

Paws in the Parks

Program overview and description

The By-Law

§ 60-200. Pets and other animals.

A. No person who owns, keeps or controls a dog shall allow the dog to run free when not restricted to the premises of said person, except as permitted by the Board of Health. Except as otherwise provided in this section, such dogs shall be leashed and curbed when off such premises.

B. Removal of feces.

Each person who owns, keeps or controls a dog within the Town shall remove and dispose of any feces left by such dog on any sidewalk, street, park or other public area or on any private property that is not owned or lawfully occupied by such person.

(1) Each person who owns, keeps or controls a dog within the Town shall remove and dispose of any feces left by such dog on any sidewalk, street, park or other public area or on any private property that is not owned or lawfully occupied by such person.

(2) No person who owns, keeps or controls a dog within the Town shall permit such dog to be on any sidewalk, street, park or other public area unless such dog is accompanied by a person carrying a device that is suitable for picking up and containing feces, unexposed to such person and to the general public.

(3) For purposes of this subsection, feces may be disposed of only at a place suitable and regularly reserved for the disposal of human feces or otherwise designated as appropriate by the Board of Health.

(4) Subsection D(1), (2) and (3) of this subsection shall not apply to a dog accompanying any person who, by reason of a handicap, is physically unable to comply with their requirements.

C. Except as the Board of Health may otherwise permit, no dogs, except those dogs that serve as service animals as defined by regulations issued pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, 28 CFR 35.104, will be allowed in the following areas of the Town: all cemetery land, all public school playgrounds and athletic fields and all Recreation Department playgrounds and athletic fields. Nor may any dog be allowed inside food establishments, retail businesses or public buildings.

D. Violations of this section shall be disposed of, in the discretion of the Board of Health, either in the manner provided in § 40-220E

Or, if applicable, pursuant to the provisions of MGL c. 140, § 173A. For all violations of this section other than violations of the licensing subsections, a noncriminal citation will be issued on the following schedule: first offense, \$50; second offense, \$100; third offense, \$300; Fourth and each succeeding offense, \$500. Any violation of the licensing subsections shall result in a fine of \$50 per such violation and, for violations continuing 30 days past licensing deadlines, an additional fine of \$100 per such violation. The fines specified in this subsection shall be in lieu of the schedule of fines specified in MGL c. 140, § 173A



BRIEF HISTORY

Goosebusters Off-Leash Dogs Paws in the Parks

- The Goosebusters program was implemented in the 90's to address geese on the fields.
 - This program admitted 200 dogs to be in the parks.
 - The program evolved over time and was revised in 2019 into the off-leash dog program
 - Now, in 2023 we are revising the program once again to the Paws in the Parks Program.
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How we got here and what we have done

- Over the past few years, since the pandemic, the Off-Leash dog program has been the source of much conversation. The needs of the parks and the community have been difficult to balance. There are many types of parks uses including athletics, dogs, passive recreation, active recreation, events, and more. The challenge has become, how do we address the needs of the community in a safe and equitable way?
 - In 2023, in response to a broadening conversation surrounding dogs and parks usage, the Recreation Department formed a working group of key stakeholders to discuss and works towards a fair solution. The group has met a number of times over the fall season and has taken a deep dive into the dog program and has attempted to create a fair and balanced program that meets as many needs of the community as possible.
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Program Overview

High Level Overview

- The dog program is going to be renamed to “Paws in the Parks”. This is to help clarify the scope of the program.
 - The working group did not review the previous program prior to getting started. We wanted a clean slate and lots of creative ideas to address the problem.
 - That being said, the solution that was developed is extremely similar to the current program that is in place. Not much is being changed!
 - It was quickly determined that there is a need to have better outreach, program understanding, and communication for the program to be successful.
 - The revision of this program enhances the system that was already in place with minor changes and improved clarity.
 - At the end of this presentation we will compare the old program with the updated one.
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Registration

- Many folks have expressed that having to come into the Recreation Office to get a dog tag was a burden. So we are going to make registration all digital!
 - You must get your standard dog license with the Town Clerk to start the process. All dogs in MA are required to be licensed Ch.140
 - Once you get your license, you will then need to go online, call, or come to the Recreation office to register for the Paws in the Parks Program.
 - Upon getting your license everyone will need to sign a code of conduct.
 - If you want to take your dog ON-LEASH to the designated parks, you must register for an ON-LEASH only tag. This is free for Residents.
 - If you want to be able to take your dogs OFF-LEASH to the designated parks, You must have an OFF-LEASH tag which allows on and off leash use.
 - \$0/Res - \$5/NR for ON-LEASH Tags. \$50/Res - \$100/NR for OFF-LEASH \$40/\$80 (R/NR) for each additional OFF-LEASH dog. No more than 3 dogs per address.
 - After you register you will be required to attend a brief 15-ish minute zoom orientation. Following that orientation, your tags will be mailed to you.
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Parks

- The familiar 4, parks/fields will be carried forward to the Paws in the Parks program as dog allowed areas. These parks are designated, not owned by the program.
 - Town Field
 - Grove Street
 - Winn Brook*
 - Pequossette (PQ)
 - Winn Brook is a unique space due to it abutting a school. The group quickly realized that Winn Brook would need additional attention. We be will collecting lots of information during the pilot program on Winn Brook to better evaluate that location.
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Winn Brook

