



## Fairfax County Park Authority

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# Noise Ordinance - Off Leash Dog Area Information

## QUESTIONS RAISED AT PUBLIC HEARING:

The Board of Supervisors (BOS) has asked for the Park Authority to provide additional information to the June 9 Development Committee for consideration.

- 🌿 Information on planning process and how public input is considered.
- 🌿 Information on standards/criteria/decision making on locating where Off Leash Dog Areas (OLDA).
- 🌿 History of complaints, trespassing after hours and other nuisance issues.
- 🌿 Impact of changing hours from dawn to 8 a.m.
- 🌿 Existing dog park locations and distances to residents.

## Information on planning process and how public input is considered

### The Park Planning Process

A park master plan is a general guide for appropriate park uses and their approximate location within a specific park that serves as a long-range vision (10-20 year timeframe) for future development and programming. Issues typically addressed include planned park features; natural and cultural resource management; and general design concerns.

Typically, there are at least two public meetings throughout the planning process to seek public involvement. The first is a public information meeting to introduce the project and existing site conditions; explain the planning process; identify community issues and respond to preliminary questions. After a preferred alternative is identified, a draft park master plan is developed, and a formal public comment meeting is held to gather public input. The draft plan may be further refined after consideration of public input. Then, the Park Authority Board (PAB) is presented with a final plan and comment summary before plan approval.

### **How Public Input is Considered**

The Fairfax County Park Authority values and depends on public input. No plan can be successful without the benefit of park users to identify needs, desires, and local community issues. Park master plans provide the public a way to help determine the best uses for a specific site and to optimize management of the site's resources. We use public input combined with analyses of current trends and future needs identified in the Countywide Parks and Recreational Needs Assessment to help craft a long-range blueprint for use of a park site.

Public input received is entered into a database, where it can be sorted and reported. Staff then carefully considers all the comments, and address them as realistically and practically as possible. The comments are provided to the PAB for consideration in the plan approval process through revisions and/or clarifications.

Information on the park planning process can be found on the Fairfax County Park Authority Planning & Development webpage at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/plandev/>.

### **Information on Standards/criteria/decision making on where OLDAs are located**

#### **Dog Park Volunteers**

All OLDAs in Fairfax County Parks utilize volunteers to monitor, clean the facilities, publicize OLDA regulations, and report maintenance needs to the Park Authority. Volunteers have also participated in initiating OLDA planning, development, and funding some of the recurring operational costs. Locational Criteria are used to guide decisions on planning a suitable OLDA location.

#### **OLDA Locational Criteria**

Appropriate locational criteria for OLDAs includes:

- 🌳 OLDA should be shown on an approved park master plan, unless otherwise approved by the Park Authority Board (PAB).
- 🌳 OLDA should not be placed within the service area of an existing OLDA.
- 🌳 OLDAs cannot be placed within Resource Protection Areas (RPAs), Flood Plains, Environmental Quality Corridors (EQCs), on cultural resource sites, or within most easements.
- 🌳 Consider proximity of the potential OLDA location to nearby neighbors. Generally, OLDA's should be located at least 50' from adjacent property lines, and preferably at least 100' from existing nearby houses.
- 🌳 OLDA cannot be placed in a space occupied by existing or planned facilities, steep slopes, or heavy native vegetation.

- Provide adequate space for the proposed facility and supporting amenities. As recommended by the 1999 Dog Park Task Force Report, the minimum size for an OLDA is 100 feet by 100 feet, which equals 10,000 square feet, or slightly less than 1/4 acre. The preferred size is at least 27,780 square feet, or about 1/2 an acre. An OLDA can have one large area or two sections, one for small dogs and one for big dogs.
- OLDA capacity is one dog for every 700 square feet within the OLDA fence. Each OLDA will post the carrying capacity.
- The park must also have a safe vehicular entrance and 10 to 20 parking spaces, including ADA spaces, depending upon the size of the OLDA.
- The OLDA surface should consist of at least 4" of stone dust. Through experience, FCPA has determined that no other natural surface holds up to the high use of a dog park, while providing a safe, adequate surface for dogs.
- Trees or shade structures should be included within the off-leash area for shade when feasible.
- An information kiosk with dog area rules, contact information, and other pertinent information, should be installed to facilitate user communications and community building.
- A minimum of 2 benches at appropriate locations inside the fenced area.
- A trash can or two, should be in appropriate quantity and of the type with self-closing lids which will prevent insect and rodent access. They must be lined with plastic trash bags. Receptacles will be emptied on a schedule timely enough to mitigate any resultant odors and/or flies or other insects.
- Medium to large dog waste bag dispenser box (routinely provided by volunteers).
- ADA compliant trail or sidewalk connecting the parking lot to the OLDA, and street if applicable. While we work to try to connect park trails and facilitate pedestrians in parks, public streets and sidewalks are generally provided by the Virginia Department of Transportation.
- OLDA hours shall be consistent with that of the park in which it resides (usually dawn to dusk), and may be restricted in an effort to mitigate any noise or parking issue(s). (The proposed Noise Ordinance will cause a change to this policy.)
- The above information was compiled from the Fairfax County Park Authority OLDA establishment webpage at: [http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/olda\\_development.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/olda_development.htm) and the 1999 Dog Park Task Force Report.

