

Recreation Department
Joseph Connelly, Director of Recreation

TOWN OF ARLINGTON



Recreation Department

PARK COMMISSIONERS

Shirley Canniff
Leslie Mayer
Jen Rothenberg
Phil Lasker
Scott Walker
Josh Fenollosa - Associate
Sarah Carrier- Associate

MEETING NOTICE

The Park and Recreation Commission
Tuesday, July 11, 2023
7:00 PM

Arlington Community Center – 27 Maple Street – 2nd Floor BOH Meeting Room

AGENDA

- 1) Election of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson
- 2) Field Turf Study Group Representative
- 3) Request for Tree Planting Park Ave. Water Tower – Barbara Thornton
- 4) Approval of Minutes – 6/13/2023
- 5) Comments and Items for Future Meetings:
 - a) Capital Plan Updates
- 6) Correspondence Received: Tennis Court Reservation System (N. Bonner/R. Talur),
Menotomy Off Leash Hours in Woods (D. Burden, B Cherrington, A. Arch, L. Berenberg/R. Wilstein, L. Burch, H. Colquhoun, J. Auger, J. Philbrook, S. Schussheim, M. Meter, M Varoglu)
- 7) New Business
- 8) Public Comment

Arlington Parks and Recreation Commission
Operating Charter and Protocols

I. Mission and Scope

- A. The Arlington Parks and Recreation Commission draws its authority from section 20 of the Arlington Town Manager Act, with duties defined in Massachusetts General Law Part 1, Title 7, Chapter 45, which establishes the right of a town to appoint a board of park commissioners, and defines the possible duties of that board, including the capacity to: acquire property for parks and connecting ways to parks, “lay out and improve public parks, make rules for their use and government, appoint all necessary engineers, surveyors, clerks and other officers, including a police force to act in such parks, define their powers and duties and fix their compensation and do all acts needful for the proper execution of their powers and duties. They shall have the authority given to the mayor, aldermen, selectmen, road commissioners and tree warden respectively by section seven of chapter eighty-four and by chapter eighty-seven, in places under their jurisdiction. Subject to appropriation, such boards shall also have the power to conduct park programs and recreation activities at places other than such public parks.” (G.L. c.45 §5)
- B. The mission of the Arlington Parks and Recreation Commission is to support, partner with, and bring the community’s voice to the implementation of the mission of the Recreation Director and its self-sustaining Recreation Department: providing safe, quality and affordable recreation programs and facilities for all ages and abilities.
- B. The Parks and Recreation Commission helps to preserve and improve spaces and opportunities for recreation in Arlington by undertaking the following tasks for the Town’s parks, open spaces and recreation facilities:
- Identifying needs and priorities
 - Advocating for necessary and on-going maintenance
 - Managing, reviewing, and improving project designs for upgrades
 - Fostering preservation and beautification projects
 - Prioritizing capital plan projects given the budget
 - Setting policies and priorities to balance and share resources across users
 - Reviewing, supporting, and advising on recreation programming
 - Holding public meetings and hearings
 - Approving special events
- C. Among the many items that fall within the scope of the Commission, Commission members will jointly prioritize annual goals and objectives for each fiscal year, which serve as key outcomes for that period, in coordination with the Department’s goals. These annual goals will shape priority actions and topics for Commission agendas.

II. Participation

- A. The Town Manager, subject to the approval of the Board of Selectmen, shall appoint a Park and Recreation Commission to consist of five suitably qualified persons. One of said persons shall be appointed for a term of one year, two for a term of two years, and two for a term of three years; and annually thereafter there shall be appointed by the Town Manager, subject to the approval of the Board of Selectmen, a member for a term of three years in the place of the member whose term is to expire. The members shall serve until their successors are appointed and qualified.
- B. In addition, the Town Manager appoints up to two Associate members for terms of two years, who participate fully in Commission tasks with the exception of formal voting authority or Chair/Vice-Chair positions.
- C. The following criteria are determined to be important in selecting Commission members:
- Interest or knowledge about the town's parks and/or recreational spaces and activities;
 - Availability to attend meetings and assist with projects between meetings;
 - Diverse representation of interest areas and constituencies within the town;
 - Demonstrated commitment to public engagement and open communication.
- D. The Commission works closely with the Director of Recreation to achieve all aspects of its mission.
- E. Liaisons of relevant Town Departments, Commissions, and Committees will be invited to attend and participate, as appropriate, in Commission meetings, and coordinate with the Commission regarding relevant issues. These include:
- Department of Public Works
 - Board of Selectmen
 - Planning Department
 - Finance Committee
 - Conservation Commission
 - Capital Planning Committee
 - School Committee
 - Community Preservation Committee

III. Leadership

- A. Starting July 1, members of the Commission will cycle through the roles of Chair and Vice-Chair, rotating these roles every 2-years. The initial order for this cycle will be based on seniority, with the Commission member with the most seniority who has not yet served as Chair beginning the rotation, with the second-in-seniority (who has not served as Chair) serving as Vice-Chair. Every other year, the Vice Chair will rotate to become Chair, and the next-in-seniority will become the Vice Chair. Those who have already served as Chair or Vice Chair then move to the end of the rotation. Members can opt out or delay their Chairship for extenuating reasons.
- B. Working with the Director of Recreation, tasks of the Chair include:

- Ensuring meetings are called and held in accordance with the Commission's mandate and by-laws
- Developing the draft meeting agenda to ensure that agreed upon topics are included and given sufficient and realistic times
- Circulating meeting agendas and meeting materials to all Commission members in advance of the meeting
- Calling the meeting to order and chairing the discussions consistent with required procedures
- Ensuring the meeting discussions are on-topic, productive, and interactive, balancing participation and timing
- Ensuring minutes are complete and accurate, key actions and decisions are finalized and recorded, and minutes are reviewed and approved at the next meeting
- Drafting the Annual Report for circulation to and suggestions from the Commission, and revisions based on those suggestions.
- Checking-in and coordinating with the Recreation Director regularly and as needed.

