

## **Board of Park Commissioners**

### **Dogs in Parks**

February 12, 2020

My name is Karen Matteoni. I am a park supporter and avid park user. I served on Long Range Planning of Parks and on the boards of 2 friends of parks organizations. I have led park cleanups, plantings and worked to get playground equipment for children. I taught elementary school. Today I am speaking as a park user and a neighbor of a park.

**I was shocked to read in the newspaper that “there has never really been a problem with the dogs.” There are problems in the parks which are not being addressed. Parks allowed dogs to be on-leash in Yahara Place Park as a pilot and declared “The pilot was a success” but staff never reached out to neighbors of the parks. A staff member said they didn’t reach out to us because “Neighbors don’t want anything in parks.” Owners are letting their dogs run off-leash and on long leashes are making the park and surrounding streets and neighborhood unpredictable, unpleasant and unsafe for other park users. The park can be tranquil one moment and then dogs interfere with other parks users.**

**I am awakened in my home by dogs barking in the park as early as 5:30 in the morning with my windows closed. Most of the dog owners are respectful of park users but many people have chosen to let their dogs run off-leash and in packs. Off-leash dogs have barked, growled, fought, run in packs, chased on-leash dogs, invaded picnics, checked out sunbathers, and intimidated other park users, including infants and children.**

**Enforcement is a major problem. There are only a few park rangers trying to enforce rules at 274 parks. If a ranger catches people with their dogs off-leash, they normally give them a warning rather than a ticket. Only 52 tickets were issued in 2018 for all of our 274 parks. Each day I see at least one off-leash dog in the park. Warnings have been ineffective. Tickets could improve compliance.**

**I have been going to public parks all my life in Chicago, New York, national parks and Madison. In all those years, I was never charged or attacked by dogs except in City of Madison Parks. Yes, we have a problem in our parks.**

**As the Board of Park Commissioners, you need to provide resources for enforcement and resolve the problems before more parks are open to dogs. We don’t let people buy a car and drive wherever they want without any training, testing, enforcement or insurance.**

## **Activities Observed in Yahara Place Park**

### **Passive Recreation**

Watching birds and waterfowl with and without binoculars  
Photography  
Arts and crafts  
Reading books  
Sunbathing  
Sitting on blankets, lawn chairs or benches  
Lying in hammocks strung between trees  
Looking at the lake  
Playing with toys  
Talking with others in person and on the phone  
Playing the guitar and other instruments  
Listening to music on radio or other device  
Sleeping on blankets, benches and hammocks  
Using electronic devices including phones and computers

### **Active recreation**

Walking including walking with canes, walkers, assistants and/or wheelchairs  
Children from local schools and camps getting exercise  
Learning to ride a bike on the sidewalk in the park or on the grass with or without training wheels  
Biking on the sidewalk, on the grass, on the path along Lake Monona, on the street next to the park with or without helmets  
Riding a B-cycle electric bike on the grass, on the path along Lake Monona, on the street next to the park generally without helmets  
Going on swings for young children, older children, and adults  
Using other playground equipment for young and old (slides, climbing equipment, games)  
Baseball  
Football  
Throwing horseshoes  
Soccer  
Flying kites  
Fishing  
Climbing trees with low branches  
Climbing trees with ropes and other equipment  
Croquet  
Singing  
Dancing  
Tightrope walking on ropes attached to 2 trees  
Kubb (A game with wooden pegs and blocks)  
Throwing frisbees  
Bocce

Making bubbles  
Tossing balloons  
Putting in and taking canoes and kayaks onto Lake Monona  
Exercise routines including running forward and backwards  
Planting trees, shrubs, and flowers  
Metal detecting and digging around tree roots  
Maintaining plantings  
Collecting trash  
Riding on hoverboards on path along Lake Monona  
Swimming at new water access points  
Badminton  
Cross country skiing  
Snowshoeing  
Going from the park to the lake to ice skate or ski

### **Picnics and other celebrations**

Marquette Waterfront Festival with food vendors  
Picnicing on blankets on the grass, or at tables  
Children's Halloween parade on the sidewalk of the park  
Weddings with or without tents  
Neighborhood picnics  
Birthday parties  
Celebrations of life  
Barbequing

### **Activities with dogs**

Walking with 1-3 dogs on-leash on the sidewalk, on the grass, on the path along Lake Monona, on the street next to the park and on private property on the residential side of the street  
Being pulled by 1-4 dogs on a leash  
Walking with 4 dogs on-leash on sidewalk in the park (professional dog walkers?)  
Walking with 1-2 dogs off-leash on the sidewalk, on the grass, on the path along Lake Monona, on the street next to the park  
Walking after 1-2 dogs which have leashes not held by the owner  
Walking/running with dog off-leash on the grass  
Sitting at a park bench or on the ground with 1-2 dogs on leash  
Throwing balls to 1-2 off-leash dogs with or without a ball launcher  
Dogs barking, growling at other dogs and people  
Dogs fighting  
Standing around while 1 or more dogs run off-leash  
Training dogs  
Yelling at dogs  
Cleaning up feces and putting in trash (or left in the bag on the ground when trash cans removed for winter)  
Watching dogs defecate without cleaning up