

VILLAGE OF SOUTH RUSSELL

PARKS WORK SESSION

Thursday, April 4, 2013 – 6:30 P.M.

The Village of South Russell held a Parks Work Session on Thursday, April 4, 2013 at 6:30p.m. at Village Hall. In attendance were: Mayor Matthew E. Brett, Council members – Porter, Wolfe, Binder, Koons, Kostura and Dishong.

Mayor explained he wanted to follow a process which would discuss what the issues are and what needs to be solved. The goal is to see if conceptually the present group can agree on how to proceed with the two ideas regarding dogs in the park: Odd/even and to create some type of area or segment to the Park. He said he would like to discuss the existing problems with each model. It was clarified that the third fundamental model is to leash the entire park.

Binder stated that he hopes the Park issue is solved tonight as he will not be attending any further dog meetings.

Mayor asked what issues need to be solved. The responses were:

1. On Park Safety
2. Off Park Safety
3. Health/sanitation
4. Enforcement
5. Planning for the future - efficient use of space
6. Accessibility for all, visitor experience
7. Liability issue

The first model was referred to as virtual segmentation (time, or date, versus physical segmentation) or odd/even. The second model is space segmentation or physical segmentation. The Mayor stated he would like to approach the issues that exist with each model.

The first issue Mayor mentioned regarding the odd/even approach is that this model does not seem to address the majority of the issues above. John Dishong stated that dog waste is always an issue with either model and as far as Park safety he said visitors are self-selecting. Mayor brought up several arguments regarding the issues. Kostura said the only way to create perfect safety in the park is to not allow dogs at all. He said that ground rules need to be put in place to create the environment they would like to have in the Park. Mayor brought up the ambiguity of the rules and specifically the definition of control. Binder pointed out that everyone is trying to create rules for dogs rather than people. Porter and Kostura responded they are trying to put into place rules and regulations for dogs via their owners. Mayor asked if everyone agrees that keeping dogs under control is a fundamental problem. Discussion regarding the definition of control followed.

Another issue the Mayor stated is as a concern is that the odd/even approach is very confusing. It was mentioned that there will be a sign that explains the rules of the Park. Koons mentioned the concern that the accessibility for all is eliminated with virtual segmentation. A discussion regarding irresponsible pet owners occurred. The topic of a Pavilion possibility in the Park in the future brought up the concern of keeping dogs away from this type of area. Dishong mentioned this is where self-policing and enforcement comes in. He said there will always be people that

don't follow the rules. Mayor said he is concerned with unleashed dogs running into areas they should not and irresponsible owners saying their dog is just trying to be friendly. Dishong said we have to better define what under control is.

Porter asked if the Police Department is capable manpower-wise of enforcing rules in the Park. He said it is a major issue to him. Mayor said he envisions a patrolman occasionally visiting the Park and issuing citations if necessary. Binder brought up the discussion of off Park safety and dogs off leash not paying attention to boundaries. Kostura said he defined under control by what isn't; such as any animal observed not responding to an audible, verbal or electric command is not under control, any animal observed that attempts through force or threat of force to create fear in another is not under control. He also said any animal observed through force or threat of force that makes unwanted bodily contact with another is not under control, and any animal observed through force that makes unwanted contact that causes bodily injury is barred from the Park and is a violation and a fine. A discussion followed regarding enforcement of rules within the Park, safety and the waste issue.

The discussion turned to physical segmentation. Dishong brought up the inefficient use of space because you're dedicating that space to a single use instead of allowing it to be a multiuse space. Binder said he thinks it's an inefficient use because people may encounter dogs anywhere in the Park and that is keeping people from coming to the park at all. That group discussed the possible location for a segmented area for dogs. Mayor said he is not a fan of fencing in a large area due to the high cost and he is not sure how many people would actually use it. Koons mentioned a sign that separates the interurban from the leashed area and unleashed area or a temporary fence. The group discussed enforcement and Binder felt if the Park had a segregated off leash area enforcement would be less necessary. Mayor said the visitor experience issue is important.

The group then discussed the issue of control. It was decided that control needed to be defined better. Dishong believes virtual segmentation should be piloted because the physical segmentation does not allow for going back. Mayor stated if these are the issues, which option solves the situation better. The group discussed some of the separate issues and which option helped solved the particular issues the best. The group discussed issues from the perspective of dog waste, on park safety, off park safety, enforcement, accessibility for all, visitor experience issues, liability, cost, and easier for residents to comply with.

A middle ground solution using virtual segmentation rather than using fencing to physically segment the park was discussed. Dishong said you can't connect to Frohring Meadows and don't allow for future plans if you physically segment the park. If the pilot doesn't work it was asked if the park will move towards a leash requirement. An area near Daisy Ln. was discussed as an off leash area.

Mayor asked if someone could define the virtual segmentation area for the off leash area, based on the discussions that were had. He would like a recommendation from Dishong and Kostura. Wolfe said residents are asking what is taking so long. Mayor said he will report that a work session was held and they should have a recommendation based upon this for the park situation to be voted on.