C. Tasks of the Vice-Chair include:

- Fulfill any and all tasks for the Chair when necessary
- Assist with time management during meetings to ensure that all topics are covered, by advising the Commission to move to the next topic
- Encourage full participation of members, by inviting input from quieter members before moving on
- Assist with any out-of-meeting tasks of Chair as needed or requested

D. In addition, members of the Commission will take on the role of Topic Leaders, with at least one Commission member per topic. If more than one Commission member is a Topic Leader, one Commissioner will designate the primary leader. The following is a current list of topics:

- Recreation Programming
- Capital Improvements
- Policies and Procedures
- ADA and Playground Inspections
- Special Event and Fundraising
- Field Management
- Off Leash Park and Program
- Friends of Parks/Volunteers
- Open Space Committee
- Town Master Plan
- Funding Opportunities
- Technology and Web Management
- Vision 20/20 Culture and Recreation
- Community Preservation Committee

- E. Tasks of Topic Leaders include:
- Informing Commission Chair of any items to place on agenda regarding your topic, and leading discussion of those topics at the meeting
 - Outreaching to key constituencies to keep them informed about the Commission deliberations and actively seek their input
 - Serving as Liaison to any Town or Community groups, by attending relevant meetings and reporting back to the Commission
 - Leading on any research, fact-finding, outreach, or other additional efforts on this issue
 - Responding to any community or external inquiries on the topic and reporting back to Commission
 - Notifying other relevant Committee, Department, Commission, and Board liaisons (see item II.E) of important meetings and discussions, and collecting input as needed.

IV. Decision Making

- A. The Commission will operate by majority rule, as dictated by parliamentary process. However, the Commission will make every effort to make all decisions by consensus. Consensus is defined as all members of the Committee agreeing to a final package proposal that seeks to meet diverse interests. Consent means that members can at least “accept”, however reluctantly, the package agreement that emerges. Abstaining members are not counted in the tally for determining consensus.
- B. If members disagree with the approach or solution proposed, they should make every effort to offer an alternative for consideration that will be satisfactory to all members.
- C. After sufficient deliberation, if the Commission is unable reach consensus on an issue, the Commission will vote and decide consistent with Robert’s Rules of Order. Votes will be taken and numbers for and against recorded in meeting minutes.

V. Committee Meetings

- A. The Commission undertakes its work consistent with Open Meeting Laws, Public Records Laws, and all other applicable legal requirements. All meetings of the Commission will be posted 48 hours in advance of the meeting and will be open to the public.
- B. Commission members will deliberate on agenda topics, and members of the public will be invited to share their comments and input on these topics at appropriate points in the meeting.
- C. Brief summaries of Committee meetings will be prepared by the Town and circulated to Commission members within one week of the meeting. After review and approval by the participants, meeting summaries will be made available to the public. The summaries are

not intended to be transcripts or detailed meeting minutes, but summaries of key points, issues, ideas, and decisions.

- D. The Chair will be responsible for developing draft agendas for all meetings, which will be considered draft until approved at the beginning of each Committee meeting by participants. Consistent with Open Meeting Law, no decisions can be made on any topics that were not listed on the draft agenda.

VI. Process Ground Rules

- A. In order to facilitate an open and collaborative discussion, the participants and contributing members of the public agree to abide by the following behavioral ground rules:
- Only one person will speak at a time and no one will interrupt when another person is speaking.
 - Members will avoid side conversations and distractions from mobile phones and other personal electronic devices
 - Each person will express his or her own views, or his or her organization's and constituent's views, rather than speaking for other Group participants or on behalf of the Group as a whole.
 - Each person will help contribute to an environment that is safe, respectful, and constructive.
 - Each person will refrain from making personal attacks, questioning integrity, calling names, and other such negative behavior
 - In order to move conversation forward, each person will make every effort to stay on track with the agenda and avoid grandstanding and digressions.

- b. Ex-officio Non-voting Members:
 - The Town’s Environmental Planner / Conservation Agent; and
 - The Town’s Recreation Director
 - c. Quorum

A majority of voting members shall constitute a quorum, and decisions shall be based on the vote of a simple majority of those committee members present and voting.
 - d. Organization and First Meeting

The initial meeting of the Study Committee shall be convened by the Director of Health and Human Services or her designee, and the first order of business shall be the self-organization of the Study Committee through the election of one or more chairs from among the voting members, whose responsibility shall be to convene and preside over all future meetings. The Committee shall also elect a clerk, whose duties shall include the proper posting of meeting agendas and minutes. The Study Committee shall designate any other officer as it sees fit.
2. Committee Charge and Reporting
- a. The Committee shall review and report on artificial turf: its health, safety, and environmental impacts, and potential mitigation measures, and a comparison of artificial turf to natural turf fields.
 - b. The Study Committee shall complete its work and report its findings and any recommendations to Town Meeting and the Select Board no later than 30 days prior to the 2024 Annual Town Meeting or to any earlier Special Town Meeting if the report is ready earlier.
3. Dissolution Committee
- The Committee will be dissolved concurrent with the dissolution of the 2024 Annual Town Meeting, unless there is a vote of Town Meeting to effectuate an earlier dissolution of the Committee or to extend the Committee’s charge.

**A true copy of the vote under
Article 12 of the Warrant for the
Annual Town Meeting of the
Town of Arlington at the session
held on May 10, 2023.**

Park & Recreation Commission appointee to the artificial turf study group

Wynelle Evans <evco7@rcn.com>

Wed 6/21/2023 1:17 PM

To: Shirley Canniff <scanniff@town.arlington.ma.us>; jfenollosa@gmail.com <jfenollosa@gmail.com>; phil_lasker@yahoo.com <phil_lasker@yahoo.com>; Leslie Mayer <lmayer@town.arlington.ma.us>; Jen Rothenberg <jrothenberg@town.arlington.ma.us>
Cc: Joe Connelly <jconnelly@town.arlington.ma.us>; Greg Christiana <gchristiana@town.arlington.ma.us>

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

Dear Members of the Park & Recreation Commission:

The sub-divided Benson Stamps substitute motion to Article 12, passed by Town Meeting, establishes an artificial turf study group. The substitute motion is here, FYI:
<https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showdocument?id=65387&t=638189848092983001> Part A applies.

As one of the people behind Article 12, I am of course interested in both the appointments to the study group and its progress.

Can you please let me know where the Commission is in this process: whether you have yet appointed a member; if so, whom; and what your next steps will be?

Thank you for your work on behalf of our Town.

