



## Park Proposal: Questions and Answers

MayDOG

The Maynard Dog Owners Group, Inc.

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## What is MayDOG?



- MayDOG is the Maynard Dog Owners Group, a non-profit 501(c)(3) community organization in Maynard, MA
- Our mission is to promote responsible dog ownership and safe, legal off-leash recreation in Maynard and the surrounding communities
- MayDOG has a 7-member board of directors, approximately 100 members, and hundreds of community supporters



## What does MayDOG want to do?



- We would like to establish a dog park in Maynard (as part of a larger recreation area)
- A dog park would have numerous benefits to dog owners AND non-dog owners alike
  - Dog parks provide a fenced area where dogs can exercise off-leash in a clean, safe environment without endangering or annoying people, property, or wildlife
  - A tired dog is a good dog! Having opportunities for off-leash play means dogs are better behaved (less nuisance barking and other problematic behaviors)
  - A dog park would enhance Maynard's reputation as a unique town with lots of amenities

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## Benefits and rationale, cont.



- Dog parks can increase property values, bring visitors to town who patronize town businesses, and attract new residents
- An OLRA would greatly improve overall safety for both dog-owners and dogs in Maynard by providing a safe and fun place for dogs and people to exercise without having to fear oncoming traffic
- An estimated 20-30% of Maynard households have dogs
- Dog owners are taxpayers deserving of recreational facilities as much as other constituencies
- Dog parks are typically used by many people year-round, unlike other recreational facilities

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## Where could we put a dog park?



- Our first choice would be to reclaim a portion of the former landfill on Waltham Street
  - 13 acres owned by the town and zoned for passive recreation
  - Our plan meets multiple objectives in the 2007 Community Preservation Plan and the 2004 Open Space and Recreation Plan
    - Protects the view of the open space visible from the street
    - Plenty of room for both a fenced area and other recreation, such as a walking/cross-country trail (.5 mile perimeter)
    - Develops an unused parcel into a well-used recreation area

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## Landfill site today



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## Landfill site today



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## What's on MayDOG's wish list?



- Approval of the idea by the appropriate town officials, including the Board of Health and the Board of Selectmen
- Designation of landfill site as off-leash area
  - Require town meeting approval to amend by-laws?
- Staged installation/construction of park
  - Fenced area — approx. 1 acre
  - Double-gated entryway
  - Separate small dog/large dog areas
  - Bag stations and trash receptacles
  - Signage
  - Kiosk/bulletin board — place to recognize large donors and publicize rules
  - Lighting
  - Cross-country trail around perimeter of entire area
  - Water source

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## What community support exists?



- Nearly 600 petition signatures
- Over 90 members
- Hundreds of dollars in donations
- Enthusiastic reactions from nearly everyone who hears about it (including non-dog owners)
- **Sample comments:**
  - ✓ I think this is a great idea. **I live at 126 Waltham Street** and this is a perfect location for a dog park.
  - ✓ A dog park would be a good use of that land
  - ✓ **What a great idea for "Magical Maynard"** - this would be a wonderful way to expand our recreational base. Our dogs would love it - and so would we!
  - ✓ **This is exactly what we need!**
  - ✓ This is a great idea!! I would bring my dog there everyday!
  - ✓ This is a safe and community-based option with little or no negatives! Please consider it!
  - ✓ I think this is a wonderful idea and **a long time overdue** – thank you!

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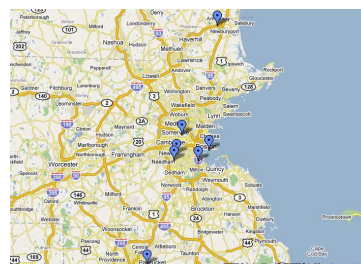


## Safety concerns



- Safety of visitors to former landfill site
- These concerns would need to be addressed through community education
- A number of other Massachusetts communities have successfully turned former landfills into parks or are in the process of doing so

- Titcomb – S. Amesbury\*
- Pope John Paul II Park – Boston
- Danehy Park – Cambridge
- Seekonk\*
- Millenium Park – W. Roxbury
- Spectacle Island – Boston Harbor
- Newton St. Park – Brookline



\*In progress

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## Budget concerns



- We propose to create the park using both public and private funds (e.g., CPA grant, private donations, fundraising events)
  - MayDOG's (pending) 501(c)(3) status will facilitate applying for grants
- Volunteers and private groups (such as the Scouts) could help with creation of trails and other park amenities
- Maintenance will entail emptying the trash barrels, more mowing, and/or spreading wood chips
- To pay for maintenance activities, dog park could require a yearly fee for non-residents and/or could raise dog license fees for residents

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## Dog bites, waste, and noise



- Dog bites
  - According to ASPCA studies, over 65% of dog bites occur on the dog owner's property, and 77% of dog bite victims are members of the owner's family or close friends of the family
  - Poorly exercised or chained/tethered dogs have a 30-40% greater chance of biting than properly socialized animals
  - The neutral territory of a public park does not trigger the territorial instincts that can lead to aggression
- Dog waste
  - Dog owners will be required to immediately remove dog waste from public spaces; enforced by peers and/or through revocation of permit to use park
  - Plan to hold regularly scheduled volunteer patrols to sweep the park of all debris
  - Will need to have multiple conveniently located trash cans and waste removal bags
- Noise
  - Well-exercised and well-socialized dogs are much quieter, both in public areas and at home
  - Topography of the site itself is the best defense against noise complaints
  - Other areas with dog parks report that nuisance barking has not been a problem in their off-leash areas; however, the park rules will include a statement that dogs who are barking excessively must be removed from the park

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## Legal and legislative issues



- Town by-laws – leash law
  - Need to be amended through town meeting?
  - Does town meeting also have to approve the plans for use of the space?
- Liability and lawsuits
  - According to a survey of 59 dog areas in California, there have been no lawsuits or legal actions against any municipalities or the state from dog issues
  - A recent search of LexisNexis conducted by MayDOG found no newspaper reports of lawsuits or legal actions related to dog aggression in dog parks anywhere in the US in the last 10 years
  - Regardless...
    - Regardless of where an incident takes place, Massachusetts dog owners are solely liable and responsible for any accidents or damage caused by their dogs\*
    - Clearly posted waivers of liability would relieve the Town of any legal responsibility for the actions of dogs and their owners inside the park

\*Source: Chapter 140: Section 155 of the General Laws of Massachusetts (see <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/laws/mgl/140-155.htm>)

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# Thank you!

