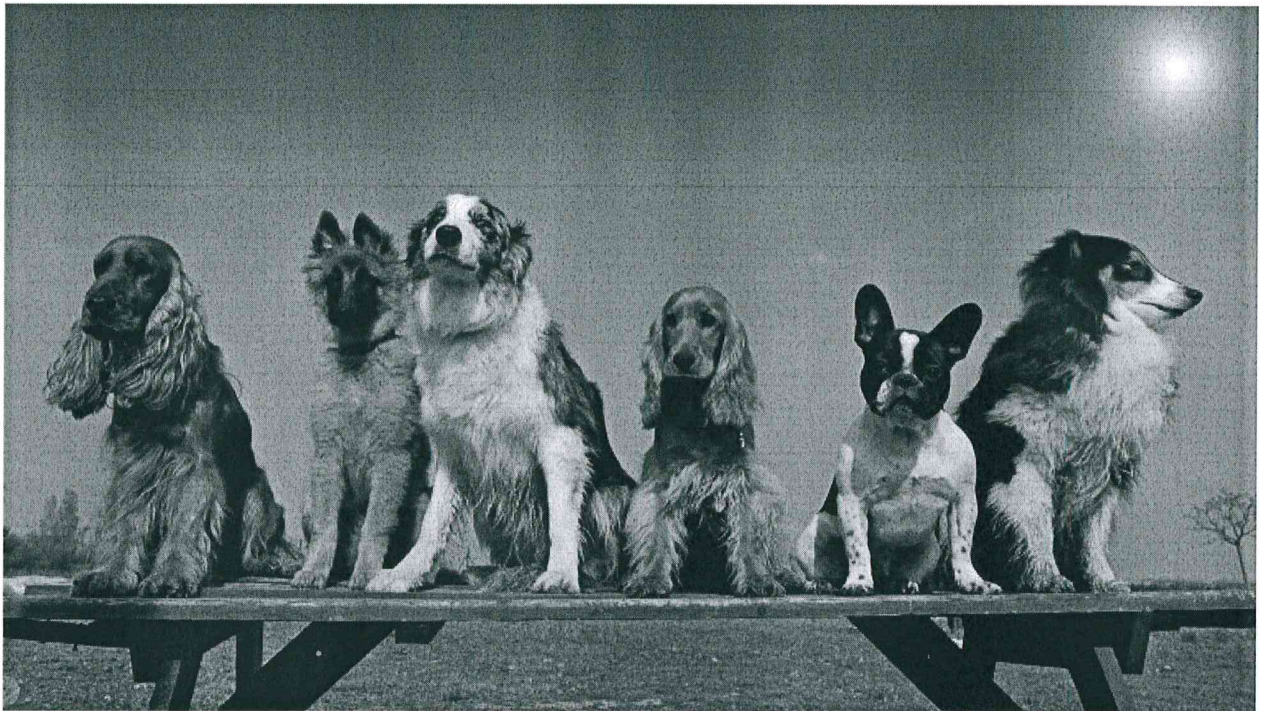


Town of Canton- Dog Park Proposal

Board of Selectmen Informational Packet



Presented by:

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I.) Project Proposal Overview:

The Canton Parks and Recreation Department, the Canton Parks and Recreation Commission and the Friends of the Canton Dog Park Committee are requesting approval to move forward with the creation of an ***off-leash enclosed Dog Park*** for the Town of Canton. The proposed location of the park is on the Maglaty Property (on Dowd Avenue off Commerce Drive). Currently the property is owned by the Canton Land Trust, the Land Trust board has voted to approve the land for use of a dog park and is requesting a land swap deal with the town for the following town owned properties:

4 Westwood drive
GIS ID 5680004
MAP-BLOCK-LOT 16/568/0004
Acres 16.52

6 Westwood Drive
GIS ID 5680006
MAP-BLOCK-LOT 16/568/0006
Acres 4.28

7 Westwood Drive
GIS ID 5680007
MAP-BLOCK-LOT 16/568/0007
Acres 7.39

Action Requested from the Board of Selectmen:

- 1.) Vote to approve the land swap deal with the Canton Land Trust.
- 2.) Authorization for the First Selectman to sign any necessary land use applications.
- 3.) Vote to approve the Dog Park project and allow the Friends of Canton Dog Park to begin fundraising for the park.