Best wishes,
Wynelle

Wynelle Evans
TMM, Pct. 14
781.859.9291 cell
evco7@rcn.com

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Re: New Trees for Park Ave Water Tower Site

Barbara Thornton <barbarathornton1@gmail.com>

Fri 6/23/2023 3:09 PM

To: Jen Rothenberg <jrothenberg@town.arlington.ma.us>; Shirley Canniff <scanniff@town.arlington.ma.us>; Leslie Mayer <lmayer@town.arlington.ma.us>; Joe Connelly <jconnelly@town.arlington.ma.us>

Cc: Elisabeth Carr-Jones <elisabeth@carr-jones.com>; Susan Stamps <susan.stamps@comcast.net>; Keith Schnebly <keith.schnebly@verizon.net>; Beth Melofchik <bethmelofchik@gmail.com>; Mary Ellen Aronow <mearlington@gmail.com>; David Morgan <dmorgan@town.arlington.ma.us>; Tim Lecuivre <tlecuivre@town.arlington.ma.us>

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To: Parks & Recreation Commission

I'm just following up on an email sent last week.

I didn't make it clear that I was writing to the commission members of the Parks & Recreation Commission. Sorry!

I only have three email addresses for members and I neglected to copy Joe Connolly. I hope this preface makes the following email, copied from the one sent 6/14, more clear. We recognize the role that Parks & Rec plays in the Water Tower area and we hope the Commission will support this request.

from 6/14:

A group of us are interested in developing a small, shaded sitting area in the Heights and are looking at the green space facing downtown Boston on the water tower site.

There is almost no public sitting space, a "parklet", for the "Heights" area. The open space at Dallin school is heavily used. The Poet's corner site is underdeveloped and geared toward open field use.

We would like to see some tall shade trees and benches that could form a sitting area for people to gather, chat and ponder the skyline.

I have just met with the Tree Committee and they have three elm trees to contribute. They seem very enthusiastic about the opportunity. But they are mindful that the Park and Rec Commission controls a significant piece of the circumference around the water tower. So the process is delayed until I can bring back a report from your group.

Is there an opportunity for me to be on your next agenda?

Or would it be easier to explore this in email?

I would very much like to have the support of Parks and Rec in this endeavor!

Best regards,
Barbara Thornton
TMM P16

+1 617-699-2213

blog: AssetStewardship.com

twitter: [@assetstewards](https://twitter.com/assetstewards)

linkedin: [Barbara Thornton](https://www.linkedin.com/in/BarbaraThornton)

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On Wed, Jun 14, 2023 at 9:47 PM Barbara Thornton <barbarathornton1@gmail.com> wrote:

A group of us are interested in developing a small, shaded sitting area in the Heights and are looking at the green space facing downtown Boston on the water tower site.

There is almost no public sitting space, a "parklet", for the "Heights" area. The open space at Dallin school is heavily used. The Poet's corner site is underdeveloped and geared toward open field use.

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Best regards,
Barbara Thornton
TMM P.16

+1 617-699-2213

blog: AssetStewardship.com

twitter: [@assetstewards](https://twitter.com/@assetstewards)

linkedin: [Barbara Thornton](#)

Re: New Trees for Park Ave Water Tower Site

Barbara Thornton <barbarathornton1@gmail.com>

Sat 6/24/2023 3:33 PM

To: Joe Connelly <jconnelly@town.arlington.ma.us>

Cc: Jen Rothenberg <jrothenberg@town.arlington.ma.us>; Shirley Canniff <scanniff@town.arlington.ma.us>; Leslie Mayer <lmayer@town.arlington.ma.us>; Elisabeth Carr-Jones <elisabeth@carr-jones.com>; Susan Stamps <susan.stamps@comcast.net>; Keith Schnebly <keith.schnebly@verizon.net>; Beth Melofchik <bethmelofchik@gmail.com>; Mary Ellen Aronow <meaarlington@gmail.com>; David Morgan <dmorgan@town.arlington.ma.us>; Tim Lecuivre <tlecuivre@town.arlington.ma.us>

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Thanks Joe!-

Elisabeth is an architect and I'm a planner - between us we could probably provide the design information you requested - but it would be jumping the gun a bit! We know that there are three agencies that have oversight on the water tower area: MWRA?, Tree Committee and Parks & Rec. We received a very encouraging response from the Tree Committee and the offer of three trees they have now, elms I believe?

It sounds like you are interested!? We are hoping to establish a shaded area for sitting in the location that faces toward the Boston skyline. I think it would be nice to have this pushed back as far from the curb and as close to the water tower as is feasible.

If Parks and Rec is interested, please let me know if we need to also go to the MWRA before proceeding?

Our next steps will likely be an article in YA and in the A-list to let people in the area know and solicit comments.

Thanks,
Barbara Thornton

+1 617-699-2213

blog: AssetStewardship.com

twitter: [@assetstewards](https://twitter.com/assetstewards)

linkedin: [Barbara Thornton](#)

On Sat, Jun 24, 2023 at 8:54 AM Joe Connelly <jconnelly@town.arlington.ma.us> wrote:

Hi Barbara,

Can you send me more details such as location at the water tower and types of trees, benches, etc.?

I can add this to an upcoming agenda.

Joseph Connelly, M.Ed.
Director of Recreation
Town of Arlington
781-316-3889

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ARLINGTON PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINTUES

June 13, 2023

The Town of Arlington Park and Recreation Commission came to order in the main meeting room at the Community Center on Tuesday June 13, 2023 at 7:00pm.

Commission Members: Phil Lasker, Leslie Mayer, Shirley Canniff and Jen Rothenberg. Scott Walker, Josh Fenollosa and Sarah Carrier were not in attendance. Recreation Director Joe Connelly was also present as was Conservation Commission liaison Nathaniel Stevens.

Members of the Public: Elaine Crowder, Liz Reisberg, Mustafa Varoglu

Preliminary Matter: Phil Lasker, Park & Recreation Commission chair, took formal attendance and welcomed anticipated speakers and members of the public to the Recreation Commission meeting.

