

City of Yorba Linda Memorandum

Date: April 15, 2010

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Parks and Recreation Commission

From: Steve Rudometkin, Interim Director of Parks and Recreation

Prepared By: Lauren Cochran, Management Assistant
Allison Lewis, Recreation Coordinator

SUBJECT: DOG PLAY LOT PROJECT

BACKGROUND

On February 18, 2010 staff presented a proposed dog play lot project to the Parks and Recreation Commission. The Commission asked that staff come back to them in sixty days after considering the following:

- Determining a park or greenbelt that might serve as a first test location, using the criteria outlined in the February 10, 2010 staff report as well as additional criteria as set forth by the Commission relative to existing park uses (Attachment A).
- Eliminating restrictions that might make this project a low maintenance, low key operation that would limit the City's liability (Attachment B).

DISCUSSION

Staff visited City parks to determine the feasibility of building dog play lots within existing parks. The following criterion was established to determine the feasibility of building dog play lots within existing parks:

- Proximity to residences/City facilities
- Availability and type of parking
- Traffic impact
- Available acreage/square feet
- Compatibility with existing amenities
- Accessibility of the proposed site
- Other existing park uses

Considering the above criteria, staff has identified three (3) possible sites within or near existing parks, located on the east, central, and west areas of Yorba Linda to be considered for dog play lots:

1. Brush Canyon Park: 5 acres, 215,400 total square feet (including parking lot)
2. (Upper) Jean Woodard Park: 16,600 total square feet
3. Vacant lot located on Richfield Road owned by Richfield Community Church

Greenbelts within the City were also examined for potential dog play lots. Public safety, vehicular traffic, and storm water challenges were a few factors that deemed these locations unsuitable for this use.

ANALYSIS

Locations

Every park and greenbelt in the City was considered for use as a dog play lot, but upon further examination of the established criteria, it was determined that there is insufficient park acreage or parking to accommodate this type of activity in most of the areas. In addition, the majority of the City park locations are heavily impacted by youth sports groups and contract classes, which ultimately impacts parking and traffic volume. Based on the established criteria, adding a dog play lot in most existing parks would not be a viable option.

The following sites are being recommended for consideration as dog play areas. These sites were selected using the established criteria and geographical locations in hopes of accommodating the east, central, and west areas of the City:

Brush Canyon Park: Based on the criteria above, Brush Canyon Park has been recommended for a potential dog play lot site. It is to be noted that this park is located on the far east side of the City, which increases travel distance for residents living in the central or west side of the City.

Jean Woodard Park: The area above Jean Woodward is currently a vacant dirt lot, totaling 16,000 square feet. This area is currently master planned for parking and a restroom; therefore any changes made to this site would require a change to the Park's Master Plan (Attachment C), thus requiring the Commission to follow City Council Policy PR2 – "The Seven Step Park Planning Process." It should be noted that youth sports groups utilize this site for athletic games and practices year round, which has a significant impact on parking.

Vacant lot located on Richfield Road: A vacant lot located on Richfield Road owned by Richfield Community Church (RCC), has been offered to the City for a temporary use for three to five years. Consequently, if a dog play lot were to be

placed on this site, it would only temporarily accommodate the needs of residents on the west side of the City.

Potential Issues

Dog Park Rules and Restrictions

Staff has considered eliminating restrictions to make dog play lots a low maintenance, low key operation which would consequently limit the City's liability. As suggested by the Commission, changes were made to the dog play lot rules which detailed the number of dogs allowed in play lot; the following rule has been added: "Please respect your neighbors, be courteous and share time of use if the dog play lot is crowded." Attachment B is a listing of all the proposed rules and regulations.

Environmental Factors

Once a site or sites is selected environmental factors would need to be carefully considered. The dog play lot project, within existing parks, would be categorically exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) based on the fact that City parks are considered "existing public facilities" and any additions to the existing parks with designated dog play lots would thereby be considered a minor alteration to the existing facilities. Although it is assumed the City would classify this minor alteration as "categorically exempt" from CEQA, the City should complete the environmental documentation necessary to evaluate the potential impacts of dog play lots before a dog play lot is installed at one of the recommended areas. Several environmental factors potentially affected by dog play lots have been indicated below:

1. Aesthetics
2. Hazardous Materials
3. Public Services
4. Noise
5. Recreation
6. Air Quality
7. Geology/Soils
8. Land Use/Planning
9. Population/Housing
10. Transportation/Traffic

The establishment of a dog play lot at Jean Woodard Park or Richfield Community Church would require additional environmental documentation because neither area can be classified as a developed park area. It is important to note that a negative declaration or negative focused declaration would need to be prepared for each site. There is a cost associated with the preparation of this type of environmental documentation which would increase the cost of the overall project.

Liability

To mitigate the risk of liability, the City will need to pass ordinances which will require

users to waive claims against the City arising from their use of the dog play lot. For example, the City of Dana Point posted signage citing the California Civil Code which indicates that dog owners are responsible for their dogs and the City cannot be held liable for any injury or harm caused by any person or dog entering or remaining in the dog fun zone (signage indicating the rules for the dog fun zone can be found in Attachment B of this report). Staff revised the proposed rules and regulations from the City of Dana Point to more accurately reflect the Commissions' desire to protect the City from liability and at the same time simplify the use of each dog play lot, specifically to lift restrictions on the number of dogs allowed in each play lot at once.

Concerns of Residents

Concerns are predicted to arise from surrounding residents and may include:

1. Noise from barking dogs
2. Smell
3. Bugs and animals
4. Requests for larger dog play lots
5. Lack of parking
6. Overflow of traffic
7. Reduction in versatile park space
8. Increased turf maintenance costs

FISCAL IMPACT

Staff estimates a minimal construction cost for fencing and sprinkler relocation, approximately \$10,000 at Brush Canyon Park. It is difficult to estimate any additional maintenance expenditures, as each site is unique, therefore, each site will need to be further assessed should the project move forward. The two additional areas being considered, Jean Woodard Park (upper) and the vacant lot located on Richfield Road, would need funding appropriated, due to the lack of existing amenities. In addition, these sites would need additional funding to construct parking lots, as there are not any current constructed at sites. In order to advance this project, funds for dog play lots would need to be appropriated by the City Council from General Fund Reserves. Once a site is selected, staff can provide a detailed site specific cost analysis for future consideration.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Receive and file the staff report on a Dog Play Lot Project.
2. Consider recommending entering into a joint use agreement with the church on Richfield Road as a possible dog play lot with the understanding a CEQA study may be required as well as the construction of parking spaces.
3. Make a recommendation to the City Council that upper Jean Woodard Park be re-worked to include a dog play lot with the understanding a CEQA study may be required.
4. Develop a dog play lot at Brush Canyon Park to use as a test case location.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Parks & Recreation Commission take the following actions:

1. Receive public input, and/or;
2. Provide a recommendation to the City Council on whether or not a “Dog Play Lot Project” should be implemented.

Should the Parks and Recreation Commission require additional information in order to render a decision, then staff requests the Commission to provide them direction as to what additional information is needed.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Yorba Linda Parks & Greenbelt Matrix
- B. Proposed Dog Play Lot Signage
- C. Jean Woodward Park Master Plan