II.) Brief History of the Project:

Canton resident Alan Duncan approached the Parks and Recreation Department about the creation of a Dog Park for the Town of Canton in July 2015. Alan presented a request to the Parks and Recreation Commission in August 2015 which approved the creation of a "Friends of Canton Dog Park" sub-group which is comprised of approximately 80+ Canton residents. The expectation was that the "Friends of the Dog Park" would be responsible for all costs associated with the dog park project which would be obtained through donations, sponsorships and fundraising.

In response to the resident requests for a Dog Park, Director Medeiros developed a comprehensive dog park survey that was sent out to registered dog owners in town. There are approximately 1,300 registered dog owners in town, of which the town had 635 e-mail addresses. Of the 635 e-mails sent, 263 individuals responded with 80% in favor of the parks creation (more details on the survey available below).

Since then the Friends of the Canton Dog Park and Director Medeiros have been meeting monthly to develop plans for the parks creation which has included developing a tentative budget, seeking information from surrounding communities on their dog park operations and discussing fundraising plans. The group has reached the stage where we are looking for Board of Selectmen support in order to move forward with the next phase of the process.

III.) Some benefits of a Community Dog Park:

Dog parks, or off-leash dog areas, have quickly become a leading feature in communities and parks across the country. Although they have been around for almost three decades, dog parks are currently the fastest-growing segment of city/town parks. There are an estimated 1,200 dog parks in operation in the United States. Dog parks vary in size and design, but all provide a fun activity space with numerous benefits for dogs, their owners and the communities in which they live. Dog parks are a great addition to any open public space, as they encourage socialization between neighbors and their cherished pets. Most importantly, they provide a place where dogs can exercise and play freely with other dogs.

Allows dogs to exercise and socialize safely. Puppies and adult dogs need room to run, and enclosed play areas permit them to do so while preventing them from endangering themselves and others (for example, by running into the path of an oncoming vehicle). In addition, dogs who are accustomed to playing with animals and people other than their owners are more likely to be well socialized and react well toward strangers.

Promotes responsible dog ownership. Dog parks prevent off-leash animals from infringing on the rights of other community residents and park users such as joggers, small children, and those who may be fearful of dogs. Parks also make it easier for a town/city to enforce its leash laws, as resident dog owners with park access have no reason to allow their canine companions off-leash when outside of the park.

Provides an outlet for dog owners to socialize. Dog parks are a great place for owners to meet other people with common interests. The love people share for their dogs reaches beyond economic and social barriers and helps foster a sense of community. Park users also benefit from the opportunity to ask questions of other owners and find solutions to problems they might be having with their pet.

Source: National Recreation and Parks Association

The need for a Dog Park here in Canton is substantial. Many of our neighboring communities including Simsbury, Granby, and Bristol to name a few, all currently have dog parks. Additional community benefits include potential ***economic boost*** with park users stopping at local restaurants, gas stations and shops, the park promotes walking/exercise for owners as well as a socialization element which is good for both people and dogs. ***The Dog Park will service a diverse population in Canton whose needs are currently not being met.***

IV.) Canton Dog Park Survey Results:

Why was the survey created? This survey was created in response to a group of residents that approached the Parks and Recreation Department inquiring about the possibility of creating a community dog park in the Town of Canton. The survey was designed to gauge community support and interest in this project.

This survey was created by: Joshua T. Medeiros, Director of Parks and Recreation in conjunction with the Friends of the Dog Park Group; a sub-committee of the Parks and Recreation Commission. The survey was created using Survey Monkey.

Survey was sent on: Tuesday September 8, 2015 via Q-Notify, the town's premier e-mail system. The e-mail was sent to a specific group: *Dog Licensing Reminders and Info* comprised of 635 e-mails.

Response rate: Of the 635 individuals on the e-mail listing, 263 individuals responded. This is a 41% response rate. The average response rate to online surveys is 25% (Source: <http://fluidsurveys.com/university/response-rate-statistics-online-surveys-aiming/>)

This survey report was compiled on September 22, 2015. Data was exported directly from Survey Monkey. All of the comments were included; however some spelling and grammatical issues were addressed for polishing purposes. Responses from Question 9 were omitted from this report in order to protect confidentiality as it contained personal contact information from participants.

Abstract of the Findings:

- 83% of the respondents support the creation of an off-leash fenced in Dog Park in town. 11% are against the creation of the park and 6% indicated they may be in favor.
- 43% of respondents indicated they would use the park multiple times per week, 42% indicated they would use the park once a week and 15% indicated they would use the park once a month.

