

Westgrove PACK board meeting April 17, 2024

Attendees: Liz Yap; Jeff Pandin; Sam Longstreet; Steve Zielenski; Shawn Bloom; Yvonne Kinkaid; Michelle Primack

Regrets: Mike Bober, LeeAnn Williams

Next steps

- **Jeff** will follow up with the plumber to ensure the water supply to the North End is ready as well as for the opening of the South End. Aiming for a turn-on date of April 26th.
- South end needs to be mowed. **Jeff** said it is scheduled for mowing the Friday before.
- **Shawn** will explore the possibility of using a metal bar (flat iron) to attach to the gate hinges as a temporary solution to the gate springs issue, and will report back on its effectiveness.
- **Shawn** will send an invitation for the May 9th and June 12th board meeting to all board members.
- **Steve** will provide an update to Liz right before the Sunday meeting regarding any committee updates or issues.
- **Steve** agreed to try and arrange a speaker for the upcoming season kickoff
- **Liz** and **Steve** will meet about updating website with more safety related information
- **Liz** will meet with **LeeAnn** about social media campaigns

Summary

Financials (Jeff):

Burke & Herbert: \$12, 459.63

Paypal: \$7,785.73

Venmo: \$0

Total: \$20,245.36

- Jeff discussed the organization's financial status, which showed an increase in donations from sustaining caretakers.

Software Update (Jeff):

- Considering the potential use of Mailchimp as an outgoing mail server
- Jeff agreeing to explore the 15% discount for nonprofits further with Nebil.
- Jeff confirmed the continuation of the current membership software project, promising a test run by the end of the month.

Turf Update: (Jeff, Shawn)

- Shawn and Jeff discussed the involvement of a volunteer named Scott Mitchell in improving the grassy areas of the park.
- Shawn and Jeff discussed the idea of Scott helping with aeration and overseeding, but Jeff expressed concerns about relying on volunteer schedule and availability.
- Shawn proposed that Scott's labor could be utilized for one-off tasks and suggested approaching him for aeration in the north end after the south end is opened.

It was clarified that Scott's offer of support would not cover the costs of supplies/materials, or equipment rental – only labor.

Reopening South end and Plumbing Issues: (Jeff, Liz, and Shawn)

- Deliberated on the optimal time to reopen South end after a 10-week closure, settling on April 27th to ensure stable grass growth.
- Also discussed the process of opening the gates (time of day), with Jeff sharing his experiences. Agreed to evening before.

- Addressed the issue of a leak in North end water feature, which was escalating and causing people to leave. The team agreed on the need to get the water back on as soon as possible — and considered finding and purchasing the part ourselves if needed.

Turf Watering Challenges and Solutions: (Jeff, Shawn, Liz, and Steve)

- Discussed the challenges of watering their property, including the need for constant supervision and the potential for water waste.
- Considered the possibility of implementing an automated irrigation system but were hesitant due to past difficulties and the landscaper's concerns.
- Shawn proposed a trial run of a watering system, with volunteer help, to assess the labor and time commitment. Follow up in May.

Gates:

- Shawn reported the arrival of the long-awaited Gate Springs, which he planned to install. The new gate closer utilizes a flat bar torsion spring.
- He would then evaluate the effectiveness of this solution and report in May prior to deploying on the other exterior gates.

Addressing Aggressive Dogs in Community: (Steve)

- Discussed a follow-up of the aggressive dog behavior at Westgrove.
- Steve reported that he had reached out to Fairfax County's community outreach person regarding this matter, but had not received a response.
- In the meantime, we advised to encourage reporting ALL aggressive dog incidents to the County non-emergency number, who would then relay the issue to animal control. The board (Steve) will report to the county serious incidents raised by members, should they be unwilling to.
- Liz proposed the idea of the county sending a representative to check dog tags and promote safety at the dog park. To be discussed further at a later time.
- Steve agreed to try and arrange a speaker for the upcoming season kickoff event to discuss this and other animal-related issues.

Lastly, Michelle mentioned that she had received an email from Mike with an update, which she read into the meeting for discussion.

Pilot Program Challenges for New Dog Park (Mike)

- Mike proposed a pilot program for a new dog park with 1-hour windows 4-5 times a week for 4 weeks.
- Concerns were raised about the feasibility of the pilot, particularly about managing and ensuring the separation and safety of both small and large dogs. The team agreed that these issues needed to be addressed with the small dog community and County before proceeding with the pilot.
- Challenges discussed were:
 - Raising awareness and monitoring usage for the proposed small dog park.
 - Acknowledging the need for a dedicated group to advocate for the initiative.
 - Concerns about the lack of resources to fully implement beyond the pilot and past concerns of some members that see closing the north/south gate as a “take away” from the full use of the park.
 - Jeff proposed presenting the idea to the all-member meeting to get feedback before pursuing options with the county
 - Liz suggested that Mike should continue to engage the small dog park community while they publicly announce the project's status.

Grant application for a Friends group has been submitted (Thank you, Mike!). We anticipate hearing the outcome of the grant in the June/July timeframe.

Future: Coordinate with LeeAnn on social media strategies.

North end Project and County Plan: (Liz)

The team discussed modifications made to a drawing by Adam Winn (FCPA), and unanimously agreed to reject the surprise of the decreased grass area - which was counter to most recent conversation with the County and many members of the P.A.C.K. Board.

- Concerns were raised about the potential for the grass to spread into proposed walking path and how stone dust would harm to dogs' pads from gravel.
- The group proposed presenting this County Drawing to the membership at General Meeting on April 21st, with Shawn presenting the compromised solution of building an apron and stone dust around the edges with turf in the middle.
- Steve proposed we should split the project into phases due to funding issues (water abatement, seating improvements, stone dust), while maintaining the default for the dog park to be majority a green turf dog park unless otherwise agreed upon.
- The Board also agreed that there is a need to address the standing water problem on the north side as the priority.

QR Codes and Safety

- Business card proposal presented. Implementation of QR codes on business cards for Board member to distribute for better communication and member outreach at the dog park was agreed to.
- Steve and Liz planned to create a dedicated page on the park's website with the necessary information and rules, which will be completed in early May.

Promotional Ideas

- The team also agreed to introduce 'hot dog Fridays' as a regular feature that include a caretaker table and considered the idea of a video feature for website and social for promotional purposes.

Lastly, we discussed the replacement of a dead tree near the west side.

Strategizing for Upcoming General Meeting

- Jeff was assigned to provide background information on the project.
- Shawn and Steve would discuss the county's proposal and address concerns.
- The board agreed to maintain a cohesive stance and to present a united front to the county.
 - Emphasized the importance of community involvement, and Shawn was tasked with drafting a message for the project that highlighted collective effort.
- Discussed strategy for the upcoming meeting with the county.

Additionally, Liz confirmed that she had updated the website with information about the fall seats and planned to compile an agenda for a handout at the meeting.

NEXT Board Meeting Dates and Hot Dog Friday

Thursday, May 9th
Wednesday, June 12th

They also discussed the upcoming "Hot Dog Friday" event, with plans to finalize the date after Jeff consults with his wife, Melissa. To ensure ample time for preparation, the group agreed to discuss the event further on the 8th of May.

Shawn agreed to send out invitations for both board meetings, while Liz committed to managing the event planning and caretaker table preparations.