**History of complaints, trespassing after hours and other nuisance issues**

FCCA Park Operations Division monitors OLDA complaints and has received very few noise complaints, except for the recent noise complaints from neighbors at Baron Cameron OLDA. At the time Mason District OLDA was master planned, there were vocal community concerns that were carefully considered by the Park Authority Board, who decided to approve the OLDA. Since the Mason District OLDA was completed in 2002, no noise complaints have been received by the Park Authority.

**Impact of changing hours from dawn to 8 a.m.**

Currently OLDAs open at dawn. FCCA posted information about the proposed Noise Ordinance at each OLDA and has not heard any negative feedback from the existing dog park users or partners about the 7 to 8:00 a.m. start time changes (Attachment 1). It is not clear however, how many users actually saw the notice. However, staff offers the following considerations:

- ❖ Signs with new posted operating hours will need to be replaced at all OLDAs (these are milled wooden signs). Costs will be absorbed through FCCA general fund.
- ❖ Most OLDAs are at non-staffed parks where monitoring or enforcement of the new time will not occur.
- ❖ Non-operating hours use may result in increased non-emergency calls to police who enforce park rules in unstaffed parks.
- ❖ Users would not be able to use OLDAs prior to work on weekdays (a popular time), or at the same time that field users are permitted to use adjacent ball fields on weekends, which start at 7 a.m.
- ❖ Table 1 shows dawn times throughout the year to the right.

*Table 1: Sunrise Time Throughout Year*

Month	Date	Sunrise	Sunset
January	1st	7:27 AM	4:57 PM
	15th	7:25 AM	5:10 PM
February	1st	7:15 AM	5:20 PM
	15th	7:00 AM	5:45 PM
March	1st	6:41 AM	6:01 PM
	15th	7:20 AM	7:15 PM
April	1st	6:53 AM	7:32 PM
	15th	6:32 AM	7:45 PM
May	1st	6:11 AM	8:00 PM
	15th	5:56 AM	8:14 PM
June	1st	5:45 AM	8:27 PM
	15th	5:42 AM	8:35 PM
July	1st	5:46 AM	8:37 PM
	15th	5:55 AM	8:33 PM
August	1st	6:09 AM	8:20 PM
	15th	6:21 AM	8:03 PM
September	1st	6:37 AM	7:39 PM
	15th	6:49 AM	7:17 PM
October	1st	7:04 AM	6:51 PM
	15th	7:17 AM	6:30 PM
November	1st	6:35 AM	5:08 PM
	15th	6:51 AM	4:55 PM
December	1st	7:07 AM	4:47 PM
	15th	7:19 AM	4:47 PM

**Existing dog park locations and distances to residents**

Dog Park - District	Distance to Residential Property Line	Distance to House
Baron Cameron – Hunter Mill	160'	239'
Blake Lane - Providence	46'	100'
Chandon – Town of Herndon	26'	93'
Grist Mill – Mt. Vernon	200'	246'
Lenclair - Lee	25'	120'
Mason District - Mason	142'	164'
Moorefield – Town of Vienna	88'	173'
Rock Hill - Sully	450'	580'
South Run District - Springfield	240'	259'
Westgrove – Mt. Vernon	297'	362'

Please also refer to Countywide Map of OLDAs and aerial maps of each OLDA (Attachment 2).

Attachment 1: Notice Posted at OLDAs

Attachment 2: Maps of OLDAs

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# FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY



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April 22, 2015

Dear Off Leash Dog Area User,

The County's Noise Ordinance is currently under review and the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing to take comment on the proposed revisions. These provisions touch on many activities we often take for granted; however we wanted you to be aware that the hours of operation at our dog parks may be significantly impacted should this ordinance amendment pass as currently proposed. Be informed!

You can find the proposal online at

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/zoningordinance/proposed/noiseordinance.pdf>

A more comprehensive gathering of information is located online at

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/zoning/noiseordinance/>

The Park Authority Board has not taken a position on the amendment but we urge you to look over the information and to share this information with other dog park users.



If accommodations and/or alternative formats are needed, please call (703) 324-8563, at least 10 working days in advance of the registration deadline or event. TTY (703) 803-3354.