

Parks Commission Dog Policy Sub-Committee Meeting Minutes
May 30, 2013: City Hall Memorial Room
7pm-8:30pm.

Committee Members Present: Ben Huffman, Lynn McNamara, Wendy Harrell, Jim Eikenberry, Dave Pelletier, Geoff Beyer, Cara Robeck

Welcome:

Geoff introduced the goal that: "Everyone who comes to the Park feels safe."
Todd Bailey requested that Geoff define what he means by "safe". Several members of the committee expressed that the group would be responsible for defining what that means for our context. Todd reiterated that he wanted Geoff's definition.

Remit of the group:

Geoff introduced the remit of the group being to look at the current policies in the park relating to dogs and the code of conduct.

Clarification points:

- This subcommittee will make recommendations to the Parks Commission.
- Question from Todd Bailey: Does city council have to approve any changes?
- Answer from Geoff: Ordinances have to be approved by city council. The Parks Commission should be able to approve any rules or Codes of Conduct.
- At the moment there is a city ordinance that dogs have to be "under control".

Introductions:

Lynn McNamara: Lives abutting the park, walks through park with dogs.

Wendy Harrell: Walks dogs daily through the park.

Jim: Walks through with family including a young child.

Dave Pelletier: Has used the park for 13 years, but only been a Montpelier resident for 4 or 5 years. Originally used the park with his dog. Now he no longer has a dog, but has a young child.

Cara Robeck: Current Parks Commission Chair.

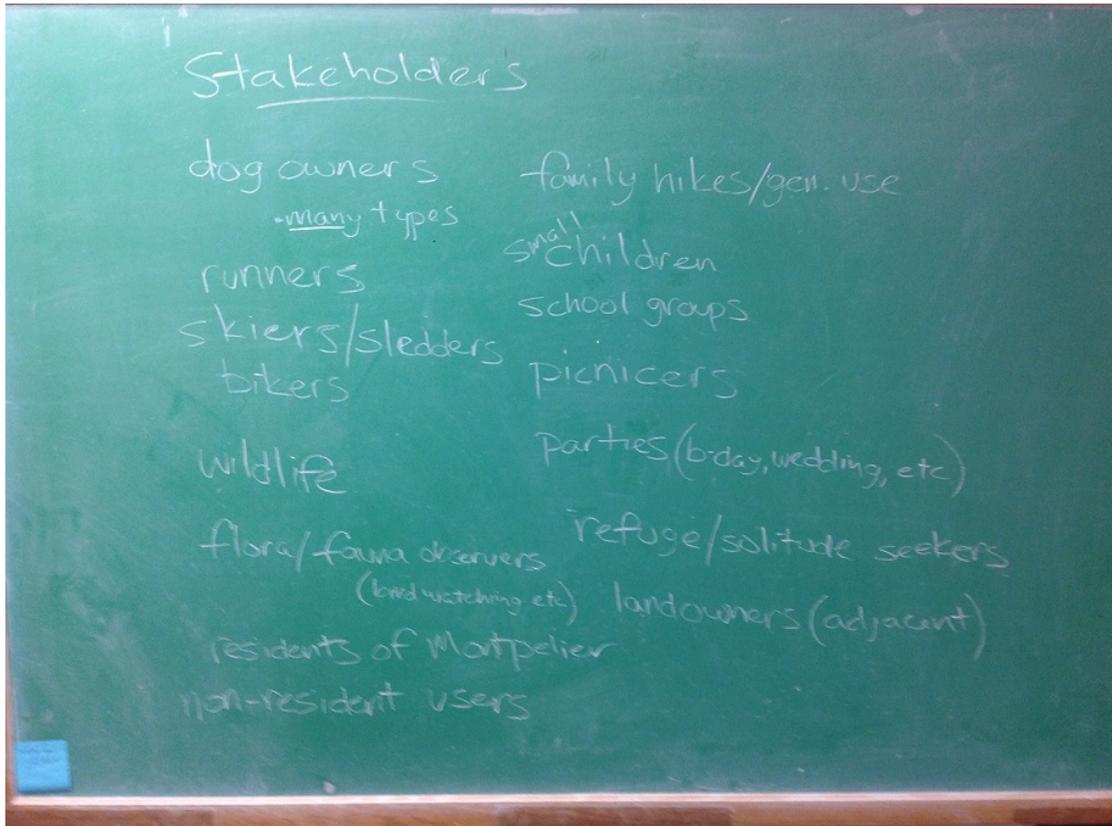
Ben Huffman: Lives adjacent to the park. Sees the park as a refuge and a unique natural spot. The quantity of dogs has changed the experience that people can have in the park. He finds dogs disruptive. Doesn't think any one group should be able to change how the park can be used by everyone else.

Geoff: Parks Director. Has seen a culture change among dog owners. Believes that dog walking can become a consumptive use that takes away from other users enjoyment of the park.

There are also 3 group members who didn't make the meeting: Susan Ritz and Larry Sherwin have been invited to be on the committee. Both are dog owners. Kip Roberts is also involved as a Parks Commissioner.

Stakeholder analysis:

The committee brainstormed a list of stakeholders who might be affected by any changes in policy or code of conduct. In order to keep these groups in mind, the committee also discussed which members of the group could reach out to and/or keep the needs of each group in mind.



Stakeholder Groups

Stakeholders	Committee member representing
Dog Owners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk dogs off-leash • Walk dogs on leash • Dog walkers can also have of multiple dogs, aggressive dogs, fearful dogs • professional dog-walkers • Dog owners not from Montpelier • Those who actively walk with their dogs for recreation • Those who use the park as a place for their dog's waste elimination 	Wendy, Lynn, (Susan and Larry)
Active recreation users runners/skiers/bikers/sledders	Dave, Cara, Susan
Vulnerable recreation users: young children, elderly, blind	Jim, Dave, Cara
Walkers without dogs (families etc.)	
school groups	Cara
picnickers parties/weddings	Geoff
residents of Montpelier	
wildlife, and environmental quality	Jim

birdwatchers	
refuge/solitude seekers	Ben
neighbors	Ben, Lynn

Next steps:

Before our next meeting we will gather materials and read them over. The materials will all be e-mailed around and Cara will post them on the Parks Commission Website so that any members of the public can also access them.

Materials to gather:

- Cara: Hubbard's Will (as transposed by a Vista Volunteer), Comments that were collected from the survey last winter and minutes from the February Open Parks meeting about Dog issues.
- Ben: City Ordinances relating to dogs and to the Park
- Geoff: VT Rec and Park Association responses to Dog policies in other parts of the state.
- Wendy and Jim: Research on Codes of conduct and rules at other Parks that allow dogs and at Dog parks.
- Wendy: Create a Word cloud of the written responses.

Responding to a previous concern with transparency: We will put all of our research materials onto the website. All communication within the group is a matter of public record (as Todd Bailey pointed out).

Ben suggested that we should also do outreach to the community at the end of this process.

Dates set for future meetings:

Thursday June 13, 7pm, location TBD
Monday June 24, 7pm, location TBD
Monday July 8, 7pm, location TBD
Monday July 22, 7 pm, location TBD
Monday August 5, 7pm, location TBD

Closing thoughts:

We circled back to a discussion about the remit for the group and Todd's request that the word Safety be defined. Jim suggested that in the context of the park, one way of looking at it would be that whatever experience a person had at the park, that they are interested in coming back. The idea of "not feeling threatened" was also expressed.

Geoff suggested, and others agreed, that setting the goal at people feeling safe in the park is actually a fairly low bar. Ben suggested that people do not want to be intruded upon.

Minutes: For future meetings we will rotate who takes minutes.