

Lopez, Donna

From: seidel.sam@gmail.com on behalf of Sam Seidel [sam@samseidel.org]
Sent: Monday, May 23, 2011 10:53 AM
To: Drury, Margaret; Lopez, Donna; Crane, Paula
Subject: Longfellow Park

For the record for tonight's meeting, related to O-3

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Dear Councilors,

Thank you for your responses to John Sloan's request that the City of Cambridge consider opening Longfellow Park to "Off Leash" dogs between the afternoon hours of 4:30 and 5:30. We have lived in the neighborhood of Longfellow Park for 37 years, first at 26 Hubbard Park and for the last 4 years at 175 Mt. Auburn Street, the house directly abutting lower Longfellow Park on the east Side.

If we were asked to name the aspects of this neighborhood which have contributed most to a strong feeling of community, for us it would first have been the presence of parents and children as we raised our four kids, and more recently the congeniality of the dog owners meeting and chatting as we walk our dogs.

Because our windows directly overlook the Park, we have a unique perspective on life in Longfellow Park. We watch people walking to and from work, parents teaching their kids to climb the one kid friendly tree right outside our window, school groups working on science and art projects, new age hippies congregating in the seating area around the statue, the occasional homeless fellows lying in their sleeping bags, college students building icy sculptures after the winter snowfalls, parishioners walking toward the Friends and Mormon churches, and voters hurrying to their polling place on Election Day.

We also see the dogs and their owners. In the past four years we have watched how the dog life of the Park appears to help more than any other Park activity to build a sense of community. When we first walked into the Park with our springer and our labradoodle, the owners we met were only faces inside heavy overcoats and the dogs were simply different sizes and breeds. But we were there every day, and often twice a day, not just passing through but mingling with the other owners for a good half hour at a time. We began to know each others stories, the names of one another's kids, the issues facing each of us. Our backgrounds didn't matter, nor did our ages or politics. What mattered was our common love for dogs. Eventually we began getting together in the evening, sometimes with the dogs and often without. Newcomers were welcomed and those who moved away were kept on our Dog Park email list.

As a community we also have a pride in keeping the Park clean. People waded through knee high snow this winter to pick up after their dogs and often we come with a second bag, to collect broken glass and debris from around the statue.

Occasionally a Dog Officer will ticket any dog that is not leashed, and we have often discussed moving our community to the open triangle of land between Mt. Auburn and Memorial Drive. But no one feels comfortable letting their dog run in that unfenced piece of land. Sooner or later a dog will run onto the Drive, with serious consequences to cars, drivers and dogs.

We are hopeful the the Council will initiate an "off-leash" late afternoon time in lower Longfellow Park.

Thanks for your consideration of this matter,
Jeannie and Mason Smith
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