COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
PARKS DEPARTMENT

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COMMITTEE ON DOG MANAGEMENT IN SAN MATEO COUNTY PARKS

Mission: To provide healthy spaces for humans and canines, to promote positive experiences for dogs and other park users and to protect natural resources in San Mateo County Parks

Meeting Notes

October 16, 2017
Building 400 County Center, 1st Floor, BOS Conference Room,
In the County Manager's Office
2:30-4:00 P.M.

Members Present: Neil Merrilees, Jim Sullivan, Christine Corwin, Darrick Emil, Chris Johnson, Jerry Hearn
Staff: Sarah Birkeland, Lori Mrizek

Chairman Neil Merrilees opened the meeting at 2:40 PM. Sarah Birkeland facilitated the meeting in Pat Brown's absence.

Next meetings
The November meeting will be held on the second Monday, November 13, 2:30-4:30 P.M. to avoid the Thanksgiving holiday week. The Committee will be presenting its recommendations to the Park Commission on Thursday, December 7.

No members of the public were present

Homework from September meeting
Committee members were asked to read through the compiled survey results (406 surveys) and comments received from the public to determine whether there were issues or gaps that need to be addressed through a revision to the draft policies.

Discussion of public input
There was discussion that the comments and survey results generally revealed good support for the draft policies. Given that public input was mostly supportive, the Committee began by focusing on those policies that appeared to be more controversial. The Committee noted that the "Avoidance of Conflicts" and "Number of Dogs per Person" policies were the most controversial.

With respect to the Avoidance of Conflicts policy, the Committee discussed its concern that the policy appeared to give more weight to certain uses, when the intent was to ensure that management balances uses while minimizing conflicts between uses. Minimizing conflict can be accomplished in many way, not just through a prohibition. For example, conflicts can be minimized through good trail design and planning. The Committee agreed that this policy should be revised to use the term "minimize" rather than "avoidance."

With respect to the Number of Dogs per Person policy, there was discussion recognizing that the public input didn't provide a clear consensus. Many expressed the view that 3 dogs per person is too many; some expressed the view that 3 is not enough. Members suggested that the original 3 dogs/person represents a good middle ground and was derived from the discussion the Committee had with other land managers about their experiences managing dogs in parks and open space lands.

The Committee also discussed the impact of the 3 dogs/person limit on commercial dog walkers and concluded it was not tasked with addressing commercial uses in public parks, which generally require a permit. Sarah noted that the Department will be conducting a comprehensive review of its fees and pricing strategies and that this will include a review of commercial uses, including commercial dog walking.

The Committee next discussed the policy regarding leashes and recognized there might be some confusion about the language in the draft policy. The Committee determined that the policy as written was a good starting point.

The Committee acknowledged there is no policy for off leash use, and that all policies should apply to dogs off and on leash. There was not sufficient time to present and consider an off-leash policy.

Next steps
After its review and discussion of public comments, the Committee determined that no significant changes were needed. The one change agreed upon was to alter the language in the Conflicts policy as noted above. The Committee agreed the next step is to draft a staff report to send to the Committee for its review in anticipation of the November 13 meeting.

Chairman Merrilees adjourned the meeting at 4 P.M.