



CITY OF LONG BEACH

Department of Parks, Recreation and Marine

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September 21, 2004

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
City of Long Beach
California

SUBJECT: Ordinance Permitting Beach Access for Dogs (District 3)

DISCUSSION

The Dog Zone pilot program was implemented on August 1, 2003, with the stated purpose of providing City staff and officials the opportunity to assess the potential for permanent beach/ocean access for dogs. On June 15, 2004, the City Council extended the initial one-year pilot program term for three months to allow the program to continue through the summer and to provide staff additional time to complete the evaluation process. The ordinance authorizing the pilot program will expire on October 31, 2004.

The Dog Zone has proven to be very popular and many residents and visitors have expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to recreate with their dogs. It is estimated that 700 to 900 dogs (and their owners) are currently enjoying the Dog Zone each week. Popularity aside, the continuance of the program required that an evaluation be undertaken to determine its impact on other beach uses and the general beach environment.

The evaluation of the Dog Zone focused on four key factors:

- Patron compliance to the rules
- Reported incidents
- Public health risk
- Volunteer participation

A brief discussion of each follows:

Patron Compliance

Since the beginning of the pilot program, City staff has been aware that some Dog Zone patrons were not adhering to the rules. However, the extent of the non-compliance was not known. With the advent of summer, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Marine obtained the assistance of the beach lifeguards in recording the rules infractions they observed. Though not a scientific study, the lifeguards recorded significant numbers of rules infractions, the most frequent being (1) dogs on the beach outside of the Dog Zone, and (2) dog owners with more than one dog. It is reasonable to assume that a percentage of the rules infractions were committed by individuals who were

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unaware of the rules or the Dog Zone boundaries. It is important to note that a formal enforcement program was not instituted during the pilot program.

Reported Incidents

Through the course of the pilot program, City staff received approximately one dozen reports of incidents. Some of these incidents were reported through an "Incident Report Form" (which is available on site), and some were communicated in e-mails forwarded from Justin Rudd, a principal Dog Zone Ambassador. These incidents include occurrences of dogs chasing (or aggressively approaching) joggers and pedestrians, unleashed dogs crossing the beach bike path, and small dogs being attacked by large dogs.

Public Health Risk

A number of residents have expressed their concerns about the health risks associated with dog waste, and the potential interaction of unleashed dogs with other beach users. In response to these concerns, City staff engaged an environmental consultant, Tetra Tech, Inc., to perform a public health risk assessment. The assessment involved the following:

- Review of lifeguard monitoring records.
- Review of Animal Control records for dog incidences, both in the Dog Zone and citywide.
- Review of beach maintenance operations.
- Review of City water quality sampling results.
- Collection and analysis of sand samples taken within the Dog Zone and access corridor, and other sections of the beach for comparison.
- Evaluation of the risk and probabilities of exposure due to dog waste and activity.

The primary conclusions of the public health risk assessment are as follows:

- Water samples analyzed for bacteria suggest that the Dog Zone has not adversely impacted water quality at the beach.
- Based on Animal Control records, there has been no dog bite incidents (to humans) reported at the Dog Zone.

- The data suggests no direct correlation between fecal coliform concentrations and dog use with the Dog Zone when compared to other areas of the beach where dogs are prohibited.
- Although some dog owners have failed to pick up after their dogs, the resulting increase in fecal matter does not appear to cause a significant difference in the quality of the beach between the Dog Zone and the other areas of the beach.
- It is unlikely that the presence of dog feces in the Dog Zone would be the cause of illness.
- The beach maintenance crew regularly cleans the beach within, and adjacent to, the Dog Zone, and some fecal matter, if present, can be removed or diluted during these daily operations.

Volunteer Participation

When the Dog Zone was implemented in August 2003, it was envisioned that a strong base of volunteers, or "Ambassadors," would develop to educate patrons regarding the rules and to assist in the maintenance of the area. This has not proven to be the case. A few highly-dedicated individuals have provided most of the volunteer efforts. While their efforts are to be commended, City staff believe that a larger volunteer base is essential to the operation of the Dog Zone.

MARINE ADVISORY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

At the September 9, 2004 meeting of the Marine Advisory Commission, Parks, Recreation and Marine Department staff presented the information discussed above and made a recommendation regarding the future of the Dog Zone. This recommendation, which was unanimously adopted by the Marine Advisory Commission, is to make the Dog Zone, as currently designed, a permanent recreational opportunity, with the provision that the Director of Parks, Recreation and Marine have the ability to suspend or modify dog access as required. The Marine Advisory Commission also recommended that:

- (1) A formal enforcement program be developed, without increased cost to the City.
- (2) An association of patrons take on greater responsibility toward successful operation of the Dog Zone.
- (3) City staff evaluate current Dog Zone signage and other facility needs, making improvements where necessary and feasible to increase patron compliance to the rules and to minimize potential impacts to general beachgoers.

If the recommendation of the Marine Advisory Commission is adopted by the City Council, Parks, Recreation and Marine staff will proceed to implement the above.

This letter was reviewed by Deputy City Attorney Charles Parkin and Budget Management Officer David Wodynski on September 13, 2004.

TIMING CONSIDERATIONS

City Council adoption of the amended ordinance is requested on September 21, 2004, to allow the uninterrupted continuation of the Dog Zone pilot program upon the expiration of the current ordinance on October 31, 2004.

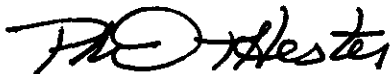
FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with the requested action.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CITY COUNCIL:

Declare the Ordinance read the first time and laid over to the next regular meeting of the City Council for final reading.

Respectfully submitted,



PHIL T. HESTER
DIRECTOR OF PARKS, RECREATION AND MARINE

PTH:GH
Attachments

APPROVED:



GERALD R. MILLER
CITY MANAGER