess and consider whether this is a public asset they wish to fund.

DISCUSSION

The Recreation and Parks Commission has discussed the topic of an off-leash dog park on no less than six past occasions where the item was formally agendized for discussion. As City Council is aware, the City does not have an inventory of undeveloped, surplussed land where the construction of a dog park may more easily occur. However, the Commission and staff discussed a variety of options and locations at length that it thought would be appropriate for consideration. These include the following.

Orange Grove

Staff continues to have discussions with representatives from the City of Los Angeles regarding possible public access to and use of the area adjacent to Coldwater Park commonly referred to as the Orange Grove. Any decisions regarding the various possible uses of this site, if approved, would have to be negotiated and would involve the appropriate representatives and groups from both jurisdictions.

LaCienega Park – Athletic Field 3

Some communities like us that are challenged by similar circumstances (limited land opportunities) have looked to dual-purposing their enclosed athletic fields to serve as off-leash dog parks during non-scheduled hours. Although this arrangement has been successfully employed within other communities, with dog owners often forming an organized group assuring that all dog waste has been picked up and properly disposed of, the Commission did not support this consideration due to health concerns and lack of City staff to otherwise maintain and "police" the area for compliance.

Coldwater Park

There is an open, grassed area within Coldwater Park north of Fire Station 2 that is under the administrative control of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works. The area serves as a preliminary drain field before Coldwater Canyon storm runoff enters a large, underground culvert that feeds into the storm sewer system serving the greater Los Angeles basin.

Staff presumed the presence of a dog park and the possibility of dog waste being washed into the system would not be allowed by the County, however, when their staff was contacted they did not immediately reject the concept indicating that similar situations exist with horse trails and related circumstances elsewhere within the County. However, with very limited parking that exists to serve users, concerns about access and the impact it may have on the bordering residential community this location was not perceived as feasible and therefore was not pursued further.

LaCienega Park

Staff also looked within our two larger community parks, LaCienega and Roxbury, for any possible opportunities. LaCienega Park, by design, is an active park and is largely dedicated to athletics through the presence of its three athletic fields. Aside from the aforementioned option of possibly dual purposing an athletic field, there is limited land that would be suitable for hosting a dog park. The largest area not dedicated for an intended use is a triangular portion on the park's southwest corner. This area is limited in size and currently serves as one of the few open and accessible areas within the park for passive use.

Neither the Commission nor staff feels that LaCienega Park, under its present configuration and use, provides a suitable space and environment to host an off-leash dog park.

Roxbury Park

Roxbury Park currently serves a large population of dog walkers as witnessed by staff and recorded in daily Park Ranger report logs. The Recreation and Parks Commission and staff feels that this park is the most suited location for consideration of an off-leash dog park for the following reasons; convenient access and parking, location opportunities that reduce or eliminate noise and other inconveniences to the adjacent residential community, regular hosting of dog adoption and dog related community special events (Woofstock) and established usage by a large population of dog walkers.

After having reviewed all aspects of this more passive, open park, the Commission and staff feel that repurposing one of the site's existing lawn bowling greens into a dog park is suitable for consideration. The westerly green is currently utilized by the Beverly Hills Croquet Club. As the active members associated with the historic Beverly Hills Lawn Bowling Club continue to decrease, abilities to serve their needs have been provided for on a single green which is the one located adjacent to the intersection of Olympic Boulevard and Roxbury Drive. Staff have had discussions with officers of the lawn bowling club and confirmed their ability and willingness to share the use of their green with the croquet players so as to not deprive that group of their continued play should City Council wish to repurpose the use of their space. Both greens are maintained to standards that are similar enough so as to not adversely affect each others use. Scheduling coordination would allow dual uses to be accommodated.

Should City Council wish to consider Roxbury Park as a suitable location for a dog park, the suggested area is preferred for a variety of reasons. The location is of sufficient size (120'x120', 14,400s/f) to serve this purpose and already has a defined border with seating that is easily fenced. Retrofit costs, which would include a five foot chain link fence, water fountain with pet bowl, trash receptacles and bag dispensers, are estimated to be approximately $20,000.

For purposes of consideration, this area is currently maintained and dedicated for use by the Beverly Hills Croquet Club. Like the Lawn Bowling Club, this group continues to experience a decline in membership and use. Our most recent roster submission indicates a total membership of 15, of which only two are Beverly Hills residents. Lawn bowling greens are expensive to maintain as they require special mowers and much higher frequency of mowing than traditional turf. As a result, the expenses incurred, the amount of space committed to this use, the few numbers of participants involved and the ability to relocate and accommodate those who are suggests that a repurposing of this area for a dog park or an alternative use is appropriate.

FISCAL IMPACT

Staff estimates that necessary retrofit costs of this site to accommodate this use would be approximately $20,000. The Department does not have identified funds for this purpose within its current operating or capital budgets.

Staff does not foresee the need to budget any additional funds for annual operating costs as the operation of these types of amenities typically have limited site impacts and replacement requirements. Additionally, site upkeep is intended to be largely self-governed. Existing park staff and funds dedicated to its overall operation are adequate to sustain operations.

RECOMMENDATION

If City Council is desirous of providing an off-leash dog park within the city, the Recreation and Parks Commissioners and staff support the identified Roxbury Park lawn bowling green as the preferred location for the reasons previously cited.

Staff further recommends that the use, if approved, be allowed on conditions that include requirements that the area is properly used and maintained by the dog owners. Requirements of use would include that dog owners clean up after their pets and that noise generated from the site does not prove to be disruptive to the adjacent residential community. A six month trial period could be initially imposed to help assure that participants respect the presence of other park users and surrounding residents.

Like many activities and services provided by and through the City, there is an element of added risk and liability that is associated with the offering. The City's Risk Manager was consulted on this activity and feels that, with proper signage, placement and efforts to enforce appropriate use the City would not be exposing itself to any greater liability than its other offerings or services. As an additional means to help monitor and enforce proper use of the site, staff will seek community members who would be willing to help form a group to oversee the use of the dog park. Their purpose would be to help assure compliance with all posted rules thereby helping to minimize risk and sustain its long-term operation. Should City Council direct staff to develop a dog park, staff will also work with the City Attorney's office and seek additional direction.

Noel Marquis	Steve Zoet
Finance Approval	Approved By

Attachment 1

120' x 120' = 14,400 square feet
Roxbury Memorial Park
© 2012 Google
1989
34°03'30.40" N 118°24'23.80" W elev 231 ft

La Cienega Park
© 2012 Google
1989
34°03'40.87" N 118°22'28.86" W elev 138 ft