

Nealon Dog Park Notice

Date: June 21, 2016

To Menlo Park City Council

From: Dana Hendrickson

Subject: Nealon Playing Field Still The Best Option For Our Main City Dog Park

The existing morning dog park at the Nealon baseball field is a special community resource that is cherished by Menlo Park dog owners and envied by residents of other Peninsula cities because it provides so many important benefits to both dogs and dog owners. Therefore, Menlo Park residents are understandably concerned about the potential loss of this “facility” and *cannot imagine how the city could provide a comparable experience at another location*. However, we want to help the city find one IF a change cannot be avoided.

The purpose of this letter is five-fold:

- Describe the wonderful benefits the current dog park provides.
- Recommend improvements that could enhance the experience of both dog owners and other park users.
- Explain how dog owners currently carry out their responsibilities towards the park and other users of the playing field.
- Request a clear written fact-based, justification for why the current dog usage viewed as unacceptable by our City.
- Offer our help to understand perceived problems and propose helpful solutions.

The PF dog park contributes to the well being of our dogs.

- The large 4+ acres, pasture-like setting distinguishes it from typical “dog runs” and dog parks plus the location is convenient and parking plentiful.
- The large space permits dozens of dogs to engage in a variety of concurrent activities: they can fetch, run and play with other dogs, and have areas for themselves if that’s what a dog or owner prefer.
- These activities improve the physical and mental fitness of our dogs and help socialize them with other dogs and people.

Nealon Dog Park Notice

The PF dog park also contributes to the well being of dog owners.

- We care a great deal for our dogs and want them to be well adjusted, happy and healthy as then they make better companions and interact better with other people and dogs.
- The PF dog park is the single most successful place in Menlo Park for residents to develop new friends and socialize with existing ones. Most use the park many times a week and share a common interest in our dogs and we support each other. This dog community is also very welcoming.
- Each morning many dog owners walk the inside perimeter of the playing field, exercising while their dogs either follow or play.
- Both the Nealon Park location and adjacent parking are convenient.

While the existing PF dog park is wonderful, the City should make significant yet inexpensive improvements.

- The limited hours of 8 to 10 am on weekdays (10 hours/week) constrains usage.
- Signage would improve the experiences of all users of Nealon Park. Examples: signs could direct owners to enter thru the outfield gate rather than the dugouts; park near the outfield not Little House; encourage dog owners to play only in the outfield, when possible; make the operating hours much more visible so as to discourage usage during unapproved times.
- In the past many dog owners voluntarily paid a professional cleaning service to clean up dog feces that were overlooked by dog owners. The City could easily pay for such a service to ensure its regular use and dog owners could share the cost.

Menlo Park dog owners act responsibly.

- Comply with existing rules and regulations and explain these to newcomers.
- Proactively welcome newcomers and their dogs
- Remind owners to control dog behavior and clean up after their dogs
- Pick-up dog feces when a dog's owner cannot be identified.

Nealon Dog Park Notice

The PF dog park was initially implemented after a series of public hearings and approved only after all identified concerns were successfully addressed. On a typical weekday 40 to 50 dogs and owners share this wonderful community resource and more than 75 use the dog park each week. After ten years we are unaware of any major problems that would cause the City to eliminate it. Please note that at the time the dog park was approved the City already recognized that the primary problem for the poor summer condition of the playing field was the poor irrigation system NOT dog usage and this fact can easily be confirmed.

PF dog owners are currently organizing so we can more effectively work with the City and welcome the opportunities to share ideas on how we can make both the PF dog park and our interactions more successful. We also encourage council members to spend time at the dog park so they can appreciate its tremendous value.

The PF dog park is a unique showcase for what the City can do to enhance the vitality of Menlo Park. We hope the City will help us make it a better experience for all users, not destroy it. That would be a major step backward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dana Hendrickson".

Dana Hendrickson

Editor & Publisher of Re-Imagine Menlo Park

danahendrickson2009@gmail.com