



Grant Park Neighborhood Association

Interim Report of Grant Park Neighborhood Association (GPNA) Dog Off Leash Area (DOLA) Subcommittee

February 20, 2017

Introduction:

At a regular membership meeting on November 15, 2016, the GPNA Board voted to establish a DOLA Subcommittee. The board charged the subcommittee to investigate alternative locations within Grant Park for a permanent, fenced DOLA, following a presentation from Portland Public Schools (PPS) concerning the planned modernization of Grant High School (GHS). As part of that process, PPS intends to create a new softball field, including dugout, benches, and other structures that will significantly impinge upon a previously identified potential DOLA location, which has become known as Option B. This location is immediately north of and adjacent to the existing soccer field with an irregular shape extending between the soccer field and the basketball courts. Another potential location, known as Option A, is no longer available as a result of an agreement reached between homeowners adjacent to that area and the City of Portland and/or Portland Parks and Recreation (PPR). A third location, Option C, is adjacent to the Beverly Cleary Hollyrood school, and appears still to be available although it has not been fully explored.

The formal members of the DOLA subcommittee are Ken Peterson, GPNA President and Land Use Chair, Stacey Tipp, GPNA Board Member at Large, and Laurene Mullen, a longtime Grant Park resident. All members of the committee have dogs and visit the current unfenced DOLA area regularly. The subcommittee has met both formally and informally via email, and some members conducted informational site visits to other existing DOLAs both within and without the City of Portland.

Recommendations:

As is the case with many planned activities within Portland during the winter of 2016-17, the subcommittee's progress has been adversely affected by inclement and snowy weather. The subcommittee requested input and assistance from PPR in conducting a site search on numerous occasions, in order to ascertain whether any potential locations are unacceptable for reasons that are not apparent from visual inspection. The initial request occurred on January 10, 2017, sent to Parks Director Mike Abatte, and has been reiterated frequently since that date. The first concrete response received was on January 23, 2017, from Brett Horner, then PPR Acting Assets & Development Manager. Since then there have been numerous communications, both by telephone and email. Brett Horner has responded promptly to all

inquiries made but PPR has provided no concrete guidance to assist the subcommittee concerning site selection.

The subcommittee has identified additional areas for consideration, which for continuity have been named Option D and Option D2. These are actually two adjacent areas, one large area north of the tennis courts, and a second smaller area east of the tennis courts. Both areas have existing boundaries demarcated by paths or other structures (except for the north D boundary, which the subcommittee selected to mitigate DOLA noise that could adversely impact homes nearby. Those areas are shown on the attached graphic. D is envisioned as an all dog area, and D2 as a small dog area.

Early on, the subcommittee concluded that there are no potential remaining DOLA locations within Grant Park that are without drawbacks. The park is heavily used and programmed, and the group fears that without prompt identification of a potential location, off leash dog use could become a casualty of the many current space-consuming activities or those planned for the future. Given the long history of DOLA use within the park, members of the public might well respond by simply de facto turning the entire park into an informal DOLA area depending upon what might be going on at any given time, and by randomly identifying locations that appear to be available. Such an outcome would pose serious issues in terms of public safety and park sanitation, particularly on playing fields where children frequently contact the ground.

The subcommittee favors the D and D2 areas as the best available remaining choices. Benefits are:

- Both areas are currently unused programmatically
- Both are clearly demarcated, making installation of fencing easier than other possible locations
- Noise from dogs would not adversely impact other nearby park uses
- D is relatively close to an existing water fountain in the park, and adding a water source to the DOLA would be easier and less expensive than elsewhere
- D is close to existing restroom facilities
- D is separated from the current children's play area, but close enough to allow parents to supervise dogs within the DOLA while retaining visual connection with children old enough to play independently in the children's area
- ADA compliance issues would be minimal due to the presence of existing paved pathways
- Existing lighting from the tennis courts and path would help create safe use
- There are anecdotal reports of undesirable activities involving juveniles within D that would be substantially reduced, if not eliminated if the area becomes a DOLA

Drawbacks are:

- The D area slopes which could cause drainage and surface maintenance issues (although those could be corrected).

- D is somewhat close to homes north of the park, although there is a buffer area envisioned of 100-125 feet that should substantially mitigate noise.

Previously identified Option C is also potentially viable. The subcommittee believes it is less desirable than Options D and D2 because of the following:

- The area is immediately adjacent to an elementary school that currently houses kindergarten students. Dogs inappropriately allowed off leash near but outside the area could cause resulting safety issues to very small children.
- Dog noise could adversely impact classroom instruction/playground use.
- The area is relatively close to homes on the east side of 36th Avenue, which could result in noise issues adversely affecting residents. The distance from the eastern most boundary of the area to the closest homes is approximately 85 feet.
- The area is geographically smaller than D.
- There is no nearby parks maintained water supply
- There are no nearby restroom facilities
- There is no available additional location for small/shy dogs that does not impinge upon other park uses (such as the east end of the soccer field).
- It has serious drainage problems during rains and currently resembles a lake.

Advantages of Option C:

- It was the second most favored location based upon the poll taken following the community meeting concerning DOLAs.
- GPNA hand delivered a flyer to all potentially affected homeowners advising that it could become a DOLA and according to PPR none complained.

Conclusion:

The GPNA DOLA subcommittee respectfully requests that these recommendations be adopted and approved by the GPNA board as a whole.

Ken Peterson

Stacey Tipp

Laurene Mullen



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