

# Weston Dog Park Proposal

## Summary and Documentation

*(subject to further updates)*

In April of 2016, a group of Weston residents, now known as Weston Dog Park Inc. (WDP), requested that the Town of Weston create a dog park as a community amenity for the purposes of recreation, exercise and socializing for both canines and their human counterparts.

In response to this request, and considering that at least one half of Weston households have dogs, the Board of Selectmen asked Town staff and the Parks and Recreation Commission to research what Town-owned lands might be suitable to host a dog park. Considerable time and effort were expended examining both existing parks and undeveloped land. For review of sites considered, please see:

*Attachment #1: Parks and Recreation Commission Recommendations, April 19, 2017*

*Attachment #2: Town Engineer's Study of April 20, 2017*

*Attachment #3: Mark Harper, Weston Animal Control Officer, April 24, 2017*

*Attachment #4: Town Engineer, Letter, Spring 2017*

*Attachment #5: Spread Sheet Comparison of Sites*

Ultimately, a Town-owned property along Davis Hill Road and Lords Highway, consisting of over 36 acres, was identified by staff and the Parks and Recreation Commission as the most suitable site for a dog park of approximately 3.65 acres, including parking, driveway and fenced area. Notifications and an invitation to a hearing were issued by the Board of Selectman to residents adjacent to the property in question. See:

*Attachment #6: Letters of Notification, June 21, 2016*

For historical reference, on January 9, 2003, a Special Town Meeting voted to purchase the land in question for \$2.3 million with the representation to the public that it could be used for future municipal purposes at the Town's discretion. The only deed restriction encumbering the property is that it "shall not be sold to a third party for residential and/or commercial development." Please see:

*Attachment #7: 8-24 Application to P&Z by Woody Bliss, First Selectman, Nov. 14, 2002*

*Attachment #8: Minutes of Town Meeting, January 9, 2003; and Vote on Moore property*

*Attachment #9: Executor's Deed, February 13, 2003 8-24*

In early 2017, the Board of Selectmen asked Town staff to bring the proposal for a dog park on a portion of the land along Davis Hill Road to the Westport Weston Health District, the Weston Conservation Commission, the Weston Parks and Recreation Commission, and the Weston Planning and Zoning Commission.

The Westport Weston Heath District provided guidance on environmental and sanitation concerns. See:

*Attachment #10: Westport Weston Heath District, April 12, 2017, Director Mark Cooper*

The Parks and Recreation Commission reviewed the proposal by Mark Harper and John Conte for a dog park to be constructed on the property along Davis Hill Road at its meeting on February 13, 2017. The Commissioners approved this proposal to go forward to the Board of Selectmen for their continued deliberation. The Parks and Recreation Commission was not in favor of using any currently active athletic fields or parks for this purpose.

The Conservation Commission issued a Permit for the park, as then proposed. See:

*Attachment #11: Weston Conservation Commission Permit, February 23, 2017*

Subsequently, an application to the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) for the creation of a dog park at this site was submitted by the First Selectman. See:

*Attachment #12: 8-24 Application to P&Z, March 28, 2017*

By a vote of 5 to 2, P&Z withheld approval for reasons delineated in its report. See:

*Attachment #13: P&Z Report on the Proposed Dog Park to be Located on the Moore Property and Dissenting Minority Report, May 1, 2017*

In response to Planning and Zoning's questions and concerns, Town staff and Commissions did the following:

- At the July 10, 2017 Parks & Recreation Commission meeting, Parks & Recreation approved preliminary rules for a proposed Dog park in Weston to go forward to the Board of Selectmen for their consideration and adoption. See: *Attachment #14: Dog Park Rules, revised August 21, 2017*
- A tentative Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Town of Weston and the Weston Dog Park Inc. was reached. The MOU delineates roles and responsibilities of the two parties, including financial and custodial obligations. Formed as a 501C (3) public charity, the Weston Dog Park Inc. will fundraise to help establish the dog park with private funds. See: *Attachment #15: Memorandum of Understanding, Aug. 21, 2017*
- Town Engineer, John Conte, prepared Dog Park Construction Cost Estimates and Town Administrator, Jonathan Luiz, outlined projected dog park maintenance costs. See: *Attachment #16: Construction Cost Estimates, revised Aug. 3, 2017, John Conte; and Attachment #17: Projected Maintenance Costs, revised Aug. 23, 2017, J. Luiz*

- A professional dog park schematic design was created showing perimeter and interior features, including fences. See: *Attachment #18: Dog Park Visualization Map, Aug. 2017*
- The Town Engineer conducted a Traffic Impact Study. See: *Attachment #19: Traffic Impact Analysis, August 1, 2017*
- The Town Engineer prepared a Drainage Report and a Sight Line Map. See: *Attachment #20: Drainage Report, Aug. 10, 2017; and Attachment #21: Sight Line Map, July 31, 2017*
- The Town Engineer is in the process of notifying the Conservation Commission of any proposed changes in the dog park plans, as required by the Permit issued on February 23, 2017 by the Commission. See above *Attachment #11*

The Board of Selectmen has scheduled a public hearing regarding the establishment of a dog park on the Davis Hill Road property to be held on September 9<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 am in the High School cafeteria. The purpose of the hearing is for the public to have the opportunity to express opinions both “pro” and “con” the proposed project and for others to listen. We sincerely hope this summary has been informative and helpful for the purposes of discussion.



Nina Daniel,

First Selectman