



AGENDA REPORT

BEACHES, PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Meeting Date: February 9, 2021

Agenda Item 5.B.

Approvals:
Dept. Head _____
Manager _____
Admin. Assistant MS

Department: Beaches, Parks & Recreation
Prepared By: Samantha Wylie, Recreation Manager

Subject: *CONSIDERATION OF DOG AMENITIES AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC BEACHES*

Fiscal Impact: None at this time.

Summary: Staff is seeking comment regarding dog amenities and dog access to public beaches.

Background: 1989, the then-named Parks and Recreation Commission reviewed the City ordinance that did not allow dogs on any park or beach, and recommended that the existing prohibition on dogs in parks and on the beach remain in place. Council upheld the existing prohibition of dogs in parks.

1994, the Commission reviewed the current subject City ordinance and received extensive public input on both sides of the issue, and recommended that the existing prohibition remain in place. Council upheld the Commission recommendation.

2001, Council requested the Parks and Recreation Commission consider whether dogs should be allowed in City parks. As a result, the Commission created a sub-committee to research and study options.

As a result of the Commission recommendation derived from the sub-committee report, Council conceptually approved the development of a permanent off-leash dog park at Richard T. Steed Memorial Park and changed the City ordinance at that time to allow currently-licensed dogs on-leash in Verde, Mira Costa, and Calafia Beach Parks for a two-year test period with oversight by the Commission and quarterly reports. (Note: Calafia Beach Park was a city-operated and maintained park but is now under the jurisdiction of the State Parks System since the 20-year lease with the State expired and was not renewed by the City.)

2002, Council approved the development of a permanent off-leash dog park at Richard T. Steed Memorial Park and approved changing the current ordinance to allow currently-licensed dogs on-leash in Verde, Mira Costa, and Calafia Beach Parks for a two-year test period.

2003, The Commission considered and agreed, by petition from Talega residents, to request that City Council consider opening Talega Park to dogs on-leash if the two-year test period was a success. (The two-year test period was successful and ended in May 2004.)

2004, City Council adopted a resolution that allowed currently licensed, on-leash dogs in Calafia, Mira Costa and Verde Parks.

2008, the Commission created a Dog Access Sub-Committee to evaluate dog access in parks and beaches. The Subcommittee submitted a progress report in late 2009, and hosted public workshops in early 2011. At that time, the Coastal Advisory Committee considered the subject of dog access to beaches and did not support a pilot program. Based on past research, the critical topics are still relevant and include health, safety, cleanliness, enforcement, environmental issues, location, and hours available on the beach.

2011, The Dog Access Subcommittee presented a report of its findings to the Beaches, Parks and Recreation Commission who considered increased access to parks and a phased program for Beach access.

2012, the City Council directed staff to (1) develop a program to allow dogs on-leash at all City parks; (2) consider a pilot/phased approach and availability of some sports fields, with attention to the Vista Hermosa Sports Park and trail; and (3) return to the Beaches, Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council with the understanding that the City is open to expanding dog presence in the park system; and (4) identify locations for new dog runs in existing parks and (5) return to the Beaches, Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council for possible amendments to existing park master plans, CEQA documentation, and amendments to Municipal Codes, with the understanding that the City is open to allowing more dogs to enjoy the park system.

The City Council directed Staff to keep the issue of increased dog access to beaches open, pending changes in circumstances relative to sand replenishment. Because of the diminishing beach space for the public, the Council voted to defer this item until there was a significant change on City beaches.

2013, as recommended by the Commission, the City Council approved dog access to Bonito Canyon, Leslie, Linda Lane, Max Berg Plaza, Marblehead Inland, Mira Costa, Parque Del Mar (excluding Park Semper Fi special use area), Rancho San Clemente, San Luis Rey, Talega, and Tierra Grande Parks, as well as the Community Center grounds. Discussion was held to explore additional opportunities for dogs including fenced dog runs in existing parks.

2014, as recommended by the Commission, the City Council approved a municipal code change to allow dogs on all City parks except playground areas, sport fields, and Park Semper Fi special use area.

2016, the Commission directed staff to research of the option of allowing dogs on-leash on beaches during specific hours. During discussions, the following comments were provided:

- Enforcement and related costs need to be explored.
- Signage needs to be carefully considered if access is granted.
- Beaches are very narrow and have not changed since the last discussion.
- Liability of dogs on beaches is a concern.
- Dog waste on beaches is a concern.
- Aggressive dogs and irresponsible owners are a concern.
- Impacts to lifeguards are a concern.

