

Parks Advisory Board Meeting Minutes February 25, 2015

Present- Norma Hernandez, Jessica Schleif, Peter O'Farrell, Andrew Fick, Tammy Loughran, Eric Halverson, Joe Miltengerger and Jim Holen

Absent- Grace Laman and Howard Rub

Guests- Michelle Bisek, Leslie Long, Kurt Englund and Dave Gasser

Staff- Angela Cosby, Terra Patterson, Randy Boehr and Jonah Dart-McLean

Meeting was called to Order at 6:50am by chairperson Norma Hernandez.

Approval of Minutes

1. Jim Holen motioned to approve the minutes, Eric Halverson seconded the motion. January minutes were approved.

Public Comment

1. Claudia Russell, 4828 Birch Street, Astoria, expressed concerned about the proposed dog park. She has lived in Alderbrook for 23 years and has walked her dog all over the area. She loves dogs and dog parks, but she was concerned that a dog park could disrupt the wildlife. The wildlife is one of the reasons she loves living in that neighborhood. Traffic and safety issues will increase when more people are brought into a small undeveloped area. The area where the dog park is proposed seems to be the last open area of the riverfront in Astoria and is a gorgeous resource that should be protected. She was also concerned about the Parks budget. She has been asked several times to volunteer to clean up and do maintenance at local parks. This is a nice idea, but opening up another park when the department already needs volunteers is a concern.
2. Lorna Zametkin, 373 47th, Astoria, said she has lived in and has walked many dogs in Alderbrook for many years. The neighborhood has changed for the better with more people walking through the area. She believed a dog park was not a good idea because of all the same reasons mentioned by Ms. Russell. She also believed a dog park should be in a more public area so that more people can see what is happening. Dog parks typically have running water and a restroom, which would be expensive to install. However, she was sure the homeless people living in the area would be happy to have a restroom nearby. More public access to a dog park would keep more eyes on the park, which would help people keep control of and help ensure people cleaned up after their dogs. She believed the dog park was a good idea, but possibly behind City Lumber. She wanted to preserve the wildlife in the proposed area, which would be easily spooked by dogs.
3. Toni Knier, 214 53rd Street, Astoria, said she has been working on her house for the last seven years. She bought the property because it was in such a beautiful location. The area is a dog park to her. Her dog loves the area and she believed people were taking more pride in the area since the road was paved. Everyone helps to pick up trash and keeps the area nice. There is a parking problem in the area and the waste trucks have trouble turning around. The area is lovely just the way it is and people of all ages are enjoying it more. She asked the Parks Board to consider another location for the dog park.
4. Rich Knier, 214 53rd Street, Astoria, said the access and parking to a dog park in this area was a problem. He was also concerned about the preservation of the pristine natural land, which is a watershed with a lot of sensitive animals and birds. Drivers enter the area from the Crest Motel and 47th Street and they do not realize how fast they are going. The road narrows and

drivers must make a turn. There are traffic and pedestrians in this small narrow area, which is not set up for additional traffic. The Parks Board has received letters about this concern for lack of adequate access. He believed the area should be preserved as is because Astoria does not have many areas like it. He was against a dog park.

5. Debi Curl, 283 53rd Street, Astoria, confirmed that all of Parks Board members had visited the site to consider the dog park. She sent the Board a letter earlier that week stating why she was opposed to the dog park. In addition to the concerns in her letter, she was concerned about the number of people that walk through the neighborhood towards the river trail. Residents in the neighborhood do not believe they own the natural area in Alderbrook and love sharing it with everyone that comes for the Riverwalk. The people that come through the neighborhood from other communities will stop, talk, and bring energy to the community. She tries to keep her yard like a little park so when people come down through the neighborhood, they can feel like the entire area is a vision of beauty. The dog park will detract from the whole Riverwalk experience.
6. Susan Swanby 5348 Alder Street, Astoria, said her house is two houses from the river trail parking area. She was upset about the process used to select a park. She believed the neighborhood should have been notified earlier in the process so that residents could be involved. Residents were only notified two weeks before the neighborhood meeting that a dog park had been proposed in their neighborhood and that a decision would be made later in the month. Residents had to cram to bring up facts about the area, which has really been taxing. She has tried to contact the City by email, but has not received a response. She asked the Parks Board to review their process and make it easier on the public. She would be disappointed if the City put a dog park in a location that has undergone so much change since the road has been paved. The neighborhood is not designed to accommodate a dog park.
7. Gina Kytr, 5253 Ash Street, Astoria, said the Alderbrook community does not support a dog park in the neighborhood. She was concerned about safety issues that occur when dog owners are not paying attention to their dogs. She was almost knocked over when a dog owner was paying attention to her child and the dog was not on a leash. More dogs would create more opportunities for people like her to be knocked down.
8. Suzie McClurry, 5241 Ash Street, Astoria, said she has lived in Alderbrook since 1972 and has seen the area go from wild to maintained. The area has seen many improvements, but increasing traffic would be over the top. The intersection by Crest Motel is very dangerous. There is a lot of vehicle and foot traffic in the area, but no sidewalks. Josie Peper and the Kytters asked her to voice their concerns that the opposition expressed at the neighborhood meeting to the dog park was not carried over by the Parks Department. Many people objected verbally and in writing, but the City does not seem to care or to listen to what the residents are saying. This is an insult to those who have voiced their opinion. The dog park would create safety issues and a lot of money would be needed to change the roads and infrastructure to accommodate parking and traffic. The footpath and Riverwalk trail are great and she suggested people walk, instead of drive, to Alderbrook Beach. She asked the Parks Board to think about the neighborhood.
9. President Hernandez thanked everyone for speaking. She reminded that the Parks Board acts as a facilitator with regard to the dog park. A separate group came up with the idea for the dog park. The Parks Board takes this issue seriously and is listening to the public's comments. City Council's goal is to have a dog park in Astoria and it is the Parks Board's responsibility to consider all of the options. Alderbrook is not the first location the Parks Department has considered for a dog park. Many sites have been considered over the last year and a half and the Alderbrook site is just one more step in the process.