- 93% of respondents indicated they would be willing to show proof of proper vaccination and obtain a dog license so their dog could use the park. 7% reported they would be unwilling.
- 97% of respondents indicated they would be willing to clean up after their own dogs in the park if waste stations were provided. 3% reported they would be unwilling.
- The top four ***most important*** features for the dog park reported by respondents in order are: (1) Pet waste station (2) Drinking water (3) Shade (4) Double gated entry.
- 65% of respondents indicated they would be willing to contribute \$25.00-\$100.00 in startup donations to support building this park. 12% reported they would be willing to donate \$100.00-\$400.00, 1% reported they would be willing to donate \$400.00-\$700.00 and 22% would not be willing to donate.
- 59% of respondents indicated they would be willing to donate an annual fee of \$25.00-\$50.00 to support annual operating costs of the park. 13% reported they would be willing to annually donate \$75.00-\$100.00, 3% reported they would be willing to annually donate \$100.00-\$200.00 and 26% would not be willing to donate on an annual basis.

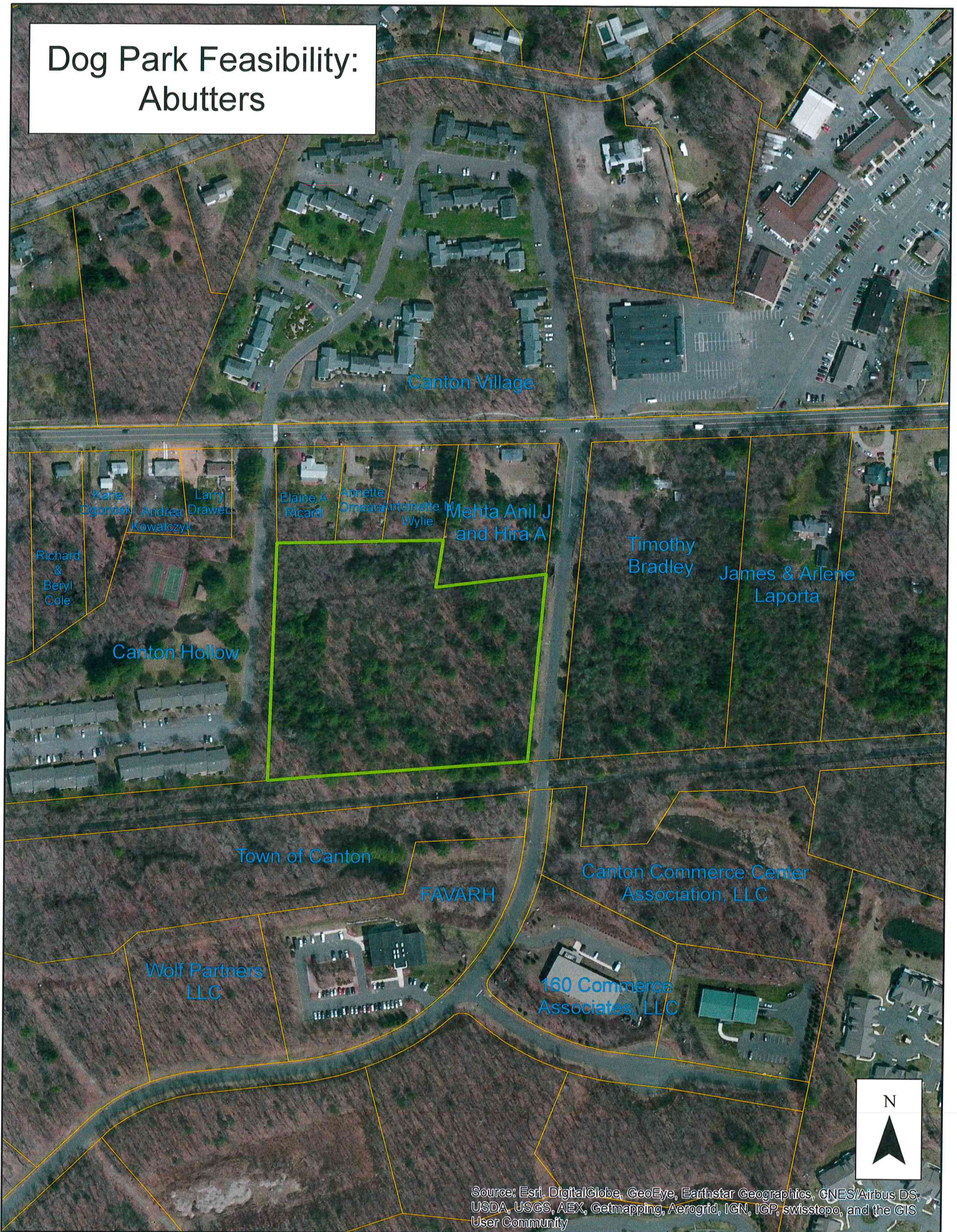
The full PDF survey report is available at www.CantonRec.org for downloading