Capital Project Updates

Spy and Parmenter Playgrounds

- Complete and open
- KZLA has reviewed punch-list items
- Gate repairs and mulch/wood fiber cleanup at Spy Pond
- Cutting grass hills at Parmenter (twice a year)

Robbins Playground

- Project anticipated to go out to bid by July 30
- Enter into Central Register July 6
- Specs anticipated to be available July 10
- Walkthrough July 17
- Construction anticipated to begin beginning of September
- Mr. Connelly will email all information to the Commissioners for review

Arlington Reservoir Phase II

- Replantings and berm repairs
- Tripping hazards are being addressed – lifeguard chair and exposed pipe
- Funds will be used to extend the irrigation system, Black Diamond will provide a quote in the fall
- Ms. Canniff suggested adding more tables on an accessible surface since grass is struggling to grow
- Mr. Connelly shared that 26 lifeguards have been hired and noted that many teenagers' first job has been with the Arlington Recreation Department

Stratton, Peirce, Bishop

- Punchlist complete
- Line striping at all schools will be done after school lets out for the summer

- Ms. Canniff commented on the unkept state of the Bishop garden, Mr. Connelly will reach out to the Principal
- The Commission discussed the possibility of turning the location into a Community Garden

Hurd Field Project

- Scoreboard anticipated mid-July
- Plantings on hold
- Water bottle filling station sensor has been adjusted
- Ms. Mayer noted that there have been reports of irrigation issued that may require adjustments to prevent continuous spraying into Mill Brook

Arlington Court Needs Assessment

- Focus areas based on public feedback; Buzzell, North Union, Summer Street, Florence and Crosby

Hills Mountain Biking Project

- Approved
- CPA funding available July 1

Menotomy Rocks Park Playground/Picnic Area

- Committed to design paid for with ARPA funding, FY24
- Special CPA request at fall Town Meeting for construction

Parallel Design

- Representative Sean Garballey has secured \$100K in state funding for FY24 which will be used for design. Parallel is state-owned property.
- Full project slated for FY25.
- The Commission discussed the pros and cons of bidding Menotomy and Parallel separately vs together. Mr. Connelly will draft two separate RFPs.

Ms. Crowder inquired about the Hill's Hill project tree survey required by CPA. Ms. Mayer confirmed that the tree inventory is being conducted during the design phase.

Mr. Connelly shared that Capital season begins in August/September. The Commission will discuss long term plans at July's Commission meeting. Will also discuss the future of Poet's Corner. He noted that all hazards at Poet's playground have been closed.

Ms. Reisberg asked about the location selection for the new Menotomy Rocks Park playground. Mr. Connelly stated that potential locations will be shared during the design phase.

Ms. Mayer noted the competing interests of the State Access Board and the Conservation Commission. While ConCom advocates for mulch, the SAB has determined that mulch is not an accessible surface. Mr. Stevens inquired about the use of FlexiPave as an alternative. Mr. Connelly explained that while

FlexiPave makes for a good pathway, the lack of cushioning makes it a safety issue for playgrounds. The Commission will further discuss the necessary balance between safety, accessibility, maintenance, environmental impact, and cost.

Playgrounds and Gathering Spaces Discussion

Ms. Mayer

- Presented a chart she created showing the walking and driving distance between all the playgrounds in Arlington.
- Changing safety codes leads to more “unsafe” playground elements.
- Increased use by “storefront preschools” which do not have their own outdoor space.
- Conduct a maintenance assessment to determine if increased traffic is contributing to overuse. Possible need for permitting and scheduling.
- Neighborhood parenting groups contribute to decision making by competing for priority.
- Identify possible restrictions on location use.
- Suggested using Vision 20/20 data.

Ms. Rothenberg

- Citing maintenance concerns, determine if all playgrounds need to be replaced.
- Identify which locations to be used as gathering spaces versus playgrounds.

Mr. Lasker

- Look at the proximity of parks to other parks.
- Combine gathering spaces with smaller playgrounds with 1 to 2 elements.
- Identify parks/playgrounds that should be considered “off-limits” for elimination. Examples: schools, Robbins, Reservoir.

Ms. Canniff

- Described the multi-generational benefits of gathering spaces within playgrounds that she has observed at Florence Playground.

Mr. Connelly

- Useful life of playgrounds, 8-10 years, leads to constant cycle of renovations.
- Use of “pocket parks” as gathering spaces rather than playgrounds.
- Will look into policies of surrounding towns.
- Notice to preschools to build maintenance fees into tuition costs.
- Will distribute playground list to the Commission to review and provide feedback.

Action items :

1. List of highest use/priority locations

2. Review GIS layers
3. Targeted survey to coincide with Vision 20/20 (distributed with census each January)
4. Prepare for Capital requests to be submitted in August/September

Ms. Reisberg requested the park/playground maps be made more accessible to the public with more interactive features showing the amenities of each location.

- Ms. Canniff noted that all the requested information is available to the public on the town website.
- Ms. Rothenberg demonstrated a Google search for Ms. Reisberg. The first search result provided a link to all the information Ms. Reisberg requested.
- Mr. Connelly advised that every Recreation Department brochure distributed for the past 20+ years has included a list of locations and amenities.
- The Commission can request that lines be added to the existing links, but the Commission does not maintain the website.

Approval of Minutes:

Ms. Rothenberg motioned to approve the minutes of May 16, 2023, as amended, seconded by Ms. Canniff. Approved 4-0.

Ms. Rothenberg motioned to approve the minutes of May 30, 2023, as amended, seconded by Ms. Mayer. Approved 3-0 with Mr. Lasker abstaining from the vote.

Comments and Items for Future Meetings:

- a) Selecting Mountain Bike design. Mr. Connelly will send the draft RFP to the Commission for review. Interviews will be scheduled for August. Public input sessions will be scheduled for the fall.
- b) Summer meeting dates – July 11, August 8. A second meeting may be added to August to conduct interviews.

Correspondence Received:

Mustafa Varoglu sent email correspondence regarding off-leash dog concerns. Mr. Varoglu was in attendance to share his experiences and concerns about off-leash dogs, primarily in the woods. He requested support from the Commission to enforce off-leash time and spaces. He also requested additional signage to be posted in the park. Mr. Varoglu also shared that he has been threatened by dog owners when he has requested that they leash their dogs.

- Mr. Connelly confirmed that new signage has already been delivered and will be installed once the sign posts are delivered. The Commission met today with ACO and Captain Flynn to plan for additional brochure distribution and ACO meet/greet sessions. The ACO has reported that she is ticketing dog owners for violations of the off-leash dog policies.
- Ms. Rothenberg – The Commission continues to have meetings with the new ACO and Captain Flynn to discuss enforcement. She noted the conflicting groups, some wanting more off-leash hours with some wanting less or none.

