

September 1, 2006

Dear Citizens,

This is to thank you for your participation in our efforts so far to identify an appropriate site for an off-leash area in the Queen Anne and/or Magnolia neighborhoods, and to notify you of our next steps in the process. I'm attaching for your review and consideration the staff evaluation and recommendation. The staff recommendation will be forwarded to the Board of Park Commissioners, who will conduct a public hearing at their October 12 meeting and will make a recommendation to me at their October 26 meeting.

As you probably know, it is a challenge to site new active uses in a park system that is largely built, and we work diligently to balance the need for passive open space with the need for active recreation areas. For that reason, and in order to minimize the impacts of a new use, Parks uses site selection criteria, in this case criteria adopted by the City Council in Resolution 29628, to guide us in finding appropriate sites. The Parks and Recreation Plan 2000, the parks comprehensive plan, and the Council resolution call for an off-leash area in each of the six sectors of the city. We now have 11 off-leash areas, and the only unserved sector is Queen Anne and Magnolia.

I understand that there is no consensus among the people who have participated in this process for a location for an off-leash area in either neighborhood. While all of the sites that citizens suggested and Parks staff analyzed meet most of the criteria, based on what we heard from you at the public meetings and the work of our planning staff, the staff have narrowed the list of possible sites to three: Magnolia Manor Park, David Rodgers Park, and Lower Kinnear Park.

We began our off-leash areas program in 1996 with a pilot project at seven sites. After an 18-month pilot period, we evaluated those sites and others, and made recommendations to the Board of Park Commissioners and City Council on which ones should become permanent and on some new pilot sites. The pilot period served as the experience we needed to learn what did and did not make a good off-leash area, and led to the City Council's adoption of the site selection criteria.

The program is enormously successful and popular, and has itself created a new community in Seattle. Other cities now look to Seattle for guidance in establishing off-leash areas. We have established good and productive partnerships with site stewards from Citizens for Off-Leash Areas, the nonprofit

organization that advocates for off-leash areas. They hold regular work parties at off-leash areas around the city. We have abandoned two sites that did not work.

Apprehension about change is natural, and our experience has been that once pilot sites are established, most of the impacts neighbors fear do not occur. Before Parks could move forward with the creation of an off-leash area or areas, we would need to secure funding. Parks would then treat the site or sites as pilots by monitoring them carefully and conducting an evaluation of the pilot experience at the end of 18 months.

The next steps in the process are the publication of an environmental checklist and an accompanying Declaration of Non-Significance, which will be available for review within the next few days on the web at: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/OLA.htm>, and a public hearing before the Board of Park Commissioners, scheduled for 6 p.m. Thursday, October 12 in the Park Board Room, 100 Dexter Ave. N (the Parks administration building in Denny Park at Dexter and Denny).

Again, thank you for your participation to date, and I hope you will stay involved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kenneth R. Bounds". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kenneth" and last name "Bounds" clearly legible.

Kenneth R. Bounds  
Superintendent