

**COMMITTEE ON DOG MANAGEMENT IN SAN MATEO COUNTY PARKS**

*Mission: To provide healthy spaces for humans and canines, to promote positive experiences for dogs and other park users and to protect natural resources in San Mateo County Parks*

**Draft Notes from Meeting**

April 17, 2017

Building 455 County Center, Redwood City  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor – Room 405

**Committee Members Present:** Rafael Avendano, Faye Brophy, Christine Corwin, Nic Erridge, Aaron Gonzales, Jerry Hearn, Chris Johnson, Neil Merrilees, Jim Sullivan  
**Staff:** Sarah Birkeland, Brenda Bennett, Carla Schoof  
**Facilitator:** Pat Brown

The meeting was opened at 2:30 PM by Chairman Neil Merrilees. He asked Committee members to introduce themselves and welcomed members of the public.

**Process Review**

Facilitator Pat Brown reviewed the proposed agenda and asked for approval of the notes from the March 20<sup>th</sup> Committee meeting. The notes were approved with two corrections. Pat reminded the Committee of its group agreements and commitment to working for consensus.

**Public Comment:**

Five members of the public were in attendance. All spoke to the Committee about the need to protect existing equestrian access parks (Wunderlich and Huddart) and to continue to prohibit dog access to these areas. They cited the following points: very few areas for horse use, safety of horses, riders and dogs if uses are mixed, and potential damage to flora and fauna if dogs allowed.

**Chair and Member Reports**

Neil noted that as the Committee continues its work, it will need to think about enforcement issues. At this time, tickets issued by rangers for dog violations are “Notice to Appear” tickets, and require a court appearance. Due to the court’s backlog of cases to be tried, these “dog” violations tend to be dismissed and not placed on a docket.

Jim Sullivan reported that the Ridge Trail connections on the coast have been completed and that the Ridge Trail is a multi-use resource.

**Proposed Committee timeline modification**

Sarah Birkeland presented the following information for the Committee’s consideration:

Given the Committee’s interest in developing a recommendation about a specific pilot, the following modification of the process timeline is suggested:

April-May 2017	Develop draft policy recommendations
June	Solicit community feedback regarding recommendations
July	Revise recommendations as needed and prepare for presentation to Parks Commission
August	Present recommendations to Parks Commission, along with suggestion that this Committee develop a proposal for piloting the new policy
Sept-Nov	Interested Committee members, with Parks Department staff, design pilot project and define metrics for measuring success
Jan-June 2018	Implement pilot project, including baseline metrics as starting place
July 2018	Report to Parks Commission on Pilot Project and determine if any revisions to the dog management policies are needed

Committee members discussed the proposal and indicated their support for the idea of completing the development of policy recommendations as planned in the original committee process timeline. Members indicated agreement with the idea that if a pilot program were going to be developed, it would take additional time, as proposed.

### **Discussion of Broad Policy Recommendation**

The Committee reviewed the potential policy statement developed by Sarah, based on the Committee’s mission statement:

*It is the policy of the SMC Parks Department, in managing dog access, to provide healthy spaces for humans and canines, to promote positive experiences for dogs and other park users, and to protect natural resources in San Mateo County Parks.*

Members then brainstormed a list of **critical elements** to consider including in a recommended policy:

- Consider needs of all park users
- Include “human” element when talking about dogs – the policy is for park users with their dogs
- Intention of the policy is to open up use and expand access to more people while protecting the quality of the park experience
- Equity/access is important
- Want to provide safe and healthy setting
- Delete “canines” – talk about dogs with their owners/guardians

Finally, members offered suggestions about revising the potential policy statement.

Suggested policy wording from Dog Management Committee meeting:

1. *It is the policy of the SMC Parks Department, in managing access for dogs with their owners or guardians, to promote positive experiences for all park users, provide safe and healthy spaces and protect natural resources.*
2. *It is the policy of the SMC Parks Department to provide healthy spaces for people with their dogs, to promote positive experiences for all park users and to protect natural resources in the parks.*
3. *It is the policy of the SMC Parks Department, in managing dog access to county parks, to provide healthy, safe spaces and promote positive experiences for all park users while protecting natural resources in the parks.*

Pat asked for volunteers to work on reconciling the suggestions and the critical elements and developing a draft policy to bring to the Committee at its next meeting. Christine, Chris and Faye volunteered.

The goal will be for the Committee to approve the draft at the May meeting in preparation for seeking feedback from the community in June.

#### **Proposed approach to gathering public input on draft recommendations**

Carla Schoof briefly reviewed the proposed approach to gathering feedback on the Committee's policy recommendations:

- Present draft recommendation to community – meetings in June – San Mateo and Half Moon Bay suggested as locations.
- Establish multiple opportunities for input
  - Community meetings
  - Input from Friends groups
  - Website
  - Postings at parks
  - Other?
- Consider input from community and revise draft as needed
- Present draft policy recommendations to Commission with summary of community input obtained during development

There was a brief discussion of the pros and cons of attempting to survey community members, but no conclusion was reached.

#### **Summarize content of discussion**

Pat provided a brief summary of this meeting so Committee members can update their constituencies on progress: the Committee is actively developing a set of recommended policies that will be presented to the public for comment early in the summer.

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Merrilees at 4:10 PM.