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~AD HOC REPORT~
Off Leash - Dog Park
Thursday, January 15, 2015

Chairman Andrew Wetmore called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m. on Thursday, January 15, 2015, in the Caucus Room, 3rd Floor, Danbury City Hall, 155 Deer Hill Avenue. Present was Committee member Jack Knapp. Also present were Robin Edwards, Corporation Counsel; Dennis Elpern, Director of Planning; Farid Khouri, City Engineer; Petitioner Joe Cavo, Paul Estefan, Airport Administrator, and members of the public.

Mr. Cavo noted sites that were considered for a dog park. He reviewed a site suggested by Mr. Estefan by the airport at the former Grenier property.

Mr. Estefan discussed FAA approvals for this site which would be a fenced, daytime only, passive recreation park, with some limited parking. There would be no lights or other objects.

Ms. Edwards commented on approvals that would be needed including a Planning Commission 8-24 review. Ordinance Section 12-3 may need a minor adjustment with a suggestion that optional rules and regulations be prepared by the Director of Parks & Recreation. She, along with Mr. Estefan and the Planning Department, will offer assistance on preparing those rules. Ms. Edwards has reached out to the Risk Manager for another look at the project in case anything has changed.

Mr. Knapp received answers to questions on parking access, insurance, no site clearing needed, mowing provided by Parks, trash removal by Parks or Public Works. His inquiry regarding Danbury-only patrons was answered as follows, dogs must be licensed, but there is no anticipated restriction on patrons' residence.

Mr. Cavo noted a sign, 'No Aggressive Dogs Allowed' shall be posted. Patrons are responsible for their own dogs and the transition area will be exceptionally large - 15 x 30.'

Mr. Wetmore quoted Section 22-357, 'Anyone who keeps or owns a dog is held strictly liable under the law for any damages caused by that dog.' He quoted from a Trumbull publication, 'The liability of an off-leash area is typically no greater than that of a children's playground, swimming area, or a hunting area.'

Mr. Elpern voiced his concerns about current city regulations regarding dogs on leashes and the need for required adjustments.

Mr. Elpern also commented regarding private parks and suggested the road be cut off to put residents to the south at ease.

Mr. Khouri noted an existing pre-cut driveway is present and they will use some of that compaction. He reviewed parking site specifics noting the parking schematic may not be the final location. Also, water must be provided so the service line will need extending.

Ms. Waller commented regarding winter maintenance and whether donated fencing was considered. She stated she is not against the dog park and likes the separate small and large dog areas.

Mr. Cavo responded regarding funds available in the recreational bond fund. He noted plans to partner with Danbury Animal Welfare Society (DAWS) to form Friends of the Danbury Dog Park to solicit donations for

future maintenance cost offsets. Mr. Cavo commented on neighboring communities' small dog park area sizes and rules. In addition, the park could incentivize some dog owners to get their dogs licensed.

A motion was made by Councilman Knapp and seconded by Councilman Wetmore, to recommend that the City Council approve the use of the airport land located at Miry Brook Road as depicted on the rendering prepared by McFarland-Johnson entitled, Proposed Dog Park, approximately 4 acres for a dog park subject to the following: 1) the amendment of any necessary Ordinances; 2) the adoption of rules and regulations by the Director of Recreation and the Airport Administrator; 3) the review by the Risk Management to ascertain that all necessary amounts and types of insurance are in place; 4) the referral to the Planning Commission for an 8-24 report; .5) that any necessary Planning and Zoning Department approvals are acquired. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilman Knapp and seconded by Councilman Wetmore, that the Ad Hoc Committee be adjourned. The motion passed unanimously at 6:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Andrew Wetmore, Chairman

Jack Knapp

Peter Nero