

**CLEAR LAKE CITY
WATER AUTHORITY**

**GREEN SPACE
PLANNING COMMITTEE**

*Dog Park Sub-Committee
August 30, 2012*

**Presented by: Fred Swerdlin
Dog Park Sub-Committee Chair
Bay Area Running K9s (BARK9) President**



www.bark9.com

Executive Summary

This proposal is to outline the minimum requirements for the establishment of a dog park site within the former Clear Lake City Golf Course. A dog park is a clearly defined location where owners can safely and legally take their dogs to exercise and socialize off-leash. This proposal is being submitted by the Clear Lake City Green Plan Dog Park Sub-Committee and Bay Area Running K9s (BARK9), a non-profit 501c3, community based group whose charter is to develop and support a network of dog parks in the Bay Area that surround Clear Lake. BARK9 recommends the minimum distance to residential property should be not less than 50 yards. As the owner of the property, the Clear Lake City Water Authority (CLCWA) will approve the specific site, with the recommendation of the Clear Lake City Green Plan Advisory Group, with input from the Dog Park Sub-Committee and BARK9.

Overview

The former Clear Lake City Golf Course presents a unique opportunity to allow dogs to play and socialize within a fenced enclosure. With single and multiple residential areas nearby, a “walk-to” park will greatly enhance the lives of human/canine partnerships. It will also give other folks on the North side of Clear Lake City an easier “drive-to” park.

The location of acreage within the former Clear Lake City Golf Course will ultimately determine the size and shape of a Dog Park, since there is no specific shape requirement for a Dog Park. If there is sufficient acreage near the existing parking lots on Reseda Drive and or Diana Lane, the proposed location for the Dog Park should be located there. Any additional parking areas that may be created, could also serve to have the Dog Park located close to those areas as well. Should any additional acreage be required supplementing the overall size of the dog park, we propose the use of the down slope area of the detention area leading towards but not crossing the hike and bike trail for a three acre Dog Park. This proposal is to be compliant with the 1990 / 2008 American with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Concepts and Alternates

The proposed fencing for a dog park will be from the top flat surface before the down slope of the sides of the detention facility down the slope to the proposed Hike and Bike Trail, acting as the bottom border, but does not to cross that path. This proposal for a dog park will encompass approximately three acres or about 131,000 square feet in area, with a possible expansion at a later date, if land is available. A contiguous piece of property is the most desirable; however, it could be broken up into two separate pieces, for the large and small dog park as separate enclosures. Depending upon how much flat level land is available at the top near the parking lots will determine the overall dimensions and shape of the dog park.

The entry and exit will be located at the top of the detention area, near the parking lots with a five foot black or green enamel coated, cyclone type fencing. Six foot wide gates will be included at the top of the fencing to allow mowers inside the dog park for maintenance of the grounds. However, at the inflow and outflow of water to and from the detention area, if partially located within the detention area, wrought iron fencing or iron piping sunk into the ground, will be at each end and within the dog park to prevent a damming effect from occurring due to the wire fencing that may block debris or inhibit water flow. The use of water fountains will be located inside at or near the top portion of the fence enclosure, at least one

for each section of the Dog Park. Wash stations will be located outside of the fence enclosure, to rinse off mud and debris from the dogs upon leaving the Dog Park, if needed.

Preferably a three to five foot berm would be created around the outside parameter, bordering the street, of the dog park to act as an additional sound barrier from the barking dogs. Eight – twelve inch diameter PVC drain pipes would be located at the base ground level of the berm spaced evenly apart to allow proper drainage both ways to / from the detention area.

The entry / exit to the dog park will be using a four foot wide double gate system as a common gate to allow access to / from the dog park mounted upon a concrete pad, to either unleash or leash your pet, but is restrained by the double gate spring loaded gate system. This proposal will have separate areas for large dogs over 25 pounds and dogs less than 25 pounds. The sections should be between 15% - 20% of the overall area for Small Dogs and 80% - 85% for Large Dogs, requiring more room to exercise.

If there is any standing water within any portion of the down slope dog park after a heavy rain, the entire dog park will be closed to all. Clean-up of the area will occur first, before the dog park reopens to the public.

A water metering system will be required for both the water fountains and rinse stations. Drainage will flow to the bottom of the flood control system unless the Clear Lake City Water Authority requires that the water flow into the sewer system for treatment.

Dog Waste that is not picked up by dog owners as it occurs (normally required by law) should be scooped weekly, with the use of volunteers to supplement.

