



CITY OF MARTINEZ

PARKS, RECREATION, MARINA & CULTURAL  
COMMISSION

DATE: July 16, 2013

TO: Parks, Recreation, Marina & Cultural Commission (PRMCC)

FROM: Tim Tucker, City Engineer

SUBJECT: Dog Park Update

**ACTION**

Accept report.

**BACKGROUND**

The Dog Park Subcommittee met Monday, July 8<sup>th</sup>. The purpose of the meeting was to review letter from Contra Costa County resident Greg Staffelbach. Mr. Staffelbach believes the Alhambra Avenue detention basin and Golden Hills Park (small dog park) are poor choices for dog park locations. He proposed several other locations. The subcommittee took the time to visit the majority of the sites.

As you may recall the Subcommittee initially looked at all park and open space locations then expanded the search to all City owned property. We did not look at vacant parcel of private land. The subcommittee then visited several dog parks to evaluate the required area and improvements. We talked to dog park users and maintenance staff. With this information the Subcommittee narrow down the opportunities to those sites with adequate area, access to water, available or potential parking, shade and with the least impact to neighbors.

The only area identified by Mr. Staffelbach that had some support from the Subcommittee was near the softball fields at Waterfront Park. However, with the loss of the picnic area near the skate park there is some thought that it may be more important to use this area as rentable picnic space. The Subcommittee recommends this are be further evaluated with the upcoming design of Waterfront Park.

The Subcommittee reviewed their original recommendation and agreed to move forward. Our next step is to hold neighborhood workshops at the preliminary sites to get their input. The City has already received letters objecting to the Golden Hills site (Attached).

Michael J. & Elizabeth A. Mallonee  
792 Horizon Drive  
Martinez, CA 94553

July 8, 2013

City Hall  
Attn: Parks, Recreation, Marina, Cultural Commission  
525 Henrietta Street  
Martinez, CA 94553

cc: Tim Tucker

RE: Small Dog Park Proposal at Golden Hills Park

Dear Parks, Recreation, Marina, Cultural Commission,

Please accept this letter as input to the recently proposed small dog park in the Golden Hills Park of Martinez.

We'd like to note that we are dog lovers and have owned many dogs throughout the years. Our comments below are not founded in issues with dogs per se, they are issues with the selection of the location of this dog park and with concerns about our city of Martinez being able to properly fund this park over its intended life span,

Golden Hills Park is the park located in our neighborhood and is used regularly by families with children, exercisers, soccer players, picnickers, tennis players and others seeking to enjoy nature's restful, restorative offerings in this bustling area.

As a close-by neighbor we will address our serious concerns about noise from barking dogs. This park is situated very close to homes which will all be heavily and negatively impacted by the barking of dogs if a dog park is allowed on those grounds. There is no mitigation available to assuage this impact and it is not something that can be adequately controlled by the dog owners, surrounding neighbors, those taking walks through the park, etc. It will cause serious strain on the relative peace and quiet of our home lives and introduce an impossible negative impact to the quality of life on the neighbors who have invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in our properties and purchased homes near this park as it generally stands today. As well, those who use the tennis courts, the children's playground and the soccer/football/baseball field at the Golden Hills Park would find incessant dog barking quite disturbing.

Living near a dog park is something so disagreeable to many that it should be disclosed to potential buyers. One certainly may elect to drive to a dog park that is located in a remote area, away from homes, however rarely would a person choose to have their home sanctity disturbed by barking dogs by purposefully purchasing a home near such a place. And even having set hours for the park will not remedy this situation as policing this will be too expensive, impractical and exhausting for all. And, for the hours the park would be open, the barking would be problematic.

That brings us to the issue of expense. We are huge fans of this town, even voting every day on the Benjamin Moore website to have our downtown recognized as a town that matters to us in the hopes of having it painted in their upcoming program. We have been working hard to revitalize the downtown and marina area and much more work is yet to be done. Financial resources that would be diverted to a dog park should be focused on the downtown and marina efforts. Adding the cost of this luxurious endeavor to dog owner license fees is not just to the people who have no interest in these parks and forces them to financially support the smaller group of folks who would use these parks.

There are sound reasons behind why neighbors in other surrounding neighborhoods have objected to these parks in their neighborhoods. In this area we have lots of access to hiking trails, walking paths and other similar places that folks can use to exercise their dogs. If it is socialization they are seeking they can visit existing dog parks, do get-togethers with other dog owners using a variety of methods to connect to those folks (veterinarian offices, postings in public and some private businesses, social media, dog owner group connection sites, etc.).

There are numerous experts in the field of animal behavior, and specifically dog behavior, who state that dog behavior at dog parks, or "bark parks", is typically not well overseen by dog owners, many of whom use the dog park as a place to let their dogs roughhouse, get riled up, and work out their aggressions. As well, they do their bathroom business at these places which introduces concentrated amounts of parasite laced dog feces and grass killing urine to what is otherwise a natural and relatively healthy bit of park land.

Children play in this park and the elderly use it to get fresh air and it is not always a healthy mix to introduce those folks to the likes of a pack of dogs. Even with fencing there can be problems. If the city of Martinez fails to consistently, firmly and in a timely manner, enforce the rules of the dog park they can be seen as negligent and vulnerable to lawsuits and at the very least, bad civic relations.

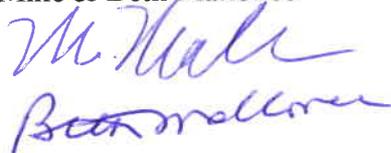
While there may be some options, albeit fraught with solid discerning input from a larger audience, the one item above that simply put cannot be resolved is the annoyance to neighboring homes of dogs barking, which as we all know, carries its sound for a long distance.

We implore you to reconsider having a dog park in Martinez for the reasons of expense, liability and in the name of allowing our townspeople to use this park as it was intended, designed and is currently being well utilized.

And, at the very least we are requesting that you not allow any dog parks near a neighborhood for all of the reasons stated above, specifically in this context we are referring to Golden Hills park.

Thank you for taking the time to hear our input to a very negative change to our neighborhood park, Golden Hills,

Mike & Beth Mallonee



## Dog Park Report Attachment

### Stauffelbach recommendation response:

1. Waterfront Park west of softball – Will evaluate as part of current park renovation project.
2. Center Avenue across from Kaiser – Private Property
3. Vine Hill Park (Mt. View Park)- Previously reviewed, near homes and would significantly reduce available grass area.
4. Hidden Valley Park – Previously reviewed, park under renovation, was not an element in the vision of the park improvements
5. Nancy Boyd – Recently renovated rear portion which is used for girls softball and soccer use. Front part of park designated for picnic areas.
6. Hidden Lakes Park – Previously reviewed. Available open space areas too remote. Conflict with picnickers and other park users at front section.
7. Hidden Valley Open Space end of Glacier – Near residential area, little available city parking areas.
8. Morello Park – Previously reviewed. Front section adjacent to residential. Rear section used by school and baseball.