- Winn Brook park is a unique location for the Paws in the Parks program. The long-standing policy has been to not allow dogs on the campus while school is in session. We recognize the need for people to walk their dogs and children to school but also are conscious of the safety of the students and staff of Winn Brook School. After a lot of consultation with park users, staff, and school officials, we will be upholding the policy of no dogs on campus while school is in session. The Park will be open for leashed and off-leash hours as applicable nights and weekends.
 - As previously mentioned we will be monitoring Winn Brook closely during the pilot and will work with the school to develop the best plan for that location.
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Off-Leash Explained

- In order to be on-leash in the parks at any time, you must register in the program. If you are not enrolled in the program, you may not have your dog in the parks on or off leash.
 - For Off-Leash, there are going to be designated hours at each of the 4 parks as off-leash hours.
 - These hours will change seasonally based on usage and calendars will be produced and distributed to registrants.
 - For example, Jan-Mar doesn't have many permitted parks users. In that season, there would be a lot of off-leash dog hours at the parks.
 - Once we get to spring (and fall) when sports seasons begin, off-leash dog hours will be reduced to hours outside of permitted activities.
 - If a park/field is permitted to a group of any kind, dogs must be on-leash.
 - Dogs are not allowed within 50ft of a playground.
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Sample Calendar

October 2024



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29 Dawn-7:30am & 4:30pm-Dusk Dawn-7:30am & 4:30pm-Dusk Dawn-7:30am & 4:30pm-Dusk Dawn-7:30am & 4:30pm-Dusk	30 Dawn-3:30pm Dawn-3:30pm Dawn-3:30pm No Hours	1 Dawn-3:30pm Dawn-3:30pm Dawn-3:30pm No Hours	2 Dawn-3:30pm Dawn-3:30pm Dawn-3:30pm No Hours	3 Dawn-3:30pm Dawn-3:30pm Dawn-3:30pm No Hours	4 Dawn-3:30pm Dawn-3:30pm Dawn-3:30pm No Hours	5 Dawn-7:30am & 4:30pm-Dusk Dawn-7:30am & 4:30pm-Dusk Dawn-7:30am & 4:30pm-Dusk Dawn-7:30am & 4:30pm-Dusk
6 Dawn-7:30am & 4:30pm-Dusk Dawn-7:30am & 4:30pm-Dusk Dawn-7:30am & 4:30pm-Dusk Dawn-7:30am & 4:30pm-Dusk	7 Dawn-3:30pm Dawn-3:30pm Dawn-3:30pm No Hours	8 Dawn-3:30pm Dawn-3:30pm Dawn-3:30pm No Hours	9 Dawn-3:30pm Dawn-3:30pm Dawn-3:30pm No Hours	10 Dawn-3:30pm Dawn-3:30pm Dawn-3:30pm No Hours	11 Dawn-3:30pm Dawn-3:30pm Dawn-3:30pm No Hours	12 Dawn-7:30am & 4:30pm-Dusk Dawn-7:30am & 4:30pm-Dusk Dawn-7:30am & 4:30pm-Dusk Dawn-7:30am & 4:30pm-Dusk

January 2024



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31	1 Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk After school - Dusk	2 Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk After school - Dusk	3 Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk After school - Dusk	4 Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk After school - Dusk	5 Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk After school - Dusk	6 Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk
7 Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk	8 Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk After school - Dusk	9 Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk After school - Dusk	10 Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk After school - Dusk	11 Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk After school - Dusk	12 Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk After school - Dusk	13 Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk Dawn-Dusk

Green = Grove

Red = PQ

Blue = Town Field

Purple = Winn Brook

Outreach

- As part of the program, town staff will work to communicate with and outreach to residents regarding field usage.
 - Increased signage will be displayed at all parks
 - Alerts, emails, and other communications will be extended to everyone in the event of calendar changes, weather closures, and more.
 - In addition to dog owners being given an orientation, additional information and consultation will be given to youth sports groups/coaches so they better understand the parks rules and program as well.
 - Belmont Rec will work closely with youth sports to better manage the fields schedules in sports seasons.
 - A communication system is begin established on the BelmontRec website to allow parks users to report issues at the parks. These issues could be a broken swing, a pot hole, dog issues, athletics, issues an more. Open communication.
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Comparison

OFF-LEASH DOG PROGRAM

- 4 Parks - Grove, Winn Brook, PQ, Town Field
- Limit to 200 dogs off-leash
- Orientation required (was never enforced)
- Dog hours suspended during permitted use
- Not well managed/No oversight

PAWS IN THE PARKS

- 4 Parks - Grove, Winn Brook, PQ, Town Field
 - Unlimited dogs as long as you register
 - Orientation required to get your tags
 - Dog hours suspended during permitted use
 - Better managed
 - Calendars produced to improve parks usage
 - Formalizes on-leash procedures.
 - Clarifies Winn Brook
 - Better Coordination with Youth Sports
 - Code of Conduct for dog users
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Paws in the Parks

Program overview and description

QUESTIONS?
