

**From:** Paulson, Erik  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 11, 2022 5:41 PM  
**To:** Park Commission <pacommission@cityofmadison.com>  
**Cc:** Knepp, Eric <EKnepp@cityofmadison.com>; Freiwald, Ann <AFreiwald@cityofmadison.com>  
**Subject:** Dog Park public notice discussion thoughts for BPC meeting of the 12th

[BCCed BPC members]

Members of the BPC -

I hope to be able to join you for your meeting tomorrow, however, due to a neighborhood meeting conflict I may have to depart before you get to the "Informational Update on Dogs in Parks Designation Process", which is an item near and dear to the hearts of residents of the 3rd District.

I and I think almost everyone in Madison are grateful that most of our parks are now dog-friendly, and I think everyone also recognizes that there should be some parks set aside as dog-free, and I think everyone recognizes that an important policy goal should be that everyone in Madison should be reasonably nearby to a dog-free park. I think everyone also recognizes that the exact placement of these dog-free parks is likely to be more of an art than a science given all of the variables to be balanced. Certainly some guidelines are helpful to make decisions, but in the end I think everyone in the City can live with trusting in the deliberations of the Parks staff and the BPC.

I also think that while we should have a process to consider changes to the dog-free and dog-friendly status of individual parks from time to time, I think the reality is that in any given year very few parks will actually change their status. Obviously we are still pretty early in the journey having only started in 2020, but I would hope that after this year or next year, we should largely stabilize the status of each park and in most years we should see only 1 or 2 parks actually change status.

Given that the actual status change of a park is going to be rare, I'd like to encourage finding a change process that tries to keep the amount of work and stress placed on Parks staff, the BPC, and the public to a minimum, while also still allowing for robust public input and notification.

I think the process that Parks staff has outlined in the memo attached to this item (see <https://madison.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=11293721&GUID=1DCDF8CF-0238-46D0-8455-DF3BF2ABF38C>) is generally pretty good - most importantly, I think the signs that go into the Parks under consideration for changes are the most valuable part of public notification of possible changes, which I think was something that was unfortunately somewhat missed in the 2021 process.

I do share a concern that has been raised by some of the other commenters on this item that perhaps the process laid out in the memo opens us up to a possibility of creating just a bit more

hubbub than we need, in the event of a request to change a park that is almost certainly not going to change. I am worried about creating a lot of work for everyone - should a single request for a park status change trigger a full round of signs and postcards from Parks staff and then a bunch of neighborhood organization and testimony before the BPC, all for a change that was unlikely to be approved anyway?

I have suggested this to Eric and Ann, and I think they are receptive to something like this change for future years, but I would strongly suggest adding a bit of a filtering step early on - something that ensures that the expertise of Parks staff is used, still preserves the decision-making role of the BPC, and cuts out a lot of noise.

My suggested process for next year:

1. Just like now, over the course of the year, anyone in the City can suggest a change on the web request form, up until Sept 30 (just a bit earlier than now)
- 2a. [NEW] Parks staff takes all of the requests that have come in and sends them to the BPC for their October meeting. It's worth notifying Alders here too, but if we know to keep our eye on the October BPC meeting that's good enough too.
- 2b. [NEW] As part of that, Staff includes a recommendation for each request. I think normally the recommendation will be "no change" but we'll see.
3. [NEW] At its October meeting, the BPC reviews that set of recommendations and decides if there are any requests that staff didn't recommend that it wants to consider for changes. BPC is not making any decisions about if the change will happen, just which ones are they considering in November after notifications go out.
4. [SAME] After that October meeting, Parks staff does the notifications to relevant folks for the parks that might be changed - signs in the parks, notifications to Alders, maybe postcards, etc.
5. [SAME] At its November meeting, the BPC can be pretty confident that everyone who might want to comment about the proposed change has heard about it, and they make their decision about the status for the next year. (Those comments might change the staff recommendation from October, of course!)

I think this filtering step in October (along with a way for the BPC to check staff recommendations and preserve their role) cuts out a lot of noise and hubbub about changes that aren't realistically going to happen and cuts down on the work that Parks staff has to do for notifications, and I think just overall will cut down on the amount of stress and heartburn in neighborhoods - we shouldn't send out notifications for changes that are unlikely to happen.

I think this slightly tweaked process is overall not much more work than Ann already has to do, and will be less work on Parks field staff, and is only probably 5 minutes more work for the BPC each year, if that, and will save residents a lot of time.

There are parts of this that I am not deeply attached to - should this be an every-other-year process instead of yearly, or should a subcommittee of the BPC make some of these recommendations - I defer those questions to the BPC. My main concern is that whatever

process Parks uses in the future preserves the ability of residents to request a change, while also not creating too much work for the BPC or Parks staff, and while also making sure we get information out to residents about possible changes while also not needlessly alarming residents.

I realize that people get pretty passionate about things when it comes to dogs in Madison, and I apologize for the length of this email. Thank you for your service to Madison Parks.

Thanks,

-Erik

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