The Commission will further discuss a suggestion to fence in the current MRP playground area to be used as a dog park.

New Business: Mr. Connelly will add an agenda item for a future meeting to discuss the Bishop Garden and new Community Garden spaces.

Open Forum – Public Comment:

Ms. Crowder stated that she was unable to locate the three bushes she initially brought to Mr. Connelly's attention. She amended her request to remove the multi-floral rose bushes at McLennan Park between the pond and the fences. The rose bushes are identified on the Massachusetts Invasive Species list. Mr. Connelly will schedule another walk-through with DPW and contact Black Diamond for an estimate. Ms. Crowder suggested planting smaller, native bushes noting that Karin Turer's son has a native plant garden.

Ms. Mayer motioned to adjourn at 9:03pm, seconded by Ms. Canniff. Approved 4-0.

The Arlington Park & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes were respectfully submitted by Deanna Stacchi.

Improvements to Tennis/Pickleball Court Reservation System

Nick Bonner <bonner1040@gmail.com>

Mon 6/26/2023 12:56 PM

To: Joe Connelly <jconnelly@town.arlington.ma.us>

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

Dear Executive Director,

I am writing to express concerns about the use and reservation of our local tennis/pickleball courts at Crosby, Grove, and Spy Pond parks. While the PlayLocal app serves as a convenient tool for reserving courts, a notable discrepancy between court reservations and actual usage has arisen.

Unfortunately, the current system has led to a scenario where courts appear fully booked, yet upon inspection, often sit unused. On multiple occasions, despite a 100% reservation rate, I have documented actual utilization at a mere 25%. Further exacerbating this issue are town programs that reserve all the courts for extended periods, but only use a fraction of them.

These conditions create a false perception of court unavailability, discouraging residents from engaging in these outdoor activities.

To rectify these issues and improve our community's access to these facilities, I propose the following potential solutions to these problems

- Instituting a small \$3-5 fee for reservations.
- Convert less frequently used tennis courts into pickleball courts, as two pickleball courts serving four players each can fit into the space of one tennis court.
- Introducing a policy to penalize no-shows.
- Enforcing existing rules prohibiting tennis professionals from reserving courts for paid lessons.
- Reducing the number of reservations a single individual can make each week.
- Reservation Windows: Implement specific time frames for making reservations to avoid far-in-advance bookings and reduce unused reservations.
- Peak and Off-Peak Times: Differentiate between peak and off-peak times, applying stricter reservation rules during peak periods, such as reservation fees or limits on consecutive hours.
- Walk-in Play at Outdoor Parks: Allocate some courts or specific times for walk-in play to always have courts available for spontaneous players.
- Reservation Confirmation: Establish a system of reservation confirmation (like an SMS verification) a few hours prior to the reserved time, canceling and freeing up reservations that are not confirmed.
- Increase Transparency: Publish real-time court utilization data online, allowing residents to see the actual use of courts versus reserved times.
- Rewards for Compliance: Encourage consistent adherence to reservations by offering a reward system, such as priority booking, extended play times, or reduced reservation fees.

I am confident that these suggestions will significantly enhance the availability and usability of our

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tennis and pickleball courts. I appreciate your attention to this important community matter and remain hopeful that we will witness positive changes under your leadership.

Make it a great day,

Nick Bonner

Cell: 440-989-0444

Court reservations for sports

Raghavendra Talur <raghavendra.talur@gmail.com>

Mon 6/26/2023 1:43 PM

To: Joe Connelly <jconnelly@town.arlington.ma.us>

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

Dear Executive Director,

As a devoted Arlington resident and sports enthusiast, I'm reaching out regarding the PlayLocal app's efficiency related to our tennis and pickleball court reservations at Crosby, Grove, and Spy Pond parks. I've observed that there is a disparity between reservations and actual court usage.

Our courts seem to be overbooked but remain largely vacant. My informal investigations reveal that the usage is only about a quarter of the full reservation capacity. Moreover, there are instances when all courts are held by town programs, while the actual usage is a fraction of the booked slots.

This overbooking phenomenon creates an illusion of court unavailability, which in turn may discourage sports-loving residents from enjoying these facilities. I have some suggestions that could help streamline the reservation process:

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| Introduce reservation windows to prevent far-advanced bookings and curb unused reservations. | Differentiate between peak and off-peak hours with stricter reservation rules during peak hours. | Set aside certain times for walk-in players, ensuring spontaneous play is possible. | Develop a confirmation system to cancel and free up unconfirmed reservations. | Increase transparency by publishing real-time court usage data online. | Incentivize rule-compliance with rewards for those who consistently honor their reservations. |
|--|--|---|---|--|---|

Furthermore, consider these enhancements:

- | | | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------|--|---|
| Charge a modest reservation fee to dissuade casual bookings. | Convert lesser-used tennis courts into pickleball courts. | Penalize reservation no-shows. | Reinforce rules against tennis pros using courts for paid lessons. | Limit the number of reservations per individual per week. |
|--|---|--------------------------------|--|---|

I believe these steps will help optimize court availability and encourage more residents to enjoy our tennis and pickleball courts. Your leadership is critical in bringing about these changes, and I trust that you'll give this matter your earnest attention.

Best Regards,

20

Menotomy Rocks Park - dog leash rules

Doug Burden <dougburden65@gmail.com>

Wed 6/14/2023 9:12 PM

To: Joe Connelly <jconnelly@town.arlington.ma.us>

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

Dear Mr. Connelly,

Thank you for your service to our wonderful town. I'm writing as a 25-year Arlington resident, all within steps of MRP. My wife and I raised 3 children through the public schools and I coached hundreds of kids in soccer and hockey.

I write in favor of extending the Off-leash window to include the woods. We used the park regularly for 23 years without a dog. A few times I finger wagged at off leash dogs in the woods, but never complained in the moment, nor even thought about submitting a complaint to the town. Now, we have had a dog for the last two years. The Off-leash time is a god-send, a source of incredible joy for the dogs. Further, I've come to appreciate that dogs benefit enormously from exploration time through the woods, and have not witnessed any incidents of off leash dogs that make the case in favor of the No Off-leash rule in the woods. Like I did for 23 years, people who don't want to encounter dogs in the woods can come at another time.