Waste Bag Dispensers using 6” PVC Tubes with 4” holes drilled in them at the top and bottom mounted on posts scattered throughout the dog park will allow visitors to bring grocery bags to be used as waste disposal bags and encourage participation in the pick-ups. These have been in use successfully at Bay Area Park Dog Park for over one year.

A Kiosk / Information Shelter will be mounted outside each entrance of the Dog Park to provide additional information about the Dog Park and helpful information to park users. Benches (enameled coated) will be placed throughout the fenced enclosures for people to relax.

Expected Community Utilization and Benefits

A network of dog parks would provide clear health, safety, and legal benefits to the Community and to park users.

Health: Dedicated dog parks improve public health by reducing dog waste to one area. Peer pressure encourages dog owners to pick up after their dogs and keep the park clean. Dog parks provide a centralized area to provide information on dog health, veterinary services, emergency veterinary services, training, etc. As inferred earlier, off-leash activity greatly enhances the lives of human/canine partnerships.

Safety: Dog parks reduce the likelihood that dogs will be let loose in park areas where they could interfere with other park users such as bicyclists, skate-boarders, rollerblading and children at play. Providing separate areas for dogs to exercise, segregates dog owners from other users and reduce the risk of collisions, etc. Years of experience at dog parks across the

country indicate that dogs are less aggressive in open areas because they are on neutral territory and not constrained by their leashes, and thus protective of owner.

Legal: Clearly posted waivers of liability would relieve the CLCWA, City of Houston, and Harris County of any legal responsibility for the actions of dogs and their owners inside the park. Dog parks would make off-leash activity legal within the official dog park enclosures.

Costs, Feasibility, and Construction Considerations

Size: The optimal minimal size is three acres, although smaller sites may be considered if particularly suitable in location or other features, otherwise, the ground cover and shrubs may deteriorate over time due to continually being trampled & dogs defecating on them. BARK9 recommends that the site be fenced with at least 5 foot minimum height cyclone or field fencing for clear definition and safety. If funding is available, future expansion may be considered. The site should have adequate parking, ten (10) vehicle parking spaces per acre of land, drainage, and will be clearly signed and posted.

Amenities: Amenities could include some or all of the following, but are not limited to these: Water fountains for dogs & humans alike, water lines, faucets, fountains, cooling stations, fire hydrants, ponds, water park, or flowing water, additional shade structures for all, waste bags, receptacles and tools for pet waste, exercise agility equipment, and furniture / benches for human use.

Handicap: This site shall be planned for handicap accessibility, per the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Federal Law, as one of the major benefits of a dog park is to provide handicapped dog owners with a way to exercise their dogs. However, the entire dog park may not be fully accessible to handicapped persons, due to the location, characteristics, and slope of where the Dog Park will be eventually located. However, most of the dog park should be available and accessible to the handicapped.

Access: Access into each area will be a double gate system with separate entry and exit gates to each section of the dog park to leash and unleash their dog. The purpose of a dual gate system is to prevent unintended conflict with dogs and unintended escapes while entering and exiting the dog park at the same time.

Construction Funding

Funding: The funding for development of the dog park, improvements and amenities will be provided by the private sector, grants, and donations, unless the city or county can allocate the needed funds. Construction improvements to create dog parks typically include only site preparation such as clearing and grading.

Site Plan: Upon approval of the specific site location by the CLCWA, a detailed site plan including improvements and amenities will be submitted.

Operation and Maintenance Costs

Maintenance: BARK9 proposes that the CLCWA, the City of Houston, and or Harris County provide ongoing lawn maintenance, trash receptacles, and garbage pickup for the dog park. Trash containers with liners and lids will keep out rain, contain the odor, and be easier to empty. \$200 in annual costs is anticipated. BARK9 and/or park users will provide disposable

bags for cleanup of dog waste. BARK9 will assist in maintaining amenities through private sector investment and volunteer efforts.

Operations: Park hours will be jointly developed by the CLCWA, BARK9, City of Houston, and Harris County, and will be consistent with existing park operations, and will be appropriate for the specific site chosen for the site. BARK9 will work with CLCWA staff and neighborhood organizations to develop a plan of operations acceptable to all involved parties.

Signage: A sample mock-up of signage with rules, hours of operations, and liability waiver is located on the last page of this proposal. The rules will be clearly posted at all entrances of the dog park and possibly at other areas external to the Dog Park.