- Liability would be the same as other public property.
- Allowing morning and evening hours serves residents, not visitors.
- Allowing dogs to walk on the beach may free up space on the Beach Trail.

2020, the City Council approved the FY 20-21 Beaches, Parks & Recreation Work Plan, which included a project titled, “Evaluation of Dog Access and Amenities on Beaches and Public Spaces”. As stated in the work plan, the purpose of this project is to review opportunities for dog access on beaches and other public spaces which may be limited, and evaluate existing and potential future amenities for dogs in public spaces. This project will align with the recommendations from the 2018 BPR Master Plan to evaluate and allow for greater dog access across the City.

Discussion: At this time, staff is seeking comment and direction regarding dog access on beaches. Previous discussions regarding beach access to dogs can be generally described in three categories:

- Dogs are not allowed on public beaches.
- An area is designated for off-leash dog access.
- Hours are designated for on-leash and/or off-leash dog access.

Previous City Councils have expressed concern over sand space and the uncertainties surrounding sand replenishment. Currently beaches have not increased in acreage and in some areas, have decreased.

Prohibited under San Clemente Municipal Code 6.08.020 (a), individuals who currently take their dogs on the beach are subjected to a citation by either Marine Safety Officer or Animal Control Officers. In the recent years, Marine Safety has taken the lead role in enforcement of this code. Lifeguards, in the past two years, have issued ten (10) citations to dog owners for violation of SCMC 6.08.020 (a), and have recorded 260 field investigations (written warnings) to dog owners.

Most recently, the City’s Environmental Services staff has been actively monitoring the bacteria levels in the certain areas along the San Clemente coastline. The four beach segments that exceed bacteria water quality objectives at the ocean shoreline are, (1) Poche Beach; (2) North Beach; (3) Pier; and (4) T-Street. Note, the origin of the bacterial specimens is not known, and may not be fully attributed to dogs alone.

In a brief review of surrounding area beach access for dogs, the following details were discovered:

- City of Laguna Beach
 - No designated dog beach
 - Dogs are allowed on city beaches before 9 a.m. and after 6 p.m. between June 15th – September 10th, and during regular beach hours from September 11th – June 14th.
 - Dogs must be on a 6’ or shorter leash at all times.
 - Owners must clean up waste.
- Capistrano Beach/Hole in the Fence (County of Orange)
 - Dogs are *not* permitted June 15 to Sept. 10 between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m.
 - Dogs must be on leash at all times

- Dogs are allowed in water
- City of Huntington Beach
 - Huntington Dog Beach – designated on-leash dog beach, open daily 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.
 - Dogs must be licensed; owners must pick up waste
 - Dogs are allowed in the water.
- San Diego
 - Dog Beach (“Ocean Beach”): 24 hr. off leash
 - Fiesta Island - Mission Bay: Dogs are allowed in all areas daily 6:00 AM to 10:00 p.m., except for the campground and nesting sites (seasonal).
 - North Beach Dog Run – Coronado: 24 hr. off leash
 - Dogs must be licensed; owners must pick up waste
 - Dogs are allowed in the water.
- City of Del Mar
 - South Beach: On-leash only (6-foot), year-round
 - Main Beach: On-leash (6-foot), Labor Day thru June 15th; Off-leash, allowed from 25th to 29th street from dawn to 8:00 am; No dogs are allowed June 16th thru Labor Day.
 - North Beach: Off leash dogs all day from the day after Labor Day thru June 15th, and from dawn until 8:00am June 16th thru Labor Day. Dogs must be leashed from 8:00am until dawn June 16th thru Labor Day.
 - Dogs must be licensed; owners must pick up waste
 - Dogs are allowed in the water in designated areas.
- City of Newport Beach
 - Dogs are not allowed between 10 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.
 - Before 10 a.m. and after 4:30 p.m., dogs are allowed, if they are securely restrained by a substantial leash or chain not exceeding six feet in length and controlled by a person who is competent to restrain the dog.
 - Off-leash dogs are never allowed
- Dogs are NOT allowed on beaches in the following cities:
 - Oceanside
 - Carlsbad
 - Seal Beach
 - Encinitas

Staff is seeking direction regarding dog access on San Clemente public beaches. The Coastal Advisory Committee will also be reviewing this matter at its regular meeting scheduled Thursday, February 11, 2021 to further consider potential coastal and environmental impacts.

Recommended

Action:

STAFF RECOMMENDS THAT THE BEACHES, PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION provide comment regarding dog amenities and dog access to public beaches.

Attachments: None

Notification: Interested Parties