

Commission backs plan for dog park

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
Wednesday, 06 March 2013 18:58

<http://www.ozaukeepress.com/images/022813/dogSM.png>

Port officials recommend zoning change to allow couple to open canine exercise area in industrial park

The Port Washington Plan Commission gave Bob and Ellen Paulus a big paw up last week as members recommended the city amend its zoning code to allow a dog park the couple proposes creating next to their shop in the city's industrial park.

Commission members also gave concept approval to the park.



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“I think this certainly is an enhancement to the community,” Mayor Tom Mlada said. “I believe wholeheartedly you will be successful.”

The goal of Lucky Dog Park is to provide an enclosed area where dogs can socialize, exercise and play off leash, the Pauluses told the commission.

“Dogs aren’t always accepted everywhere,” Ellen Paulus said. “I think it’s appropriate that dogs have a place where they can be off leash, where they can run and play.

“They say a tired dog is a happy dog. We’re hoping for a lot of happy, tired dogs in Port Washington.”

Although the couple hasn’t operated a dog park before, they have experience hosting large greyhound play dates at their business, Paulus said.

To create their park, the couple plan to fence the roughly one-acre of land surrounding their shop on Mineral Springs Drive, Paulus Printing, then subdivide the area for large and small dogs.

A smaller area would be set aside for rent for limited time periods, she said. It would be ideal for dogs that aren’t suited for the group setting or owners who don’t want their dogs interacting with other canines.

“We have this big, large field we keep cut but don’t utilize,” Paulus said. “We’ve been thinking for a long time about what to do with that.”

Although the park wouldn’t be huge, that’s a benefit, she said. She’s talked to people who have gone to larger facilities but find it difficult when their pet runs and they can’t see it on the other side of the park.

The Pauluses said they plan to make tennis balls, flying disks, beginner agility equipment and wading pools available to people using the park, as well as benches, portable toilets and drinking water.

Lucky Dog Park would be private, with families paying daily, monthly or annual fees as members.

Before a dog could use the park, it would be checked to ensure it has proper vaccinations and the right temperament to interact safely with others, Paulus said.

She and her husband would monitor the park at all times, she added.

“Our goal is that we will get to know every dog and every dog owner who comes there,” Paulus said. “One of us will be there whenever the park is open.”

The couple will also ensure the park is cleaned every night, she said.

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If all goes well, Paulus said, the couple would eventually like to build an indoor running arena, similar to a horse arena, that could be used in winter or during inclement weather.

A dog wash could be part of the arena, she said, and perhaps a small retail area as well.

“It’s nice to hose the dogs off before putting them in the car,” Paulus said, noting a number of fellow greyhound rescue families have lobbied for this amenity.

“Not many dog parks have this (indoor arena), and it would make us a destination,” she added. “I think it would make our park a lot more desirable.”

There should be adequate parking for the facility in the existing parking lot, Paulus said, adding there is also room on the street to park.

Commission members were pleased by the proposal, and by the fact the facility would be located in the city’s industrial park.

They recommended the city amend its ordinances to allow dog parks as a conditional use in the agricultural, industrial and public and utility lands zoning districts.

“As long as it’s not too close to people who would be disturbed by the noise and traffic, I think it’s fine,” commission member Bud Sova said.

By making it a conditional use, the city will retain control of such issues as fencing, lighting, parking, landscaping and signage, officials said. If there are problems, the city will be able to step in to force either remedies or closure.

Ald. Dan Becker, a member of the commission, lauded the Pauluses’ effort, noting that many people have suggested the community create a dog park of its own but in a time of limited resources that isn’t likely to occur.

“Government has had to look at going back to its correct business, so to speak,” he said. “Here’s a private sector solution to something government doesn’t necessarily need to get involved in.”

The proposed ordinance change will have its initial review by the Common Council on March 19, with a public hearing and vote scheduled for April 3. A hearing and vote on the conditional use permit for the Pauluses would then be held on April 16.

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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