



**Agenda Item B.3**  
**DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEM**  
**Meeting Date: August 1, 2018**

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**TO:** Chair and Members of the Parks and Recreation Commission

**FROM:** Vyto Adomaitis, Neighborhood Services & Public Safety Director

**CONTACT:** JoAnne Plummer, Parks & Recreation Manager

**SUBJECT:** Preliminary Discussion and Initial Considerations for an Off-Leash Dog Park

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff is requesting the Parks & Recreation Commission receive the information provided in the report and provide feedback and recommendations on the following:

- A. Determine if the current need for an off-leash area is currently being met by existing facilities in the area; and/or
- B. Provide a recommendation to the City Council requesting the consideration of an off-leash area in Goleta; and/or
- C. Provide alternate direction.

**BACKGROUND:**

The desire for residents to have an off-leash area for dogs in Goleta is something that has been discussed throughout the years, but to date, there has been no definitive action to create a legal off-leash area on public property in Goleta.

The City of Goleta hosted a Recreation Needs Assessment (RNA) from 2013 – 2015, and the final recommendations and priorities from the consultant and the Parks & Recreation Commission, at that time, did not include a dog park. However, the community's desire for a dedicated dog park was expressed via the online questionnaire conducted as part of the RNA, as well as through stakeholder interviews and community meetings during that process. In 2016, then Parks & Recreation Commissioner Kyle Richards asked for this item to be discussed and considered. In December of 2016, the Parks & Recreation Commission received a report and public comment on the topic. At that time, Commissioner Kelly Barsky reminded the Commission and the public that a priority list of projects had just been adopted and it was not time to address a dog park until the Commission was able to see some of those projects come to fruition.

**DISCUSSION:**

There are a large number of studies and reports regarding the benefits of dog parks; not only for the dogs, but for the owners. Dog parks provide a safe place for individuals to exercise their dog, allowing the dogs to run freely while their owners socialize. Additionally, these green open spaces bring people out and about by promoting walkable neighborhoods and an enhanced sense of community.

There are a variety of options for developing dedicated off-leash areas and some of the obstacles and challenges they present have been evaluated. The primary considerations of creating a designated dog park are: size/location, configuration, fencing, signage, protection of vegetation and environmental resources, access, compatibility with surrounding uses, water demand, drainage, noise concerns, maintenance, adequate parking, enforcement and neighborhood safety.

Recent trends nationwide have indicated three main configurations for off-leash dog parks: (1) dedicated off-leash facilities, (2) shared use fenced areas within a larger park and (3) off-leash trails.

There are many examples of off-leash opportunities across our state. The table below identifies local opportunities throughout the County of Santa Barbara.

<b>Off-leash Type</b>	<b>Name/Location of the Facility</b>	<b>Park Size Authorized Agency</b>
Dedicated Off-leash (1)	Waller Park/Santa Maria	3 acres/SB County
	Orcutt Community Park/Orcutt	2.5 acres/SB County
	Tuckers Grove in South County	SB County
	Future plans for MacKenzie Park in Santa Barbara	Half acre/City of Santa Barbara
	Barton Park	0.60 acre/City of Lompoc
Shared Use Parks (2)	Patterson Neighborhood Open Space/South County	County of Santa Barbara
	Sea Lookout Park/South County	County of Santa Barbara
	Toro Canyon County Park/South County	County of Santa Barbara
	Tabano Hollow Open Space/South County	County of Santa Barbara
Off-leash Trails/Areas (3)	Douglas Family Preserve (formerly known as the Wilcox Property)	50 acres/City of Santa Barbara
	Hale Park	14 acres/City of Santa Barbara
	Beach Area between the Arroyo Burro Estuary to below Shoreline Park	11 acres/City of Santa Barbara

The development of a new dedicated off-leash facility would be an involved process. As with any new project, the first step would be to determine the need. The RNA and input during public meetings has established that there is a strong desire for our community members to have an area for their dogs to be off-leash legally. The next step would be the evaluation of existing conditions to determine the type and size of a facility and an appropriate location for such a facility.

Once the location is determined, funding for the project for development and ongoing maintenance and operations would need to be secured and policies created and adopted.

The City of Goleta's Municipal Code Section **12.15.470 Dogs Required on Leash** clarifies that dogs must be on a leash, no more than six feet in length. However, Section **12.15.480 Off-Leash Dog Areas in Designated City Recreation Areas** in the Municipal Code indicates that it is permissible to have dogs off-leash. Unfortunately, to date, there are no currently designated recreation areas established within the City.

The desire for off-leash trails can pose other challenges such as potential safety hazards for animals and pedestrians alike. Off-leash trails can also lead to damage of environmentally sensitive habitat areas (ESHAs). The majority of the City's existing trail system is located on Ellwood Mesa or around Lake Los Carneros which both contain designated ESHAs. Goleta's General Plan addresses these concerns and restrictions under the Conservation and the Open Space Elements.

Although no funding is currently budgeted for development of an off-leash dog facility, local jurisdictions, such as the County of Santa Barbara and the City of Lompoc, have been able to collaborate with citizen committees to secure alternative funding for construction and on-going maintenance of their off-leash dog parks.

The Cities of Santa Maria and Carpinteria both explored the idea of dog parks and each determined the need was already being met by existing facilities in the surrounding areas. Outreach efforts in recent years to providers of dog obedience and agility classes communicated that the need in Goleta is being met by current local opportunities such as the nearby Tabano Hallow Open Space Area and Tuckers Grove Park, located just east of Goleta in the unincorporated area of the County.

To continue efforts on the concept of developing an off-leash dog area in the City of Goleta, the Parks & Recreation Commission must determine the need for a dog park at this time to become a priority and recommend that this item be taken to the City Council for further consideration. To date, the Parks and Recreation Commission has confirmed that there was a need for an off-leash dog area, but there was a greater need to prioritize the projects outlined in the RNA on two separate occasions. If the Commission would now like to recommend an adjustment to the priorities, Neighborhood Services staff will bring this recommendation before the City Council for direction at their meeting in September.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

Depending on the type of site selected, associated costs would include the initial construction, maintenance, and repairs. Estimated capital outlay for a small park could range from \$10,000 to \$60,000 contingent on size, landscaping, equipment and desired amenities. The annual maintenance cost for labor and materials is estimated at \$15,000 for a small facility. A large six-acre facility was recently constructed in Mission Viejo that included separate small/big dog areas, lots of space to run, other dog related amenities and a trails system for \$1.4 Million.

There are currently no budgeted funds to initiate this project, although Park Development Impact Fees are a potential source of funding for construction, based on park design and other potential funds.

Approved By:



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Vyto Adomaitis,  
Neighborhood Services &  
Public Safety Director