

Greetings Alders and Park Commissioners:

I'm writing to provide you with an update on our dogs in parks pilot program and to request your support of the extension (and possible expansion) of this program through the end of 2016. The program has technically expired and we would like to have it renewed at the 5/17 Council meeting (approved at the 5/11 BPC meeting as well). As most of you are aware, it is my opinion that the current dog policy MGO 8.19 is antiquated and does not serve the City of Madison well. The current ordinance generally prohibits dogs in parks except for where very specifically authorized.

Currently, there are 7 off-leash dog park exercise areas and 14 parks that allow dogs on-leash in some manner. The existing pilot expansion added 13 more parks (listed in file 42700) to this list bringing the total to 27 locations where dogs are authorized on leash (and on path in the pilot expansion parks). There have been relatively few issues with the pilot program, so we feel that it should be extended. Of note, there are issues that we are working through at some of the locations, so don't take the relatively few to mean no issues. Some people don't like dogs period, others don't like being ticketed for letting their dogs run off leash, etc.

If you are interested in having a park added to the pilot program, we would be interested as well. The hope would be to have a better before/after study of a park that is added to the program this year. We would like to limit any expansion of the pilot program to a total of 5 more parks given limited ranger resources. Two suggestions we have received already are Peace Park and Central Park. Both have good path systems and are in high traffic areas for dogs, so they are good initial candidates with Alder and survey support. There are some situations where Parks staff would not support an expansion (at least not in a pilot setting). For example, Madison Parks does not support dogs in conversation parks. If an Alder supports a location and it meets the criteria of the existing pilot, we would conduct a neighborhood specific survey and then seek approval from the Board of Park Commissioners to authorize this expansion for 2016 (note that the resolution grants the BPC to authorize this for this pilot program only as a way to allow the process to move forward at the appropriate time without a separate ordinance amendment). If you have suggestions, please email Ann Shea at ashea@cityofmadison.com by May 13th.

We have also published an online survey to evaluate the overall program to date and to explore interest in overall support for dogs in parks policy modifications. Please feel free to share the [short survey](#) widely. Please feel free to contact me directly if you have any questions about the resolution, the program, or other dog related issues.

Of note on the importance of dogs in parks policies/development --- Off-Leash Dog Park Exercise growth was a focal point in both the press releases for the [2015 City Park Facts](#) and [2016 City Park Facts](#) issued by The Trust for Public Land annually. Of note, Madison ranked 3rd in per capita off leash dog parks in 2015, but has slipped to a tie for 4th in the most recent edition. We do anticipate developing at least 3 more off leash dog parks in the next six years, assuming funding is available (all dog parks in the system currently were constructed with 100% dog park permit revenue funding). We hope this will keep us in the top ten nationally, but with rapid growth in many communities that is far from certain at this point.

If you have a park that you would like the Parks Commission to consider

Sincerely,

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