

CITY OF OAKLAND



Office of Parks and Recreation

TO: Jeffrey Taylor
Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission
FROM: Audree V. Jones-Taylor, OPR Director
DATE: June 18, 2008
RE: Allowing Dogs On-Leash in Mosswood Park

SUMMARY

The Office of Parks and Recreation has received a request from community members regarding allowing dogs on-leash in Mosswood Park. Currently dogs are not allowed in any area of the park except the fenced dog play area. Dog owners would like to be able to walk their dogs through the park on their way to the dog play area without being in violation of City laws. OPR supports changing the dog ordinance: OMC 6.04.080 (A)(1) to include allowing dogs on a six foot leash on designated paths through Mosswood Park.

FISCAL IMPACT

Adopting the change in the Municipal Code would require that new signs be posted in Mosswood Park. Staff estimate that the production and installation of the signs would cost approximately \$2000. There is currently no budget for this expense. However, OPR will be creative in seeking the funds should PRAC accept OPR's recommendation.

BACKGROUND

The Mosswood Dog Play Area was opened earlier this year and came to fruition largely because local dog owners worked long and hard to make the dog play area at Mosswood a reality. Almost immediately after the play area was completed, the same dog owners complained that the rules governing foot access to the dog play area did not make sense. They requested that the City's ordinance governing dogs in parks be modified to allow dog owners to walk their dogs through Mosswood Park on-leash.

KEY ISSUES AND IMPACTS

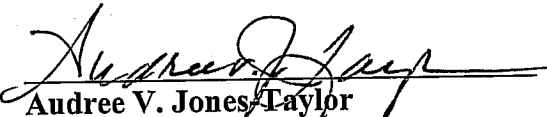
There are some important issues to review when considering whether to allow dogs off-leash in any Oakland park. Some of the concerns about allowing dogs on-leash in Mosswood include:

- Traditionally, dogs have only been allowed in city parks where there is open space and there are not picnic sites and children's play areas.
- Liability: assessing the City's exposure if someone is bitten or injured by a dog on-leash.
- We are not requesting to allow dogs on-leash in other parks.
- Environmental impacts – dog waste, wild animals (squirrels, birds, etc.), maintenance, other users' health and safety.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that PRAC approve the community request to allow dogs on a six foot leash in Mosswood Park on designated paths and forward its recommendation to City Council for revision of the relevant Ordinance.

Respectfully submitted,


Audree V. Jones-Taylor
Director, Office of Parks and Recreation

May 29, 2008

Dear Park & Recreation Advisory Commissioners,

We are writing regarding a problem with the ease of access to the Mosswood Dog Park. As you know, dogs are not allowed in Oakland Parks except by permission; historically by vote of City Council and now, as of 2007, by direction from PRAC. When we asked PRAC to approve the Mosswood dog runs, we didn't realize that we would also have to ask for a provision to allow people to walk through the park to get to the dog runs. We would expect to keep the dogs on leash until they reach the fenced dog runs.

Currently, in order to abide by the Oakland Municipal Code, people are forced to walk several long blocks around the perimeter of the park to enter the dog park in the Southwest area of Mosswood Park via the Webster Street parking lot. This is particularly a problem for seniors and others with limited mobility living north and east of Mosswood Park, that want to use the dog park. Mosswood Park is a rather large park; a walk around the entire perimeter adds a considerable distance to gain access to the dog park. That extra walk means people who could easily walk through the park, might choose to drive instead, all because they are prohibited park access. We believe that having a reasonable regulation that allows people to go through the park, on park pathways, with their dogs on leash, will remedy this oversight.

We request that PRAC update the regulations for Mosswood, either to make it a park like Joaquin Miller and Dimond Canyon where dogs are allowed on leash or to change the rules so that dogs on leash are permitted access on the paved pathways. This adjustment in the regulation would encourage walking rather than driving to the park. It would help seniors and others who cannot walk distances. It would support the basic premise of the dog runs, that is, to give dog owners a reason to use and enjoy the park. To be clear, we are not requesting that dogs be allowed random access at

Mosswood, only that we can walk through the park with our dogs on leash.

This has worked successfully at tiny Hardy Park for many years. While that park is about 1/5 the size of Mosswood, the neighborhood has built two children's play areas within a few yards of the dog park and bringing dogs to the fenced area has not impacted the other park users. Also, San Francisco and Berkeley allow leashed dogs in most of their parks, whether or not there is a fenced dog area and those cities have successfully mingled leashed dogs and other park users.

We ask you to make the dog runs at Mosswood truly accessible to the dog owners who want to comply with the law by keeping their dogs on leash in the main park and have a natural access to the dog runs without driving.

We are requesting that the Park and Recreation Advisory Committee permit dogs to be walked, on leash, on the paved pathways within Mosswood Park. This would enable people to take their most direct route through the park to gain access to the dog park.

Appropriate signs at key entry points to the park would both promote use of the dog park and let people know that they have permission to walk dogs on leash on the paved pathways only.

This change would facilitate use of the dog park by all responsible dog owners, enabling people who want to comply with the law to be able to do so without compromising general park use.

If you have any questions regarding this proposal, please call me at 510-658-8713. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ellen Gierson

Contact Person for
Concerned Mosswood Dog Park Users

May 29, 2008

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Sincerely,

Ellen Gjerson

Contact Person for
Concerned Mosswood Dog Park Users

Walsh, Kip

From: Tom Walsh and Maura Fitzgerald [maura_tom@comcast.net]
Sent: Sunday, June 08, 2008 4:01 PM
To: Walsh, Kip
Subject: A Request to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to request that you grant the request of Mosswood Dog Park visitors that they allow on-leash, on-path access across the park from the eastern side.

This convenience will encourage greater enjoyment of the park by dog owners and others and make the park less hospitable to the drug dealers and vandals who now use the park.

Thank you,

Tom Walsh
Maura FitzGerald
1412 Barrows Rd
Oakland