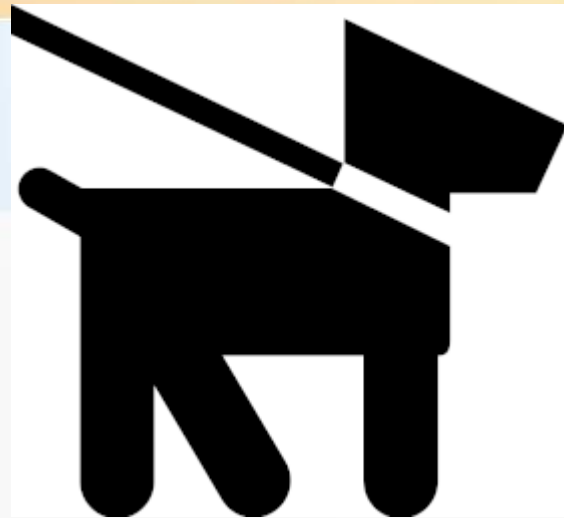


# Off-Leash Dogs Working Group

## Summary



# Working Group Members

## **Animal Advisory Commission**

- Craig Nazor
- Jo Anne Norton

## **Parks and Recreation Board**

- Dawn Lewis
- Nancy Mohn Barnard

## **City of Austin Staff**

Kimberly McNeeley, Director, Parks and Recreation

Don Bland, Director, Austin Animal Center

Jason Garza, Assistant Director, AAC

Mark Sloat, Manager, Animal Protection, AAC

Kelsey Cler, Communications Manager, AAC

Belinda Hare, Executive Assistant, AAC



# Citizens' Concerns

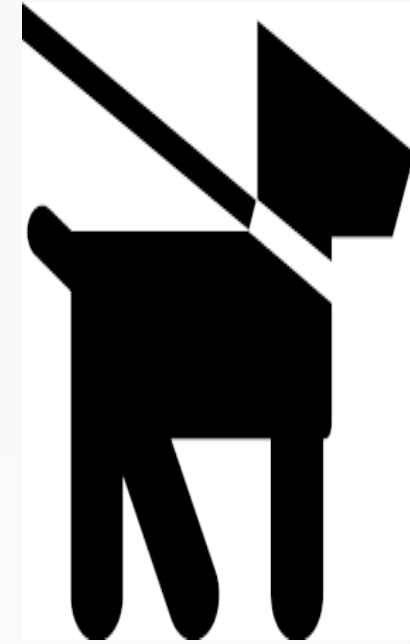
**SOURCES:** NextDoor, emails, conversations about off-leash dogs in on-leash areas and neighborhoods

- Chase bikes potentially causing accidents
- Run up to strollers or citizens with walking aides
- Poop not scooped
- Not enough tickets written for violators
- Dogs run up to random adults and children
- **Dog owners are not trained to break up dog fights**



# Issues Considered by the Working Group

- Misinformation about existing laws
- New Austinites may not know about existing laws
- Off-leash dogs on parkland that is on-leash only
  - Citizens cannot safely enjoy City parkland
- Citizen ability to request an official off-leash area
  - Austin growth outpacing off-leash areas
- Options for citizens to report issues
- Enforcement of all Leash Codes



# Laws - Austin City Code Title 3

- ***Keep dogs on a leash and under control in all areas that are not designated as “off-leash”***
- Pick up and sanitarily dispose of pet waste left on public or private property
- Provide adequate shelter
- Ensure pets have current rabies vaccinations
- Confine pets transported in unenclosed vehicles in a manner that prevents the animal from falling or jumping from the vehicle or being injured
- DO NOT leave a pet alone on a chain or tether
- It's unlawful to sell a puppy or kitten that is not spayed/neutered, vaccinated, and microchipped

# Enforcement Affected by Staffing

- 21 Animal Protection Officers
  - 7 days a week, 7a-Midnight - Service 900 Sq Miles of Travis County
  - Handle a multitude of animal related issues
  - Can write tickets for off-leash dog violations
    - Tickets are \$217 - can be increased by a judge to \$500 or dismissed entirely
- 25 Park Rangers
  - 7 days a week - Service 330 City Parks - 19,000 acres of parkland
  - Handle a multitude of parkland related issues
  - Cannot write tickets for off-leash dog violations

# Solutions Discussed

Enforcement capabilities limited. Alternative solutions considered:

- Education campaign (Speakers Bureau, Focus groups)
- Media campaign (billboards, commercials, flyers in CoA Utility Bills)
- Expanding off-leash dog areas
- Bark Rangers
- Collateral (Brochures, leashes, dog poop bags, etc.)

# Raising Awareness About Existing Off-Leash Laws

- **Musical Messaging - Target Completion 5/31/2022**

- Two local musicians created songs
- Working with PARD team on videos
- Various social media platforms will run the videos
- Kevin

Andrea

- **Print Media - Flyers**

- Posted on AAC and PARD sites
- Address laws, common questions, where off-leash areas are located, interacting with wildlife, dog park etiquette
- Explored utility bill insert but concluded too costly and not far reaching





# Raising Awareness, etc.

- **Website Enhancements**

- AAC enhanced their Website to make information easier to find
- AAC added off-leash issues to their Chatbox

- **Education**

- Events - Zilker Kite festival
- AAC hired a new Public Health Educator (former APD officer)
  - Video will be created about leash laws and other animal issues

- **Park Rangers**

- Citizen education at locations with high calls to 311

# Focus Group

- A group of citizens reviewed PARD's "Off-Leash Area Guidelines"
  - Community driven process developed by PARD
    - Guidelines and policies to request a new off-leash area
  - Overall, participants felt the document was solid
  - Discussed parkland currently being used as informal off-leash areas (examples: Little Zilker, Mabel Davis, Brentwood, Gracy Woods, Longview, Stacy)
    - Families cannot enjoy parkland
    - Dog attack near Little Zilker - on-leash dog lost an eye in front of the family including children

## Focus Group, ctd.

- Citizens using deterrents, such as pepper spray, on off-leash dogs who approach
- Hybrid approach to off-leash areas
  - Parkland some days, off-leash area other days
- Private land partnerships (example: a church space)
- Signage visible and adequate
- Information hard to find on AAC website

# Focus Group - Next steps

- PARD planning team will take the lead on future off-leash areas
  - The focus group members will continue to participate
  - A presentation will be made to the Parks and Recreation Board
  - If approved, PARD will create a campaign to increase off-leash dog areas
- AAC continues to improve their website and chatbox

# Citizen Action

Call 311 to report incidents such as:

- Off-leash dogs in public spaces not designated as an “off-leash area”
  - Include a detailed location
  - The data is being collected to support enhancements to City services
- Habitual strays
  - Neighbors who routinely let their dogs out the front door to roam - give the address - APO has a process to engage your neighbor

# Citizen Action, ctd.

- Calling 311, continued
  - Dogs harassing wildlife - need detailed location
  - Dog doesn't seem to have a home
    - Is skinny, intact, looks scared or lost
  - Dog scares or injures a human
    - Important - call 911 if the injury is severe
    - An APO will contact you
    - Dangerous Dog Statute
  - Dog injures a dog, cat or fowl
    - An APO will contact you
    - Vicious Dog Ordinance

# Citizen Action, ctd.

- Private property (AISD land, businesses, church yards)
  - Contact the owner of the land
- Ask for a speaker at neighborhood meetings
  - 512-974-6717 (PARD number - will coordinate who speaks between PARD and ACC)