V.) Dog Park Design/Framework

The Friends of Canton Dog Park Group is looking for approximately a 1 acre property, 100 x 200 feet in length with a small dirt parking area, similar to the Granby Dog Park. The Maglaty property on Dowd Ave is currently owned by the Canton Land Trust and was determined to be a highly desirable location for the park for several reasons. First, the location provides a great deal of natural shade from the trees. Shade was identified as a huge concern for users and to be able to have a natural wooded concept meets that need. Second, the possible location of the park abuts the existing Farmington River Trail which is widely used by walkers, bikers and dog owners. Part of the project would involve adding a parking lot and a portable restroom at the site which could serve a dual purpose for both the Dog Park and users of the river trail. Lastly, the site is in close proximity to major roads that make the park easily accessible and connective.

While several residential houses are abutting the Maglaty property, the design concept for the park would be for the park to be positioned closer to the Farmington River Trail away from the homes. The goal is to leave several acres of woods between the homes and the park. Additionally, the group wishes to leave as much of the natural woods as possible cutting down minimal trees.

Dog Park Feasibility: Abutters



VI.) Dog Park Draft Budget and Financing Plans:

Please note this budget is in draft stage and is fully open to Board of Selectmen input and advisement. Members of the Friends of the Dog Park group in conjunction with Director Medeiros have sought out 3 quotes for the items indicated on this budget.

Cost of Creating 100 x 200 ft Dog Park

\$11,084.00- 5ft. high all green vinyl coated chain link system (includes double gate entry & service entrance)

\$2,750.00- mulch for surfacing

\$5,000.00- site work/tree removal/disposal of trees/clearing site as specified. Includes parking area

\$5,000.00- grading, spreading the mulch, stump grinding

\$500.00- 2 dog waste dispenser stations

\$200.00-Anticipated dog waste bags needed (\$60.95= 6 rolls of 400)

\$1,000.00-\$3,000.00- Park Sign and rules (DPW creates signs?)

\$306.00- Port-o-john- (approx. \$51.00/per month for 6 months)

\$468.00- 6 months (\$234.00 for 6 months/weekly garbage, bi-weekly recycle- residential barrel)

\$1,200.00-2 picnic tables (Approx. \$600.00 per picnic table depending on quality)

\$1,000.00-2 benches (approx. \$500.00 per bench depending on quality)

Total: Approx. \$30,278.00

Annual Operating Expenses (covered by the "Friends of the Dog Park")

\$306.00- Port-o-john- (approx. \$51.00/per month for 6 months)

\$468.00- 6 months (\$234.00 for 6 months. weekly garbage, bi-weekly recycle- residential barrel)

\$2,750.00- annual mulch re-surfacing

\$200.00-Anticipated dog waste bags needed (\$60.95= 6 rolls of 400)

Total: \$3,724.00

How will costs be covered?

The project will be funded through a combination of community member donations, local business sponsorships and fundraising events including (Pooch Plunge, Dog Costume parade, etc.). The Town of Canton should create a Dog Park gift fund to be overseen by the Parks and Recreation Department in which the money can be donated and managed.

VII.) Miscellaneous Operating Notes:

Park Rules & Regulations: Director Medeiros surveyed the Connecticut Recreation Parks Association membership and has received copies of dog park rules from dozens of towns across Connecticut. The Friends of the Dog Park Group Rules & Policies Committee synthesized those rules to create a draft rules list for the proposed Canton Dog Park. The rules below are to be considered ***draft form only*** and will need to receive approval from the Friends Group, the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Town of Canton. The objective of the Dog Park rules is to ensure a safe and positive experience for all park users.

Canton Dog Park- Proposed Park Rules – DRAFT FORM ONLY

The following park rules were compiled by the Canton Dog Park Rules subcommittee. This is a draft only and will be reviewed by Canton business owner and dog trainer, Ben Garson (Dogology). The subcommittee is considering a list of recommendations that encourage best behavior based on Ben's input.