President Hernandez

1. What do you hear- President Hernandez said people love the new playground at the recreation center. Also, Staff is happy to have Jonah Dart-McLean as their new supervisor.

Employee Recognition

1. Angela Cosby and Jonah Dart-McLean recognized Randy Boehr as the January employee of the month.

Old Business

- A. Tammy Loughran gave an update on the Parks Foundation. The foundation continues to work with Friends of McClure Park, the teen center, and the Garden of Surging Waves. The foundation will be raising money through a fundraiser.
- B. Jonah Dart McLean gave an update on the Parks Lawn and Plant Management Task Force, which is laying the framework for long-term planning for the City's parks with regard to the use of herbicides, chemical substances and other practices to improve quality of the turf and beds. A variety of solutions will be tested at five different sites to determine the levels of care and standards of use for each site, which should help the Task Force develop a long-term plan.

New Business

- A. Kurt Englund and Dave Gasser presented the Astoria Baseball Foundation's request to remove a tree near Akin Field in Tapiola Park. He described their work to terrace the bank behind the backstop of the baseball field, which had fallen. Removing the tree would simplify the project and give the area a cleaner look. If the tree remains, its root will be disturbed by the terrace work and the tree would be compromised. The Foundation offered to plant three trees in other locations, at their expense, to replace the one that is removed. Director Cosby described the process used to plant trees in parks, which considers irrigation, soil types, and many other aspects of the parks. She did not believe the tree to be removed had any special significance.

Tammy Loughran moved that the Parks Board approve the request from the Astoria Baseball Foundation to remove a tree near Aiken Field in Tapiola Park; Andrew Fick The motion was unanimously approved.

- B. Director Cosby reviewed the steps taken and locations reviewed during a search for a dog park. To update the new Board members, she presented what has taken place over the last two years via PowerPoint. Locations currently being considered include a four-acre site near the Alderbrook lagoon and a portion of the former John Warren Field now owned by Columbia Memorial Hospital. She reviewed maps of the Alderbrook lagoon and hospital property and discussed the pros and cons of having the dog park each location. Staff preferred the hospital property for a dog park, as the costs and maintenance would be less than in Alderbrook. The hospital is interested in considering an agreement with the City for a temporary dog park on their property. Michelle Bisek said the Friends of the Astoria Dog Park approved of the hospital's property, even though it would be temporary, because implementation and maintenance of a dog park at this location would be minimal. A permanent location could be identified while the hospital's property was being used.

Tammy Loughran moved that Staff host a town hall meeting to collect public feedback about the temporary use of Columbia Memorial Hospital property as a dog park. Eric Halverson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

The Board and Staff confirmed for the audience that petitions and letters opposed to the use of the Alderbrook lagoon had been received. Alderbrook residents would be notified if the City decided to pursue the lagoon as a possible location for the dog park. One resident of Alderbrook expressed concerned about the report given at the January Board meeting on the town hall meeting in Alderbrook. She requested agendas and minutes be published on the City's website. She also requested an opportunity to speak about the presentation.

- C. Director Cosby and Jonah Dart-McLean presented the Parks Maintenance Project Report.
- D. Director Cosby gave a report on the CHIP-in program. The schedule for the next year has been published and Janice is looking for sponsors and volunteers.
- E. Director Cosby gave the Special Projects Report. Pete O'Farrell was recognized for his help with the Half marathon event "Run on the river".
- F. Director Cosby gave an update on Lil Sprouts and Port of Play. Many kids get sick this time of year, but Staff has prevented health issues. Volunteers are needed to read to children on March 2nd for Dr. Seuss's birthday.
- G. Director Cosby reported on the recreation center, programs, fitness, and athletics.
- H. Director Cosby gave the Aquatic Center report. An unannounced audit was conducted on February 24th by Ellis and Associates. Lifeguard Staff exceeded nine of the ten areas of the audit. President Hernandez said she received positive feedback from an out-of-state visitor about the Aquatic Center.

The Board and Staff continued discussing the dog park. Director Cosby noted that Staff has prepared a binder that includes all 62 pages of information and the survey results. This binder is available to the public. The Board discussed whether to remove the Alderbrook lagoon as a possible location for a dog park and agreed to keep the lagoon on the list of possibilities. The Board and Staff discussed the public's perception of the lack of communication from the City despite the City's efforts to send letters, return phone calls and emails, and have public discussions at meetings. The City uses the same process for each potential location and remains transparent. However, there will always be some opposition and the Parks Board must still make a decision.

- I. Director Cosby updated the Board on upcoming events.

Next meeting will be held Wednesday, March 25, 2015 at 6:45am at the Astoria Recreation Center.