

Acton Dog Park Committee

Meeting Minutes

Acton Town Hall, Room 126

17 October, 2017

Committee Members Present:

- Mike Perry, Chair
- Cathy Fochtman
- Karen Martin
- Betsy Kristl
- Clare Siska
- Tom Gillispie
- Rodney Smith
- Joan Gardner

Call to Order

- Mr. Perry called the meeting to order at 7:34 PM.

Review and accept prior meeting minutes

- The minutes of the 10/3/2017 meeting were unanimously accepted with no changes.

Status of Replacement Committee Member

- In place of Bill Alstrom (resigned), the committee recommends that Karen Martin become a full member, leaving an opening for a new associate member.
- Mike will contact the VCC with this recommendation and request the appointment of a new associate member. The VCC will need to make a recommendation and submit it to the BoS for final approval.
- Cathy suggests committee members reach out to our personal connections to identify potential applicants.
- Oktoberfest responses should also be reviewed for names of potential candidates.
- It would be desirable to have a full committee in place by January (potential BoS meeting)

How do we communicate with one another? / Open Meeting Law (OML) Discussion

- Concerns were raised that recent email communications put this committee at risk of violating Open Meeting Law.
- Betsy cited the need for accommodations for those with disabilities.
- Clare distributed copies of relevant passages from the Open Meeting Law Handbook for reference.
- Cathy stressed the importance of adhering to OML; Tom urged us to err on the side of caution.
- To remain in compliance, it was agreed that:
 - Committee members should – and are encouraged to – send to the Chair any requests for topics to be added to upcoming agendas.
 - Discussion points and preparatory notes can also be submitted to the chair; they should not be sent to the full committee.
 - Discussion or deliberation of any kind may not take place in email when a quorum of members is on the email distribution list.
 - Logistical information, documents for review, and other information may be sent to the full committee for informational purposes only.
 - The Attorney General's office has outlined specific procedures for dealing with OML violations. Committee members should first raise any concerns about violations of OML to the Chair or in open meeting.

- Betsy contends that Clare’s membership on the committee raises a conflict of interest as Clare owns a dog walking business.
 - Clare cited her clearance by the VCC and the BoS. Conflict of interest was discussed in her interview and was not deemed to be a barrier to membership. Clare assured the committee that she will recuse herself as required should any conflict of interest arise in the course of the committee’s work.

Reports on Oktoberfest

- Members who attended were very enthusiastic; well worth our presence
 - Event was well organized
 - Setup and location (Gardner Field) were great
 - Over 40 vendors
 - Well attended; many families with kids
 - Rodney suggested they need more food options.
 - ADPC Table was attractive and had lots of traffic; raffle brought much interest
 - People we generally open, positive, responsive to dog park concept
 - Residents from surrounding towns also expressed interest
 - Several people asked to be put on a mailing list.
- 97 questionnaires were returned. In response to the question, “Would you support a dog park in Acton?”
 - 87 YES
 - 2 NO
 - 5 MAYBE
 - 3 no answer

Raising Awareness and Support

- **Committee presentations:**
 - Tom has not heard back from anyone except Commission on Disabilities (CoD).
 - Betsy will present to the CoD on November 11
 - Clare will reach out to Andy Magee, Chair of Open Space, and request a slot in an upcoming Open Space Meeting (November or December)
 - Karen will present to the Recreation Committee on November 7
 - RITE – not discussed
 - Land Stewardship – not discussed
 - Talking Points (Elevator Speech) are meant to convey a consistent message, but presenters are free to tailor the Talking Points to their audience
 - Presenters should request a deliverable from each committee: specifically, a letter of support addressed to the Board of Selectmen.
- **Survey**
 - Use the same questions from Oktoberfest sheets for consistent data
 - Cathy’s Recreation department will create the survey online.
 - Betsy will design a simple postcard with an image for the front and room for postage and address. The back of the postcard will include a briefly worded invitation to participate in a short survey – URL to be provided by Cathy / Recreation Department; Tom will create a QR code.
 - Draft postcard and survey URL will be sent to committee. Send feedback to Cathy (not to all committee)
 - No end date for survey return. We will count responses in time for BoS meeting.
 - Send out ASAP to 2017 list of registered dog owners in Acton – Cathy has list.
 - Recreation Dept. will handle logistics and cost for printing and mailing postcards.

- Other methods for publicizing committee and the survey (to be discussed at next meeting)
 - *Beacon* article
 - *Action Unlimited*
 - Acton Critter Sitters customer newsletter: end of October/early November
 - *Municipal Quarterly*
 - Acton Critter Sitters Facebook page
 - RITE website (Cathy has access)
 - Special Town Meeting, December 4 – Cathy will get us a table; need volunteers & materials
 - Community Table at AB Farmers Market 2017 (<https://www.abfarmersmarket.org/nonprofit>)
 - Other?
- **Social media**
 - Discussion of whether we can set up a Facebook page, website or mailing list.
 - Cathy will research whether we can use Facebook
 - Clare will talk to Chair of South Acton Train Station Advisory Committee about what they did.

Progress Report to Board of Selectmen

- The committee targets a January progress report to the BoS
 - Mike will ask Joan to get us a date and slot on the agenda
 - Presentation will include survey data, committee support letters, other materials TBD

Future meetings and events

- The committee agreed to meet every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month to avoid conflict with the Recreation Commission meetings.
- Upcoming meetings rescheduled to: November 14 & 28; December 12 & 26
- Cathy and Mike will work together to cancel scheduled meeting rooms and secure rooms for the new dates.

Adjourn

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Clare Siska