



# *PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT*

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MEETING DATE: JANUARY 23, 2008

ITEM NUMBER: 9d

**SUBJECT:** REQUEST OF THE COSTA MESA BARK PARK FOUNDATION FOR EXPANSION OF THE SMALL DOG AREA, EXPANSION OF THE GENERAL DOG AREA, AND RELATED IMPROVEMENTS AT THE TEWINKLE BARK PARK

**DATE:** JANUARY 14, 2008

**FROM:** PUBLIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT

**PRESENTATION BY:** DONNA THERIAULT, MANAGEMENT ANALYST

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** DONNA THERIAULT at (714) 754-5024

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the City Council consider the Bark Park Foundation's request to:

1. Expand the small dog area into the general dog area, extend the current walkway in the small dog area, and install wheelchair turnouts into the newly expanded small dog area with the conditions below.
2. Extend the existing concrete walkway in the small dog area in a westerly direction to the back gate entrance with the conditions below.

Conditions for item #1 & #2:

1. All improvements involving sidewalk and wheelchair access must be designed by a licensed landscape architect, meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements, are approved by the Public Services Director, and provide the least amount of impact to the existing irrigation and lighting systems.
  2. All design and construction work must be performed by the Costa Mesa Bark Park Foundation or their licensed contractor through a no-fee permit with the City. The contractor must provide insurance meeting all City requirements.
  3. The work must be inspected by Maintenance Services staff during construction to insure all work meets City Standards.
  4. At the completion of all approved work, the irrigation and turf must be fully restored to provide full irrigation coverage and established turfgrass of a variety approved by the Maintenance Services Director.
  5. All damage caused by construction of the improvements by the Bark Park Foundation's selected contractor or vendor shall be repaired to the satisfaction of the Director of Public Services at no cost to the City prior to the re-opening of the Bark Park.
  6. The Costa Mesa Bark Park Foundation must fund the design, construction, and associated fees for all approved improvements.
3. Recommend City Council not approve the expansion of the general dog area.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Costa Mesa Bark Park Foundation (Foundation) has submitted 3 reports to the Costa Mesa Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) requesting the approval of the expansion of the small dog area into the general dog area (Attachment 1); extension of the existing concrete sidewalk in the small dog area to the recently installed back gate and into the newly expanded small dog area, and to construct wheelchair turnout areas (Attachment 2); and expansion of the general dog area into an area in TeWinkle Park between the Tennis Courts and the California Air National Guard Facility (Attachment 3).

The issue of expanding the small dog park into the general dog park area was presented to the Commission in June 2007. At the June meeting, there was not an agreement among the Bark Park Foundation Board Members as to how the small dog park was to be expanded. The Commission requested the Foundation Board Members come to a consensus on a proposal to expand the small dog area and return to the Commission once an agreement between the Board Members for expansion of the small dog area was achieved.

The existing layout and configuration of the small dog area and the general dog area of the Bark Park was approved by the City Council in October 1999 when major improvements were made to the Bark Park. The existing layout and configuration of the small dog area and the general dog area was designed with input by the Bark Park users.

Since that time, the City has also designed and built a dog watering station in the general dog area, renovated and restriped the Arlington Street Parking Lot, built a new restroom for use by Bark Park, Skate Park and TeWinkle Park users, provided lighting for the parking lot and the interior of the Bark Park, installed a new gate directly into the small dog area, improved the drainage of a section of the general dog park area, and provided turf reestablishment in several areas of the general dog area.

## **ANALYSIS**

The Foundation Board Members have discussed the expansion of the small dog area and have come to an agreement on the proposed improvements presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission. The Foundation feels the use of the Bark Park in general and particularly the small dog park has increased and there is now a need to enlarge both the small dog area and the general dog area. They also feel there is a need to provide wheelchair turn around areas in the existing small dog area and the proposed expansion area.

### Expansion of the Small Dog Area

As noted in the report from the Foundation (Attachment 1), the small dog area encompasses less than 10 percent of the total Bark Park area. The Foundation has also determined that other dog parks in the immediate area provide between 20 and 25 percent of the total dog park for segregated small dog areas. Their report also states that overcrowding and high use leads to unsanitary and unsafe conditions in the small dog area due to the increased amount of dog urine and feces in the small area, and the inability of dog owners to pull their dogs to a neutral area to avoid a confrontation with other dogs. The Foundation proposes to pay for all cost of the expansion and is requesting they be given approval to begin the expansion immediately. They have received a bid for the fence relocation from a fencing company.

Staff has reviewed the Foundation's request and feels the proposed expansion of the small dog area can be achieved with the services of a landscape architect and approval of the final layout by the Public Services Director. The existing irrigation layout was designed by a landscape architect to provide for the efficient watering of zones within the Bark Park. Any changes to the system would require a qualified irrigation designer or landscape architect to analyze the existing design and make changes which would not negatively affect the irrigation efficiency or hydraulics of the system. Additionally, in order to avoid an "irrigation zone" having a chain link fence run through it, and the irrigation water being sprayed through the chain link fence, some irrigation lines and/or sprinkler heads may need to be relocated.

Staff has reviewed the Foundation's proposed design and would be willing to work with the Foundation on possible alternatives and other design options to improve the small dog area with less impact on the existing site and irrigation systems.

