

From: Jackie LaGesse [mailto:lagesse@yahoo.com]
Sent: Tuesday, August 18, 2015 12:06 PM
To: Council; Kathy Bergen
Cc: duluthdogparks@yahoo.com
Subject: Duluth Dog Parks - Riley Road

Dear City Council:

Thank you for taking the time to listen to the area residents and their request for an additional dog park in Duluth.

My main motivation for the Riley Road Dog Park will be to train my dog to be a better dog citizen. The acreage that is being proposed for Riley Road will be an instrumental tool in training my dog in proper recall. Although I have had great success in socialization, exercise, and human interaction at the other two area dog parks, I desire more acreage to adequately assess my dog's ability to return to me upon request in case of situations which could be dangerous.

Duluth is often viewed as a great place to visit, but has recently been viewed as "unfriendly" and difficult for those moving into our area to make new friends and meet acquaintances with similar interests. Since I have begun attending the dog park on a regular basis I have personally met and stayed in contact with a variety of people who are able to discuss our common interests, provide recommendations for area businesses, and become more involved in the community. Through these people and the dog park community as a whole I have participated in:

- Volunteering time towards clearing property for Observation Hill Dog Park
- Donating funds for Observation Hill Dog Park build
- Attending fundraisers for dog parks.
- Attending Park & Recreation Meetings
- Participating in the Walk for Animals event to benefit Animal Allies
- Attending Pet Co Adoption Events
- Participating in the Cause for the Paws 5k to benefit Douglas County Humane Society
- Patronizing A Place for Fido retail establishment through a recommendation
- Attending Fitgers Fido Fall Festival
- Participating in John Beargrease Mini-Sled Dog Races
- Attended Fitgers Canine Carnival

Most of these events were brought to my attention by the dog park community members that I have networked with. Rest assured that at all these events money was either donated or spent at area businesses.

I have long said that there are many special interests in a city such as Duluth, however, I fully believe that it is in the city's best interest to position itself so it is able to offer amenities to a variety of special interests, not just those that involve children. My dog is my special interest.

I believe that the approval of the Riley Road Dog Park site plan should be the "no-brainer" vote at the current time - but the larger discussion should focus more on the additional acreage that is available beyond the creek to make this site an even greater asset, and more competitive with the dog parks near the metro area of Minneapolis/St. Paul that can encompass up to 30 acres of fenced-in land. With further studies done on the environmental impact of canines (as opposed to any other wild animal) being near this creek. I believe there are many solutions that would allow the utilization of the larger site plan which would include fully understanding the impact (leveraging reports done by other dog parks in Minnesota that encompass lakes, ponds and streams), or keeping the creek fenced off, but allowing access from one side to another via a foot bridge.

And finally, although I do greatly appreciate the city's allowance of dog parks on city property and the expenses incurred within, and the volunteer efforts to build and fund raise for the parks, I can't help but state that I wish the city council would find money in the budget to contribute to the build of these parks.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter that greatly impacts and benefits a large portion of the community,

Jackie LaGesse