

Neighbors bark about dog park proposal

Written by CAROL POMEDAY
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Residents on village's southwest side tell officials they are concerned about noise, danger to children

About a dozen residents who live near Heritage and Bares Memorial parks on Belgium's southwest side made it clear to the Plan Commission Tuesday they do not want a dog park there.

"I'm not against having a dog park. It just doesn't belong there," said Colleen Allen, who lives across Highway KW from Bares Park.

She and her husband Allen planted trees and flowers at Bares Park and maintain the plantings.

"We sometimes have a hundred children in the park and I'm concerned about them," Mrs. Allen said.

Scott Anzia, who lives adjacent to the park, had a list of questions he wanted answered, ranging from fencing to maintenance to rules prohibiting children ages 15 and younger from dog park.

He said dogs can always get loose and worries about them chasing children playing in the park.

"I'm not sure it would be entirely safe to let my son run around our yard with dogs in the park," he said.

Kathleen Wollner said she's opposed to a dog park any where near residential areas and especially near her home.

"I don't like dogs; I'm afraid of dogs," she said. "I don't have dogs, but I'm constantly hearing them barking and picking up after them."

Having a dog park would make it worse, she said.

Two weeks ago, the Parks, Recreation and Forestry Committee discussed the possibility of a dog park east of the playground in a open area in a hollow. It would not be visible from the street and a row of trees would screen it from neighbors and help reduce noise, Village President Richard Howells said.

"A row of trees isn't going to muffle the noise," said Al Martinez, whose property abuts the park.

Small dogs that live in the area go crazy whenever another dog goes past, he said, predicting they will bark constantly if a dog park is allowed there.

"First you put in a parking lot and now a dog park. Who is going to want to buy my house?"

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What's going to happen to our property values?" Martinez asked.

Robert Goschey, another neighbor, simply stated, "It's the wrong place for a park."

The wastewater treatment plant in the industrial park would be a much better place, several residents said.

Trustee Vickie Boehnlein, a member of the Park, Recreation and Forestry Committee who is spearheading the dog park project, suggested people visit Muttland Meadows in Grafton, where she takes her two small dogs, across from Lime Kiln Park to see how dogs behave off leashes in the large fenced area.

Howells said he received numerous e-mails and phone calls from people regarding the dog park issue. The responses have been about evenly divided for and against the project, he said.

"I want the public to be involved in this," Howells said. "It's only a concept. Nothing is set in cement. If 51% are against it, there won't be one. I strongly believe in majority rule."

Former trustee Ron Weyker, who headed the parks committee when Heritage Park was developed, said the park plan shows future expansion of sports fields, and he expects it will be heavily used in the years to come.

"There was no money set aside for a dog park," Weyker said. "I think it comes across loud and clear from the neighbors who live around there, they don't want to see it in their neighborhood or any neighborhood."

Plan Commission member James Sprader asked, "Shouldn't we decide if the village wants the park first? If so, then decide where to put it."

Boehnlein said the parks committee is still exploring possible sites, expenses and other issues.

"Honestly, I think we have the cart before the horse here," she said. "The Park and Rec has not made any recommendation to the Plan Commission yet. I understand the Plan Commission at some point has to get involved, but it's too soon now."