

Amherst Dog Park Task Force

Report to Town Meeting

November 6, 2017

Amherst is home to over 2000 dogs and the humans that love them. We are striving to make Amherst an even more dog- friendly community by creating a place where dogs and their people can come together to socialize and play. The Amherst Dog Park Task Force was established in the spring of 2017. Our vision is to build a fenced-in park in Amherst that is free to all visitors and is supported and maintained by volunteers in the community.

The task force has nine members appointed by the Town Manager as well as three non-voting liaison members: Dave Ziomek, the Director of Conservation and Development, Carol Hepburn, the Animal Welfare Officer, and Jim Wald representing the Select Board. The task force first met in June of 2017 and has had four full meetings as well as several subcommittee meetings. Members of the task force have been working in five separate areas: Site Location, Design, Funding, Rules & Regulations, and Sustainability.

The first goal is locating a site for the park. The task force is working closely with town staff to identify possible locations. Our preference is to use donated land or land already owned by the town, but we are also looking at the possibility of purchasing land.

The current plan of the task force is to submit a request to the Community Preservation Act Committee in December, requesting funds to purchase land for the dog park. We plan to supplement the CPA funds with a grant from the Stanton Foundation of Massachusetts, which supports the development of enclosed dog parks in Massachusetts cities and towns. The Stanton Foundation grant will pay nearly the full cost of building the park.

Task Force meetings are posted and the public is welcome to attend. In addition, we will be reaching out to the Amherst community, looking for

support and volunteers to assist in the maintenance of the park once it is built. We will be looking for your support in the 2018 Annual Meeting to vote in favor of a CPA allocation.

The members of the task force believe that a dog park will be a benefit to dogs, their families, and the community at large. We are grateful for the strong support that we are receiving from the Town Manager and town staff. We hope that Town Meeting will support our efforts as we move forward.