Thank you for your consideration, as I know you have to balance competing views.

Sincerely,

Doug Burden

44 Brantwood Road

21

Why Menotomy is such a great place to walk the dog

barbara cherington <bcherington@yahoo.com>

Thu 6/15/2023 7:45 PM

To: Joe Connelly <jconnelly@town.arlington.ma.us>

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Hello Joe:

I'm a retired woman who has lived in Arlington for 24 years. I have been walking my dog for 12 years at Menotomy Park, around the pond, then taking the loop through the woods and back to the car. The morning off-leash hours have been a blessing for the dog and me because it gives him the chance to sniff here and there and enjoy meeting other dogs at his leisure. At some point during our last 12 years, I saw a sign go up that dogs weren't allowed off-leash in the woods, and was surprised by that. My dog has never ventured off by himself, and I knew he instantly obeyed my verbal commands, so I always felt comfortable having him off-leash. I can understand the pressure of so many dogs in such a dense suburban area, but in all the years I've walked in those woods and around the pond, I've never once witnessed a dog misbehaving. Perhaps I've just been lucky but it just hasn't been my experience that dogs run wild in the park. I just wanted to let you know that I appreciate the park and its beauty, and hope that you know that at least for this old lady, the park has been nothing but tranquil and beautiful and other dogs and their owners nothing but respectful and well-behaved.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

Barbara Cherington
53 Mount Vernon Street
Arlington, MA 02476

22

Menotomy Rocks park off leash hours

Adria Arch <adriaarch@gmail.com>

Fri 6/16/2023 12:39 PM

To: Joe Connelly <jconnelly@town.arlington.ma.us>

Cc: Elliot Eichen <elliott@nearts.com>

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Dear Joe,

Here are my two cents on the crackdown on off leash dogs in the woods.

I have been walking my dog Bisbee and now my new dog, Bella, at Menotomy Rocks Park almost every day since 2011 and I cannot tell you what it has meant for me, my family, and our dogs to enjoy this precious resource. I have met many new friends in this strong and lovely community of people and dogs. To be able to walk in the woods, unleashed or leashed, with my dog, is why I come to the park. It is a magical place, and I treasure it. Our family is part of the Friends group, and if I ever left Arlington, the Rocks would be the one thing that I would miss more than anything else.

We do walk in the park unleashed. Because it is wonderful - the sights and smells, and to see our dogs enjoying and mostly staying on the paths is a gift. To make most of us who walk at Menotomy "illegal" for walking unleashed in the woods, no matter the time of day, seems simply ridiculous. Why not just make the same morning hours for off leash in the woods that is also true for the flat areas around the pond? Not only that, but during the summer when the pond becomes unsafe, it is dangerous to walk our dogs around it. Dogs will inevitably go in, drink the water, and possibly become very sick.

Please please please stop the punitive actions, and instead I beg the Commission to be realistic.

Many thanks for hearing me out.

Cordially and respectfully,
Adria Arch

--

www.adriaarch.com

23

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Dog community in MRP

LB **Lorri Berenberg** <lorriberenberg@gmail.com>
To: Joe Connelly

🔒 🍷 ↩ ⏪ ➦ ⋮

Sat 6/17/2023 6:17 PM

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Dear Mr. Connelly,

We have been Arlington residents since 1996 and have lived with our family on Woodland Street, just around the corner from Menotomy Rocks Park. Before we got our first dog in 2002, the only people in Arlington that we knew were our immediate neighbors and families whose children went to school with our son. Through the dog community at MRP, we have met a diverse group of people from all the neighborhoods of Arlington. Many of these people have become close friends. We share a love of the park, our dogs, Arlington's wildlife, and green spaces. Every visit to the park includes meeting up with someone we know through our dogs.

We understand that others are writing to you in support of including the use of the woods during off-leash hours. We wish to add our voices to this request. More importantly, we are writing to counter the complaints you have been receiving. The people who bring their dogs to MRP for off leash hours are responsible dog owners. It has been our personal experience that 99% of the dogs are well behaved, non aggressive, and trained to respond to voice commands. Those of us who are veteran dog owners help new dog owners by exchanging training techniques. The dog community at MRP is welcoming and respectful to all visitors in the park.

It is our hope that the Commission will come to understand the imbalance between the complaints versus the positive experiences enjoyed by the dogs, their owners, and the non-dog owners who comprise the special community that has developed over the years in the Park.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lorri Berenberg and Rob Wilstein
13 Woodland Street
781-641-4011

↩ Reply ➦ Forward

24

off leash at Menotomy Rocks Park

Lyra Burch <lyraburch@gmail.com>

Thu 6/22/2023 1:06 PM

To: Joe Connelly <jconnelly@town.arlington.ma.us>

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Hi Joe,

I am an Arlington resident and dog owner living on Jason Street near MRP. We moved to Arlington during covid and a big reason for choosing our house was the close proximity to Menotomy. We got our dog in the spring of 2021 and have enjoyed many happy hours with her in the park. I am a runner and love doing laps with her in the woods in the morning. The recent enforcement of the leash rules in the woods has been a big disappointment to our family. I strongly encourage you to consider dogs being able to be off leash in the woods during the 6-9 am hours. Over the past two years I have witnessed many happy and responsible dogs and owners enjoying the woods during the morning hours and I hope we can continue to do so without fear of getting a fine.

Thanks for your time, Lyra Burch

25

Menotomy Rocks Park: Dogs

fabbyhelen@helencolquhoun.com <fabbyhelen@helencolquhoun.com>

Mon 6/19/2023 10:23 AM

To: Joe Connelly <jconnelly@town.arlington.ma.us>

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Dear Mr Connelly

I walk my dog once or twice a day in Menotomy Rocks Park (once during the morning off-leash hours and again, on-leash, in the afternoon) and live nearby.

I believe that there was a recent Town Meeting at which the subject of off-leash dogs in the Park was discussed. I heard that there were various views expressed on the side of keeping dogs on-leash in the woods and I would like to express some views in support of allowing dogs off-leash in the woods during off-leash hours (06.00h to 09.00h daily).

