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WEST ROXBURY

Councilor plans meeting about possible West Roxbury dog park

Posted by Matt Rocheleau July 22, 2011 05:16 PM

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(Globe file photo / 2001)

While it's early in the process and he's open to discussing other sites, City Councilor Matt O'Malley suggested using a portion of the 100-acre Millennium Park as his top choice for a dog park.

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

A meeting next month will discuss the possible creation of a dog park in West Roxbury as well the possibility of establishing a friends group to help maintain such a park.

"We're very early on in the process," the meeting's host and organizer, District 6 City Councilor Matt O'Malley said by phone this week. But, "I think there is a real need and a desire to have a dog park in this community."

A dog park is a confined outdoor area where dogs are not required to be leashed.

The councilor said he envisions such a park, which he supported during his election campaign last year, as a "win-win" – something that could address complaints of dogs running unleashed through neighborhood streets and

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yards; while also providing an open, but controlled, exercise space for dogs and their owners, who don't already have nearby access to such a space.

He said he knows of other [Boston dog parks](#), including the South End, South Boston, Dorchester and on the Boston Common, but none that are convenient to his Parkway constituents.

A site has not been chosen; O'Malley "is currently working with the city to assess the feasibility of a dog park and to find an appropriate location," his office said, and he said he's open to exploring all options.

Yet, the councilor did say he currently sees using a yet-to-be-pinpointed portion of the 11-year-old [Millennium Park](#) as an "ideal location ... the first, not the only choice" for a dog park because of how much space the former landfill offers and because there are no residential areas abutting the 100-acre property.

In other area cities and towns that have [established dog parks in recent years](#), the chief opponents to such plans have often been abutting residents to the proposed dog park, concerned about such factors as increased noise, traffic and parking.

Last fall, an encounter between an unleashed dog and a trainer at Millennium Park [revived talks](#) about turning part of the space into a dog park.

"This is more complicated than just setting up four fences," O'Malley added in a conversation Wednesday. "It's going to take some sweat equity."

He said a funding plan to both establish and maintain the proposed dog park has not been finalized yet. It could be paid for with public or private funds or a combination of the two.

"Everything's on the table," O'Malley said.

He said that over 40 residents had told him they plan to attend an Aug. 11 meeting he has arranged at the District E-5 Police Station.

The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. and its purpose is to gauge interest, hear feedback and concerns, and to recruit potential members for a friends group to continue to explore plans for a dog park, with the idea that the friends group, which O'Malley said he'd like to be a part of, would later help oversee the park's maintenance.

The councilor, a Jamaica Plain resident, is not a dog owner himself, but he said he's a "pet and dog lover." He grew up in a household with dogs and his parents, who live in West Roxbury, own two currently.

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