#### Extension of the Concrete Walkway and Related Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Improvements in the Small Dog Area

The second request from the Foundation (Attachment 2) is for the extension of the existing concrete walkway in the small dog area to allow patrons in wheelchairs to enter the small dog area from the newly installed back gate, and to provide for wheelchair turn around areas along and at the end of the walkway. The existing concrete sidewalk allows patrons in wheelchairs to enter the park from the main front gate and access the small dog area to the dog watering station. If the expansion of the small dog area is approved, the Foundation would also like to extend the concrete sidewalk into the newly expanded small dog area and provide a wheelchair turn around in the new expansion area.

Staff reviewed the Foundation's proposal and again feels the improvements can be achieved with the services of a landscape architect and approval of the final layout by the Public Services Director. At the time the back gate was installed, the existing main gate entrance into the Bark Park met the requirements and standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Foundation was made aware that the back gate entrance would not meet ADA standards without extensive improvement. Therefore, the main gate entrance into the small dog park is required to be open for ADA accessibility and the subject back gate directly into the small dog park is a secondary entrance.

Currently, there is some grade difference in the small dog area near the back gate entrance that would need to be checked for ADA compliance if a sidewalk is installed in the location. In addition, the proposed location of the new sidewalk in the small dog area expansion has some hilly areas and the installation of a sidewalk would definitely need to be designed to meet ADA standards. The 4-foot width and grade of the existing sidewalk in the small dog area currently meets ADA standards for public areas.

The existing irrigation in the area of the proposed sidewalk extension to the back gate and the proposed extension into the small dog area expansion will require some changes and relocation. There are also some small trees and shrubs that may be impacted by the extension of the sidewalk into the proposed small dog area expansion.

## Expansion of the General Dog Area

The third report from the Foundation requests to enlarge the general dog area into an area located between the Tennis Center and the California Air National Guard Facility (Attachment 3). Due to a directive by the City Council in November 2007 to not provide a second dog park at Fairview Park, the Foundation feels Bark Park is the only off-leash facility that will be available in Costa Mesa for the near future. The Foundation also feels that the Bark Park will experience a heavier use year around due to the installation of the lights and will need to have additional space if the small dog area is expanded into the general dog area.

Staff has reviewed the Foundation's proposal and does not recommend approval of the request to enlarge the general dog area. The subject location is difficult to see from either Junipero Drive or Arlington Avenue which may contribute to inappropriate use of the area. Currently, the area is accessible to TeWinkle Park users, but is seldom occupied. If the area is made part of the Bark Park it will still have the same lack of visibility issues, but will now have greater use. The main entrance into the Bark Park is not locked at night and the subject proposed expanded area would be utilized by Bark Park users. The new lighting system was not designed to provide adequate lighting to this area and may result in increased City liability should any problem occur in that area that could be attributed to sub-standard light levels.

The subject area is currently irrigated on the same schedule as the TeWinkle Park area north of the Bark Park and east of Junipero Drive. The irrigation within the proposed expansion area cannot be controlled or segregated with the existing Bark Park irrigation without extensive relocation of existing irrigation lines and rewiring of the irrigation controllers for both TeWinkle Park and the Bark Park. Should muddy conditions develop over time as the turf is damaged by the dogs, the irrigation scheduling could not be adjusted down without negative impacts on areas outside of the expanded Bark Park area.

Currently, the subject expansion area has about 8-10 eucalyptus trees that may be detrimentally impacted by Bark Park users and their dogs. The use of the existing Bark Park area has resulted in a significant loss of mature trees. Staff recently removed 7 dying trees from the Bark Park and is scheduled to remove 3 more. In the past, several dead trees have been removed. Irrigation issues, soil compaction, and lack of proper soil nutrients can contribute to unhealthy and dying trees and turf. The buildup of urine in the soil has resulted in high soil salt levels and an increase in soil pH, contributing to the death and decline of trees and turfgrass. Adding additional area will likely have the same result.

Maintenance staff recommends that the existing Bark Park area be more proactively managed with intensive soil and turf renovation performed, rather than expand into new areas.

## **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The Parks and Recreation Commission can recommend City Council not consider and/or approve the Foundation's request for any or all of the proposed alterations to the Bark Park.

## **FISCAL REVIEW**

The City currently has no funding to provide for the requested design and construction of the proposed changes to the Bark Park.

## **LEGAL REVIEW**

No legal review is required for this item.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Foundation has made a request for several changes to the TeWinkle Bark Park to resolve issues of overcrowding, wheelchair accessibility, and lack of space. Staff feels the proposed changes to the small dog area can be done with the services of a landscape architect and with certain conditions and approvals, and recommends the Commission make a recommendation to City Council for consideration. Staff does not recommend the Commission approve the Foundation's request to enlarge the general dog area.

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DONNA THERIAULT  
Management Analyst

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PETER NAGHAVI  
Acting Public Services Director

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1 Costa Mesa Bark Park Foundation Report for Expansion of the Small Dog Area
- 2 Costa Mesa Bark Park Foundation Report for Extension of the Current Walkway in the Small Dog Area and for Wheelchair Turnout Areas
- 3 Costa Mesa Bark Park Foundation Report for Expansion of the General Dog Area

C: Bruce Hartley, Maintenance Services Manager  
Donna Theriault, Management Analyst

File Name 012308- Expansion of Small Dog & General Dog Areas Report

Date 01/14/08

Time 3:00 p.m.