

Westgrove Dog Park General Meeting (April 30, 2023. Sherwood Regional Library)

Liz Yap introduced herself as president to the general meeting. This is the spring general meeting (we have two per year). Introduced LeeAnn as vice-chair. Thanks to everyone for attending. Appreciate everyone's feedback.

Reminder that we have a poop bag sponsor – Pampered Pet for 2023. Saves us 1000-1200/year. Please support our sponsor and tell her you're from Westgrove!

Treasurer's report (Jeff)

Handed out financial report.

In 2023 we raised \$3,547.73 and spent \$6,163.67 so far. Don't panic – most of our expenses fall earlier in the year due to turf maintenance etc. We are in good shape. We still have \$4,627 remaining for operations; \$1,253 remaining for administration; \$1,000 remaining for fundraising. Budget does not yet include anything for projects (discussed later; supplemental budget discussion in the fall). Cash on hand right now is \$14,709.89 which is enough to fund remaining 2023 and carry us into next year as well as get started on the new project.

Question: Do people get billed for renewals? Answer: We have looked at software packages but they are too big and expensive for our group, but manual management is too much. Jeff works at a high school and has put together a team of IT-savvy students who will work on a renewal program over the summer. Jeff and Melissa keep track of who is up to date – check with them to see when your renewal comes up.

Question: Where do we get the money? Answer: General donations for no particular reason/purpose, caretakers, sustaining caretakers.

Question: How much money are we looking for? Answer: \$20 is base level/year, \$120 is sustaining caretaker level/year. Can pay via check, paypal, venmo, etc.

Question: How many sustaining caretakers do we have? Answer: We have 30 (not the same people each year necessarily, but generally the number is 30). Caretakers cover our general operations in general. We get no money from the county. The county does do some things: they cut the grass outside the fence, maintain the driveway, etc. We do everything inside the fence.

Budget this year is the same as last year. We don't anticipate any major changes. \$10,345 for operations. About half of this is ground prep and seeding. Also mowing and monthly turf maintenance and other minor repairs etc. \$1,700 for administration includes website, PO box, signs, liability insurance, fundraising events, etc.

Remember: Westgrove Pack cannot enforce or make dog park rules. County owns the dog park. People need to call county non-emergency number if there are issues.

Motion to approve budget. Seconded. Vote approves the budget.

Old Business

Turf is looking good. South side to open first week of May. Water will be turned on as well on the South Side (North side water is always on). North side will green up on its own as spring progresses.

North end project: Update from Jeff. A concept for this project was approved at October meeting. County generally favorable but wants a more detailed proposal. Park authority, stormwater management, and others will have to sign off. We already have a brick pathway and there will be a walkway from there to the existing water fixture (which has been trouble for us). The existing water fixture will be replaced with a human drinking fountain as well as all needed for the dogs. The current swale was not installed correctly – the pipe underneath it does not drop appropriately and causes flooding. We will improve this as part of the project and build a rain garden (a big pit with stones, soil, and water-loving plants). This will provide some filtration and help prevent environmental problems. Jeff believes this will end the standing water problem. The other part of this is a concrete dog pool/water feature. Will be about 8' square and about 12" deep. Will function with some sort of button to turn it on and off and automatically drain it slowly. Water will drain into the rain garden (which is good to keep the rain garden wet). Probably artificial grass around the pool to avoid mud. There will also be additional seating so people can watch their dogs. All will be ADA compliant. At some point (not this project), the walkway will be continued and we will add a shade canopy. This is the proposal that will go to the county. We will do fundraising and will also come back and ask for budget authority to fund the project after agreement is reached with the county.

Hot dog Friday: Started about 6 years ago by Melissa and Jeff. Looking for sponsors to provide hot dogs, buns, etc. Open to everyone. We ask people to make a donation while there if possible. Current plan is to start the Friday before Memorial day and end around labor day (weather permitting). Question: What does it cost to sponsor? Answer: Prices haven't been set. Reach out to Melissa or Jeff to find out. We can also accept in-kind donations (like buns, hot dogs, etc). We might also invite businesses to come and offer services for a donation to the Pack (nothing political. Must be family friendly.) NO ALCOHOL.

New Business

Gate safety: (LeeAnn, Vice-Chair) There has been concern after a dog escaped and made it to Fort Hunt road and was killed. People are leaving the exterior gate open when it MUST be shut for safety before the inner gate is open. It is NOT a courtesy to leave it open. LeeAnn is creating a committee to investigate safer gates (maybe auto-closing gates? Need to accommodate wheelchairs/walkers no matter what we choose). Please tell others if you see them leave the gate open. We are working on signage to remind people about gate safety. If anyone goes to other dog parks and sees something that might work, let us know.

Small Dog Park (Caroline) Caroline's dog got attacked by a large dog at the dog park, but he still wants to play. They have been going to Shirlington, where there are small dog parks. Fairfax county has no small dog parks. Benefits: Small dogs will play with small dogs and remain safe. Big dogs won't have the opportunity to see small dogs as prey and go after them (natural instinct). Also benefits puppies – they can be socialized comfortably with small dogs. On any given Saturday, there can be 25-30 small dogs at the Shirlington small dog park. Fairfax county should have the same opportunity for small dogs because even getting in the door at a regular dog park can be difficult for small dogs. The pack wants to help make a small dog park happen, but Westgrove might not be the best place given the master plan (never had anything allocated for small dogs, and space is being built out with existing projects). The master plan says that the park is for all dogs. If someone took a portion and made it small dogs only, we would have to amend the master plan (public hearings, etc) and that would probably take at least two years. The process would be the same whether we carved out a space for an existing park or added a new

small dog park. Any park would have to have an entrance, but probably should be dedicated to small dogs only which would require ADA compliance. Engineering could be fairly complex. Also, Westgrove often runs at or near capacity. Reducing the space for the dogs we already have might not be the best solution. Also, we can't build outside the fence because it is environmentally protected area. Other, currently non-dog space might be the better option here. Lenclair might have some space. Bucknell Park might be an option as well. Question: Could small dogs possibly have 4-5 dedicated hours a week at Westgrove? Answer: The pack doesn't have the authority to do that. Only the Park Authority could do it and they are aware of the need. We could request people respect small dog hours, but can't enforce it. Keep in mind: If there are issues with an aggressive dog, call the Fairfax County non-emergency number. We can explore the idea of restricted hours for small dogs. Maybe form a sub-committee to figure out how to do this, fundraise, etc. We also need to check with our caretakers to see how they feel. (Adding small dog hours might increase the size of the caretaker community). Caroline and Liz are going to put together a survey and send it to the dog park email list. A good beginning might be to figure out a schedule. The Pack can facilitate conversations with the Park Authority about the feasibility of a small dog park in Fairfax County (even if not at Westgrove). Moved to create a committee to further evaluate a small dog park and provide recommendations (hopefully by early June to start with restricted hours, potentially). Mike on the board volunteered to help out. Motion seconded. Voted. Motion passed.

Meeting ended 4:10 PM