

SCARSDALE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS PRESIDENTS
DOG PARK PROPOSAL TO THE SCARSDALE VILLAGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

EVERY DOG HAS ITS DAY – BUT NOT YET IN SCARSDALE

A dog park is a wonderful, much-needed amenity for the Village of Scarsdale. In August 2016, the National Association of Realtors ranked dog parks as the number 2 amenity most sought by buyers – above libraries, community pools, coffee shops, and farmers’ markets. Dog parks create a sense of community and offer socialization opportunities for both dogs and people. As we try to build community in Scarsdale, a dog park presents a place where neighbors can congregate with their dogs and engage in conversation and play with people they might otherwise never meet. The health benefits of a dog park to both the dogs and their owners are well recognized. Indeed, the Fall 2017 issues of the White Plains Hospital Health Matters magazine highlights these health benefits and recognizes the excellent dog parks our more enlightened neighboring communities operate.

Last Fall, SNAP commissioned two of its member Presidents, Andrew Sereysky and Robert Berg, to study the practicality of having a dog park in Scarsdale (the “Dog Park Committee”). The Dog Park Committee conducted initial due diligence, researching dog park literature, exploring neighboring municipalities’ dog parks and examining their dog ordinances. After presenting their research to SNAP, SNAP voted to request that the Village consider constructing a dog park in Scarsdale.

What is a Dog Park and How Does It Benefit the Community?

A dog park is typically a fenced in area of a public park where people and their dogs can play together. A dog park offers dogs off-leash play areas where the dogs and their owners can socialize with other dogs and their owners in a park-like setting. The American Kennel Club strongly supports the establishment of dog parks, pointing out the following benefits a dog park offers:

a) *Allows dogs to exercise and socialize safely.* Dogs need room to run and enclosed play areas permit them to do so while preventing them from endangering themselves and others (such as running into a street into traffic). Moreover, dogs which are accustomed to playing with other dogs and people besides their owners are more likely to be well-socialized and react well towards strangers.

(b) *Promotes responsible dog ownership.* Having a dog park encourages owners to keep their dogs on-leash outside the dog park and avoid run-ins with joggers, small children, and people who are afraid of dogs. A dog park makes it easier for a municipality to enforce its leash laws since dog owners have little reason to allow their dogs to run off-leash outside the dog park.

c) *Provides an outlet for dog owners to socialize.* Dog parks are a wonderful place for owners to meet other dog owners with common interests. Dog parks promote a mixing of neighbors from different backgrounds who share a common love for dogs. This promotes a

breakdown of social barriers and fosters an important sense of community. Dog owners also benefit from the knowledge of other dog owners regarding issues they may have with their dogs.

d) *Makes for a better community by promoting public health and safety.* Well-behaved and socialized dogs are better neighbors. They are less likely to create a nuisance, bark excessively, or destroy property. A well-used dog park means people and dogs in the park year round, helping to deter crime or vandalism.

Where are Appropriate Sites for a Scarsdale Dog Park?

Scarsdale is blessed with lots of public park space, including 10 neighborhood parks, a 4-pool swimming complex with play areas, 5 major playing fields, 26 tennis courts, platform tennis courts, and the 10-acre Weinberg Nature Center.

Dog Park Design and Requirements

The Dog Park Committee envision two large fenced in areas – one for large dogs and one for small dogs. Each would be equipped with a double-gated entry to keep dogs from escaping and to facilitate wheelchair access. Each should be outfitted with shade and water for both dogs and owners, along with benches. Cleaning supplies, including covered garbage cans, waste bags, and pooper scooper stations should be provided. Signs would be posted specifying dog park hours and rules.

The Village public works department would be tasked with maintaining the dog park, keeping it properly supplied, and removing waste on a daily basis.

The Dog Park Committee believes that the Village can construct and maintain the dog park at minimal cost, especially considering the tremendous benefit it will provide to the community.

The Dog Park Committee proposes that some of the costs of the dog park be funded from the annual Village dog licensing fee. New York State law requires that all dogs older than four months which are “harbored” within a municipality must be licensed by that municipality, and proof of current rabies vaccination must be provided with each renewal. Currently, the Village of Scarsdale assesses an annual dog license fee of \$20 for neutered (or spayed) dogs, \$28 for un-neutered (or non-spayed) dogs over four months of age, and \$23 for dogs under four months of age, whether or not neutered or spayed.

Anecdotally, we believe that well over one thousand dogs are harbored within the Village of Scarsdale, yet probably less than half are properly and currently licensed. We propose that only properly and currently licensed dogs be allowed to use the dog park. Because of the attractiveness of the dog park, enforcement of this policy will likely encourage dog owners to ensure that their dogs are properly licensed, and thereby, will provide incremental revenues to the Village to offset the cost of the dog park.

Rules for the dog park would be adopted and posted prominently. Based on our experience as dog owners, enforcement would largely come from the dog owners who use the dog park. Failing to clean up after one's dog is a serious faux-pas that brings out considerable social opprobrium from other dog owners. A dog park committee of interested residents can be established to work with the Parks Department and the Public Works Department to assure that the dog park is properly operated and maintained.

Rules for the dog park would include the following:

- Owners are legally responsible for their dogs and any injuries caused by them.
- Puppies and dogs must be properly and currently licensed, inoculated, and healthy.
- Dogs must wear a collar and ID tags at all times.
- Owners must clean up after their dogs.
- Dogs showing aggression towards people or other dogs must be removed immediately from the dog park. Dogs which exhibit a history of aggressive behavior will not be permitted to enter.
- Noisy dogs (excessive barking) must be removed from the dog park until they calm down.
- Puppies using the dog park must be at least four months old.
- Owners should not leave their dogs unattended or allowed out of sight. If young children enter the dog park, they must be under constant supervision.
- No dogs in heat will be allowed inside the dog park.
- Owners must carry a leash at all times. Dogs must be leashed before entering and prior to leaving the dog park.
- Violators will be directed to leave the dog park immediately. Repeat violators will face suspension of their dog park privileges.
- Dogs must be walked directly from the parking area on leash to the dog park, and must be walked directly from the dog park on leash to the parking area. If the dog is being walked to the dog park from outside the park, the dog must only be walked alongside the paved road to the dog park parking area, and must not walk over any other park property.
- Dogs may not be walked anywhere else on park property.
- No eating or drinking (other than water) by dogs or humans is permitted in the dog park.

These simple rules should ensure the safe and efficient operation of the dog park, and minimize any problems with other park goers or park facilities.

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SNAP thus respectfully requests the Village Board consider the establishment of a dog park in an appropriate Village location.

Approved by SNAP, November 6, 2017