

Couple to pitch plan for dog park in Port

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
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<http://www.ozaukeeexpress.com/images/022813/dogSM.png> **Dog lovers will ask city for permission to create private, membership-based canine area in industrial park**

Port Washington dog lovers Ellen and Bob Paulus are hoping to set tails wagging throughout the area by providing a place for canines to run and play.

The couple, who own Paulus Printing in Port Washington's industrial park, will appear before the Plan Commission Thursday night, Feb. 28, to discuss plans to create a private dog park on the property.

"We're dog people. It's kind of been churning around in our heads for a number of years," Ellen Paulus said Tuesday.



During the last several years, as the city has discussed its dog leash law and whether to allow canines at city festivals, the idea gained traction, she said.

And when it became clear officials didn't like the idea of creating a public dog park, the couple refined their idea, she said.

"We thought a private dog park might be something the community could use," Paulus said. "It's important for dogs to have social interaction and a safe place to run. This would provide a fun way for people to exercise their dogs."

She likened their proposed dog park to an athletic club for dogs, with memberships required for people to use the facility. Dogs would be required to have proof of vaccinations and be assessed to ensure they have the proper temperament and interact well with others before being accepted as members.

If they aren't ready, Paulus said, the couple would provide resources to help the owner train and socialize them so they can eventually use the park.

The proposed dog park would be fenced and encompass the portions of their 1.6-acre lot not taken up by the print shop and parking lot at 1270 Mineral Springs Rd., Paulus said.

The roughly 1-acre site would be smaller than Muttland Meadows in Grafton — a dog park

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run by a volunteer organization — but yet provide “plenty of room for people to throw tennis balls and dogs to run back and forth,” Paulus said.

There would be separate fenced areas for large and small dogs, as well as an area that people could rent for private use, particularly if their dog is too shy, too rambunctious or too aggressive to run freely with others.

While the park would be open year-round for canines, there could be days when the couple holds special events for specific breeds, such as a Golden Retriever Day or Poodle Afternoon, she said.

Paulus said the fact they are proposing the dog park be created in the industrial park, not a residential area, is a plus.

“Not everyone would want to have a dog park nearby,” she said. “Here, you don’t have to come past the dog park unless you want to, and you wouldn’t hear the dogs.”

The couple, who own three greyhounds and have fostered 150 greyhounds over the last decade, aren’t strangers to the idea of watching over large groups of dogs.

During the last three years, they have hosted several greyhound play dates on their property with as many as 42 dogs in attendance, Paulus said.

“We emphasize safety,” she said. “We’ll be monitoring closely who’s here, are they an appropriate dog for a dog park.”

Paulus said she doesn’t expect the park would be overloaded with dogs at any one time, but if that occurred the couple could set a limit.

The couple would be responsible for ensuring the park is cleaned daily — something that will also go a long way to keep the facility safe and disease free, she said.

“This isn’t a dog park monitored by volunteers,” she said. “This is something Bob and I are running.”

Someday, if all goes well, Paulus said she would like to create an indoor arena for dogs to run. It’s something she has heard greyhound owners wishing for.

“That would certainly make us a destination,” she said.

But before the couple’s dream comes true, they need a Plan Commission approval of their site and operational plan.

The city would also be required to change its zoning code to allow for dog parks, either as a permitted use in specific zoning districts or as a conditional use. The Plan Commission is expected to make a recommendation to the Common Council on the preferred amendment to

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the zoning code.

Randy Tetzlaff, the city's director of planning and development, suggested the zoning ordinance be amended to allow dog parks as a conditional use in the industrial, agricultural and parks and utility land districts. This, he said, would allow the city to set requirements for such things as fencing, signage, landscaping, lighting, parking, maintenance and hours.

A public hearing would be required before the change in the zoning code is approved.

Image Information: ELLEN AND BOB Paulus walked two of their greyhounds on their land in the Port industrial park where they want to create a dog park. Photo by Sam Arendt