1. Use park at your own risk.
2. Owners are legally responsible for the behavior of their dogs at all times.
3. Dogs must be leashed when entering and exiting the park staging area. Have a leash on hand at all times; however, they are to be removed once inside the park.
4. Remove all choke, spike, pinch and electric collars upon entering the park.
5. Dogs shall be attended, within eyesight and under voice control of the attendee, at all times.
6. Dog waste must be cleaned up immediately.
7. No animals except dogs are permitted inside park.
8. Attendees are responsible for filling holes and repairing damage cause by their dogs.
9. Aggressive dogs, female dogs in heat, dogs younger than four months, and sick dogs are not permitted.
10. Limit two (2) dogs per adult per visit.
11. Children under the age of 12 are not allowed in the fenced in area. Dog handlers must be 16 years of age or older.
12. Dogs must be properly licensed and vaccinated.
13. No food of any kind - human or dog - permitted in the dog park.
14. Dog toys are not permitted in park.
15. This is a substance free park, no alcohol, drugs or tobacco are allowed.
16. Bikes, strollers, baby carriages, skate boards, skates, rollerblades, glass containers and motorized vehicles (except dog maintenance) are not allowed, with the exception of wheelchairs.
17. Be responsible and courteous to others. Speak up to errant dog owners to help them become more responsible.

The park is maintained by volunteers so we kindly ask that you take out what you take in and help out with keeping the park clean during your visit. Your help ensures our success!

Failure to abide by the rules may result in loss of park privileges. As a park steward, report any damage, violations and concerns to Canton Parks and Recreation at 860-693-5808.

Maintenance and Upkeep: The Canton Dog Park will be a Town of Canton Parks and Recreation owned and operated park. However, upkeep of the park will be the primary responsibility of the Friends of Canton Dog Park. A Friends of Canton Dog Park advisory committee will be formed to help facilitate upkeep of the park. A memorandum of understanding will be drafted between the Town of Canton and the Friends of Canton Dog Park.

Tentative responsibilities of each group may include:

Town Responsibilities

- Schedule annual dumpster and port-o-johns contracts
- Order supplies for the park including: mulch replacement, waste bags, etc.
- Serve in an advisory role to the Friends of Canton Dog Park Group
- Plow Dog Park parking lot during winter months

Friends of Dog Park Responsibilities

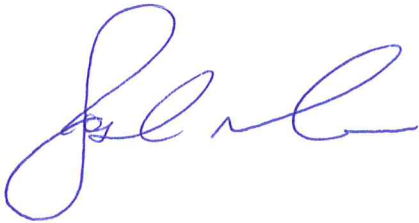
- Welcome and educate new “dog parkers” on the benefits of dog parks. Organize educational workshops on a seasonal basis at the Canton Community Center and/or Dog Park.
- Weekly visits to the park to clean up any dog poop or litter that may accumulate.
- Responsible for staffing and coordinating fundraising activities and events to cover costs of annual budget expenses for the park.
- Report and monitor conditions of the park and report to Parks and Recreation Department officials.

What is the Town’s Liability as a Result of Having an Off-Leash Dog Park? Connecticut General Statutes: “Strict Liability Law of One Who Keeps a Dog.” Anyone who owns or keeps a dog is held strictly liable under our law for any damage caused by the dog, irrespective of whether the owner or keeper was negligent in controlling the dog. The statute is Sec. 22-357, and the relevant portions of the statute state: “If any dog does any damage to either the body or property of any person, the owner or keeper...shall be liable for such damage, except when such damage has been occasioned to the body or property of a person who, at the time such damage was sustained, was committing a trespass or other tort, or was teasing, tormenting or abusing such dog.”

VIII.) Conclusion:

The Canton Dog Park is a highly desired project by hundreds of Canton residents and the potential for the project to be fully financed by the user group, minimal impact to the town's general fund budget make this project a potential huge success. Please understand that this proposal is in draft form and that the Canton Parks and Recreation Department and the Friends of the Canton Dog Park is fully committed and open to working with the Board of Selectmen on any revisions and changes needed to make this project a win for the community as a whole.

Submitted with Respect,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joshua T. Medeiros'.

Joshua T. Medeiros, MS, CPRP
Director of Parks and Recreation
Town of Canton