- During off-leash hours, there are almost no people in the woods other than dog-walkers. There are, however, non-dog-walking people who enjoy walking around the pond with the off-leash dogs during early morning: I have never seen any problems with this arrangement.
- Whatever risk or danger people associate with an off-leash dog, it is illogical to suppose that the risk/danger is amplified when the dog is in the woods. Those perceived risks also exist when dogs are off-leash around the pond and on the three grassy areas. Indeed I might argue that any risks are greater on the fields as groups of dogs may misbehave as a pack when they are all playing together.
- Most dog owners are responsible and keep their dog(s) under control when they are off-leash. In the woods, most dogs walk around the paths with their owners with the occasional foray into the woods to follow a scent or a squirrel. There are some dogs that range further, but it is uncommon to see a dog that is not under the owner's control.
- An obvious question is what risks do people imagine would come to pass if dogs were allowed off-leash in the woods during off-leash hours?
 - I have heard that a cyclist complains that dogs harass him as he cycles in the woods. I know this gentleman (we work for the same company) and he spends perhaps 5 minutes each morning cycling through the woods on his way to work. He is vocal but I have not seen him being harassed by dogs; when my dog was a puppy, she used to bark at him and try to chase the bike – but this occurred while she was on-leash, being trained. Now she is merely curious if he stops to say hello on his way through.
 - I have also heard that abutters complain that dogs stray into their gardens from the woods. There must be a similar number of abutters around the currently permissible off-leash area as there are around the woods so I am curious to know who complains, if anyone, about dogs straying into their yards or doing damage in some way.
 - The key is obviously that dogs need to be under control wherever they are: a dog determined to run away and do mischief will do that while legitimately off-leash around the pond so restricting dogs in the woods is not a logical way to prevent this.
- There has certainly been an uptick in dog ownership during and since the pandemic and it is true that many dog owners ignore the off-leash ban in the woods in the early morning. Rather than citing this as evidence of irresponsibility, I suggest that it is evidence that having dogs off-leash in the woods during off-leash hours over a period of 2-3 years has not resulted in any perceived risks being realized and that, in general, dog walkers are responsible and keep their dogs under control.

I hope that we could move to a position of allowing dogs off-leash in the woods during off-leash hours (when there are truly very few people in the woods other than those with dogs). Citations/fines would be reserved for owners who do not keep their dogs under control, as is the case in other off-leash areas of the park. What is the mechanism by which we could make such a proposal to the Town?

Kind regards

Helen (Colquhoun)

26

MRP Dog Walking ideas

Jane Auger <jane_auger@pobox.com>

Thu 6/15/2023 1:42 PM

To: Joe Connelly <jconnelly@town.arlington.ma.us>

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Good day, Mr. Connelly.

I'm writing in support of revisiting the issue of dogs in the woods in Menotomy Rocks Park, as well as expanding off leash hours. I know from living here for over 25 years, that the same people complain about dogs over and over again, and the people who enjoy dogs never comment.

My main idea is that "dog density", if you will, would be more spread out and not as much of an issue if you included the woods in the offleash area. For example, many people do not bring their dogs to play in the field, because older dogs do not benefit from that. Imagine that there are 10 dogs in the park at one time. If they can only be in the field, then you have 10 dogs in the field chasing around and that often keeps older dogs from entering the space. If they could be spread out through the park, the dogs may never even see one another or encounter any human beings. When dogs walk on any of the paths, they are kept out of the way of bikes and pedestrians by their owners.

Secondly, the dog walkers are the ones who routinely pick up trash, glass, and other people's detritus. The casual visitors to the park have a greater tendency to overfill the trash barrels, which is inappropriate, rather than packing it out. Most dog walkers are in the park during morning hours that already have limited use by the general public, -and are thereby often the first ones to spot signs of trouble like broken tree limbs, small fires, and other problems.

Dog walkers are possibly the most regular park users, as they come to the park in all kinds of inclement weather, and are there even in rain and snow.

The loss of the playground is a separate issue, but will certainly reduce MRP as a little child attraction.

I know you have heard all these things before, but wanted to send a letter with a more "pawsitive" spin than the ones you've been receiving.

Sincerely,

Jane AUger,
37 Ottawa Rd
MRP neighbor

27.

Off leash hours

Julia Thomson-Philbrook <julia.thomson.philbrook@gmail.com>

Thu 6/15/2023 11:31 AM

To: Joe Connelly <jconnelly@town.arlington.ma.us>

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

Hi Joe,

My name is Julia Thomson-Philbrook. We met earlier this year when the Arlington Education Foundation was organizing their 5k. It was a smashing success, thanks again for your help!

I am writing today because of the constant noise about off leash hours in Arlington. I am a bit confused that the Commission is so concerned. I walk all over Menotomy park every morning with my two dogs (one of whom remains on leash as she is a puppy and learning recall; the other of which is older and has great recall so can be off leash). It's unfortunate that one biker seems to believe he is at constant risk from our dogs. I would suggest to the Commission that dogs barking is generally not aggressive behavior. It's also normal for dogs to want to say hi to people they pass - and this happens on leash as well as off leash.

I am speaking in favor of off leash hours between 6-9AM. The division at Menotomy between woods and non-woods makes no sense to me, and I have never heard a good argument in support of this division (including for abutters - I never see dogs anywhere near abutter properties unless they are in the field below, which of course is fine for off leash prior to 9AM. There are more abutters below than there are in the woods). From my perspective, responsible dog owners - the vast majority of people using Menotomy in the morning - are being targeted by fellow community members for constant complaints. And as a taxpayer in Arlington, I am also strongly against using valuable town resources - including possible overtime? - to police this policy for reasons which are, in my opinion, largely nonexistent.

I would also encourage the Commission to consult with neighboring police departments, many of which have very generous off leash hours (eg, Lexington), to better understand how to manage complaints with the strong desire of communities for off leash hours.

Thanks for listening -

Talk soon!

Julia

26

letter re: Menotomy Rocks Park

Shelley Schussheim <sschussheim@gmail.com>

Tue 6/13/2023 2:12 PM

To: Joe Connelly <jconnelly@town.arlington.ma.us>

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

Mr. Connolly,

I am writing to describe the community of dog walkers in the woods at Menotomy Rocks Park (MRP) and to ask that this information be considered in deciding about off leash hours in the wooded area.