Security: Security would be provided by a combination of the City Police Department, County Sheriff, and or County Constables.

Staffing and Administration: BARK9 and CLCWA propose that the dog park be free to its users, with no staffing required. This will make the park easy to administer from the CLCWA standpoint with a minimum of resources.

Other Considerations Legal Issues

BARK9 understands that there will be concerns about liability and about public health at dog parks. BARK9 proposes that the following or similar language be posted prominently at each entrance to the dog park:

“By entering this dog park, the park user agrees to hold the Clear Lake City Water Authority, City of Houston, Bay Area Running K9s, and Harris County harmless and free from liability from any action of any park users or their dogs. Park users agree to fully comply with posted rules and take full legal liability from any action of their own or their dogs.”

This language reduces liability for dog park usage, while within the dog park, in other parks much more clearly than for other uses such as biking, hiking, or rollerblading, which generally do not have posted liability waivers.

Health Issues

The operational proposal below addresses housekeeping issues in dog parks so public health will not be compromised. BARK9 is committed to monitoring park usage along with park users to be sure that they are well maintained, safe, secure, and clean. Dog Park experience in thousands of parks across the United States indicates that users cooperate to keep their designated areas clean and well maintained.

Recommendation

BARK9 requests Legal and Health endorsement of this proposal. If you have any questions, feel free to contact BARK9 President Fred Swerdlin at 281.488.8193.

Email: info@bark9.com US Mail: P. O. Box 591297; Houston, Texas 77259-1297.

Examples of some amenities



6" Dog waste bag
Dispenser \$20



4" Dog waste bag
Dispenser \$15



Double gate system 6'H X 4' W
(Single Entry/Exit)
\$2200



Dog rinse station
\$1600



Water Fountain
\$3200



Double gate system
(Exit Left – Enter Right)
\$5400



Bench
\$900



Backless bench
\$520

Location

The only place that is currently suitable for this proposal is the areas that would be close to parking. The reason is that the parking must be close enough to be compliant with the ADA Requirements that the United States Federal Government has enacted into law for wheel bound persons. The area identified below is the area we seek for a three acre dog park located within the area outlined in red meeting the additional requirements to be at least 50 yards from residential property. The red line also depicts the area bordering the street where a three to five foot berm could be located.



PLEASE READ AND COMPLY WITH ALL OF THE FOLLOWING RULES
PLEASE REMEMBER - THIS IS A PARK FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF DOGS

By entering this dog park, the park user agrees to hold the Clear Lake City Water Authority, City of Houston, Bay Area Running K9s, and Harris County harmless and free from liability from any action of any park users or their dogs. Park users agree to fully comply with posted rules and take full legal liability from any action of their own or their dogs. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Emergency: 911
Harris County Precinct 8: 281.488.4040
Houston Police Department Dispatch 24 HR: 713.222.3131
Report Park Problems: _____

Hours of Operation: Daylight hours only ► Sunrise to Sunset
(No dogs or humans permitted within the Dog Park during darken hours)

- *Dogs must be leashed prior to entering and upon leaving the park.*
- Dog owners are solely responsible for the actions and behavior of their dogs.
- Please ensure dogs do not escape the fenced area.
- Animals other than dogs are not allowed.
- Owners must carry a leash & their dog's vaccination certificate while in the park.
- All Dogs must have current rabies and all other vaccinations as required by the City of Houston and Harris County Public Health Departments, are licensed, free from contagious diseases and parasites.
- Dogs must wear a collar with identification & license tags at all times.
- Dogs must be in view of and within voice control of their owner / handler at all times.
- Immediately leash your dog and leave the park if aggressive behavior is observed.
- Never leave your dog unattended.
- Limit 3 dogs per person per visit.
- No female dogs in heat. Spayed / neutered animals are recommended.
- No puppies under 4 months of age.
- Clean up after your dog. Fill any holes your dog may dig.
- Dogs with a known history of dangerous or aggressive behavior are prohibited.
- No children under 10 years of age allowed.
- Children over the age of 10 must be closely supervised and must behave appropriately: no running, shouting, chasing dogs, petting of other's dogs without the owner's permission.
- No food or drink, other than water, (Human or Dog), or smoking allowed in the park.
- Absolutely no bicycles, skateboards, rollerblades, scooters, or any motorized vehicles except those required for the physically challenged are allowed.
- Persons are encouraged to wear proper footwear while in the Dog Park, NO BARE FEET!