

Agenda Report

TO: City Council DATE: September 14, 1998
FROM: Acting City Manager
SUBJECT: Consideration of Off Leash Dog Areas in City Parks

RECOMMENDATION:

This item is for information only.

BACKGROUND:

Over the past five to ten years, there has been an increased interest demonstrated by members of the community to develop and/or assign an area in the City where dogs could run off leash. Currently the City has in place Ordinance 6.12.010-Prohibited, which states, "No person owning, having an interest in, harboring or having charge, care, control, custody or possession of any dog shall cause or permit such dog to be in or upon any public street, alley or other public place or in or upon any unenclosed lot or premises, unless such dog is securely confined by a strong cord, chain or leash, not exceeding 6 feet, securely and continuously held by a competent person owning, having an interest in, harboring or having charge, care, control, custody or possession of such dog, or unless such dog is confined within an automobile. This section shall not apply to any dog performing during a City-permitted exhibition or bench show, or during obedience training when such training is conducted by an owner at times and in areas designated by the Recreation Department." In 1991, the Recreation and Parks Commission recommended to the City Council that Brookside Park, Victory Park and Central Park be designated for off-leash training by the owner during certain hours and days. These off leash training areas have been in use since that time.

On December 3, 1994, the Recreation and Parks Commission formally adopted Eaton Wash Park Master Plan. This recommended plan included an area designated for dogs off leash. The recommended master plan was submitted to City Council on January 9, 1995. Testimony was received from community members and Recreation and Parks Commissioners on the various recommended elements of the Master Plan. City Council adopted the Eaton Wash Park Master Plan eliminating the off leash dog run area.

The development of the Lower Arroyo Master Plan was initiated in the late 1980's and finalization of the concept plan was completed on April 15, 1996. The plan as presented to the Business Enterprise Committee (BEC) of City Council came with two distinct recommendations on the establishment of an off leash area in the Lower Arroyo. The Recreation and Parks Commission recommended that the master plan include an area for dogs to run off leash. Staff recommended that the existing ordinance requiring dogs on leash remains and that staff along with interested community members seeks alternative sites other than the Arroyo for an off leash area. Both recommendations were submitted to the BEC for their review and recommendation. BEC recommended to City Council that the Lower Arroyo Master Plan not include an area for off leash dogs. City Council on April 15, 1996 adopted the Lower Arroyo Master Plan in concept with no area designated for off leash dogs.

In February of 1996, staff requested guidance and information from the City Attorney's Office in respect to potential City liability for injuries in off leash areas in City parks. The City Attorney has concluded that although there may always be some liability exposure with any activity such as this, with proper precautions, liability exposure to the City can be kept within manageable limits in the risk/benefit analysis. The risk of exposure would be increased if dogs were simply running free and not part of an organized training program, but proper precautions should also keep that liability exposure within reasonable limits.

In May 1998, a citizen appeared before City Council expressing his concerns about dogs being off leash and causing problems at Victory Park. This complaint was reviewed by staff as well as by the Pasadena Humane Society and did not appear to be warranted.

On June 15, 1998, City Council reviewed the current status of Eaton Wash Park Master Plan. Discussion was held as to the various approved elements of the current plan, which does not include an area for dogs off leash. Public comments were received in support of developing an off leash area in Eaton Wash Park. After Council discussion was held on the current plan and possible options of amending the plan to include other elements such

as an off leash area, Council requested staff to move forward with the implementation of the plan as currently adopted.

There have been various communications and articles presented in support of an off leash area for dogs. A group known as P.O.O.C.H. has been formed to raise the interest level of developing an off leash area in Pasadena parks.

In inventorying the various parks and open space areas in the community there are four park sites that either have been and/or could be considered for an enclosed fenced area that could accommodate an area for dogs off leash. As previously stated, Eaton Wash Park and Lower Arroyo Park were considered for an off leash area, however, both current master plans approved by Council do not include an identified area for dogs off leash. Hahamongna Watershed Park was also considered at one time to be an area that could accommodate dogs off leash. Currently the Hahamongna Watershed Park Advisory Committee under the guidance of Takata and Associates are developing the final master park plan which is scheduled to go to City Council in the Spring of 1999. The fourth park that could be considered for a fenced area is the lower section of Eaton Blanche Park that runs along Oneida Street and Oneida Drive, and parallel to L. A. County Flood Control Channel. Eaton Wash Park has homes adjacent to the east side and east entrance. The Flood Control Channel on the west and hillsides on the east border the Lower Arroyo area. The basin boards Hahamongna Park area to the east and hillsides to the west. Eaton-Blanche Park area is boarded by homes to the west and Flood Control Channel to the east.

A major element to be considered in the development of an off leash area is adequate parking for potential users. The current master plan for Eaton Wash does not call for on site parking, so park users would park either on Orange Grove and/or in the neighborhood area near the east pedestrian entrance. Lower Arroyo parking area is nearly used to capacity during weekends for walkers, casters and archers. Hahamongna Park does have parking available on the upper level on the west side, as well as some parking near the existing west ball field. Eaton Blanche has minimal off street parking and park users would park in the adjacent neighborhoods and/or on Del Mar Blvd.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Not knowing at this time the potential location of a possible off leash area it is difficult to provide information on the fiscal impact. Expenses could include fence installation, insurance, trash cans and disposable plastic bags, signage, and/or staff to maintain area.

Respectfully submitted,



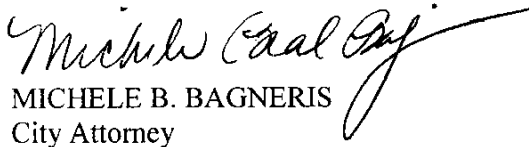
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