I am an abutter on the west side of the park, adjacent to the woods. I have been walking through the park practically every morning, rain or shine, for the past 30 years. I also walk through the park most afternoons. I've done this at times when I have had a dog and for long stretches of time when I have not had a dog. I am now in my late 60's, live alone, in a house that is way too big for me and is challenging to afford. But I can't imagine choosing to live anywhere that did not provide me with easy access to MRP.

The park has provided me with a cherished community. I regularly meet people of all ages from all walks of life. This intergenerational group gathers every day in all sorts of combinations and we walk and we talk incessantly. The chatter is fluid, the topics are diverse, the sharing is open and authentic. As you might imagine, the need for these connections heightened during the pandemic. For some of us, this was the only human contact we had, and for others it was certainly the only contact we had outside of our families or small pods. We desperately relied on one another and forged even stronger bonds. These are not casual relationships. We band together if someone is in a personal crisis. We care for each other's dogs, babysit each other's children, share our homes during power outages, go camping together, share meals and drinks, help with one another's gardens and house repairs, and so on and so on.

Housing communities have been built to achieve what we have organically created at MRP. It's a beautiful thing. We wake every morning excited to face the day and to see the people we care about. In fact, a number of us have casually talked about writing a book, or creating a podcast or a film to share what we call the "power of the park". But the recent enforcement of the no off-leash in the woods rule has felt so negative, sapping so much joy from our experiences. We hope this won't be the closing chapter in our telling of the "power of the park".

Our dogs are used to being off-leash and are well behaved. Those who know their dogs need to be on leash, do so. The dynamic between dogs while on leash can be quite different, and sometimes aggressive. For this reason, while rules are being enforced, more people gravitate to the field so dogs can be off leash, but this can create a riskier situation if there are too many dogs. Despite the long standing rules, there have been decades of off-leash dog walking in the MRP woods. In my 30 years of spending time in the park, hundreds of thousands of dog walks have taken place and I am unaware of more than an imperceptible number of incidents that could have put anyone at risk. That's amazing.

The dog walkers love MRP and want it to be a safe and welcoming place. We believe that opening the woods in the morning would be a small concession for those who are concerned about off-leash dogs, but will restore the sense of ease and acceptance for this precious community.

Thanks for your consideration. And please know that the current AOC (I forgot her name) has been super friendly and reasonable, which we greatly appreciate.

Shelley Schussheim
High Haith Road

Shelley Schussheim
sschussheim@gmail.com

29

Menotomy dogs: Thanks and a request

Marie Meter <mmeteer@mac.com>

Sat 6/10/2023 8:26 AM

To: Joe Connelly <jconnelly@town.arlington.ma.us>

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Hi Joe,

I want to thank you and all of those in the Arlington Town government who work hard to give us such incredible resources like Menotomy Rocks Park. I've lived just a couple blocks from the park for over 30 years and have been so thankful to be near such a beautiful open space. For the past 14 years, I've been there nearly every day with my dog Lucy (who is now a lot slower than when we got her) and for the past 3 years with my little dog, who loves to play chase with her friends in the park.

My real appreciation, though, came with the pandemic. While so many people felt lonely and locked up in their houses, I had an escape: a beautiful open space and a community to hold me and let me be a part of holding them. Discussions of off leash areas and hours are always centered on the dogs (who do love it). But its real value is for us owners. There are very few places we can really connect with people who aren't in our immediate family, friend, and work groups. Parks are one of them. But in general we don't walk up to strangers and talk to them in a park. However, we do when we have dogs (or children at a playground as a recent NYTimes article on community pointed out). Walking and talking are what we do. It starts with talking about our dogs, but we also share our struggles: kids who came home during the pandemic and are finding it hard to reintegrate, elderly parents moving in or moving to assisted care, jobs that have become harder to navigate over zoom. And our joys: Finally getting to have that vacation that was planned for 2020, a new puppy, a new baby.

I know your inbox gets a lot of complaints, about when the dogs are off leash and where, and I'm sure that has contributed to the recent crackdown on off-leash dogs in the woods at Menotomy, But that crackdown has its own downsides and has made many of us unhappy: It's harder to have a conversation standing in a pack of dogs in a field, who, like children, will inevitably start to squabble over a toy. Circling the pond ends up with wet, stinky dogs and with all the traffic, makes it harder to keep track of your dog. And leashing my dogs means dragging my 14 year old dog around as my 3 year old tries to play, wrapping the leash around our feet. If it weren't so unpleasant, it would be comical.

Also, in my 14 years, I haven't seen problems in the woods. I know there are people who don't like dogs. I don't like bikes careening down paths in the woods, but I don't call and complain every time I see one. We seem to be turning into a complaining society, where a few with strong opinions are holding the rest hostage.

The dogs can't see the imaginary line running through the middle of the park. I'm hoping that you will take this message of support for off leash throughout the park with the same weight as the complaints. My time every morning with my dogs gives me three of the key pillars to good mental health: Community, exercise, and being in nature. The current restrictions don't eliminate those benefits, but they diminish them.

Thanks for listening and for supporting the parks in town.

30

Re: Off Leash Dogs in Menotomy Rocks Park - Request for enforcement and return of signs to Jason Street Entrance/ Notice Board

Mustafa Varoglu <mvaroglu@gmail.com>

Thu 6/8/2023 10:37 PM

To:Richard Flynn <rfflynn@town.arlington.ma.us>

Cc:AnimalControl <animalcontrol@town.arlington.ma.us>;Jen Rothenberg <jrothenberg@town.arlington.ma.us>;Joe Connelly <jconnelly@town.arlington.ma.us>;Julie Flaherty <jflaherty@town.arlington.ma.us>;Leslie Mayer <lmayer@town.arlington.ma.us>;Sandy Pooler <spooler@town.arlington.ma.us>;Shirley Canniff <scanniff@town.arlington.ma.us>

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Dear Officer Flynn,

Thanks for your reply. I appreciate the increased enforcement and saw ACO Wilson in the park this evening on my way home and during a walk. She seemed engaged with the dog owners and it's the first time in a long time all the dogs I saw were on leash.

I hope the ACO will visit the park on a somewhat regular basis to continue to reinforce the requirements for off-leash activity. It seems once the visits end the dogs are off leash again.

Thanks again to you and ACO Wilson.

Sincerely,

Mustafa Varoglu

31.