



COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

CITY COUNCIL of SALT LAKE CITY

TO: City Council Members

FROM: Jan Aramaki and Allison Rowland, Policy Analysts

DATE: July 31, 2018

RE: **AMENDMENT OF SALT LAKE CITY'S ORDINANCES REGARDING DOGS IN CITY PARKS, TRAILS & OPEN SPACES**

Item Schedule:

Briefing: July 31, 2018
Set Date: July 31, 2018
Public Hearing: August 21, 2018
Potential Action: September 4, 2018

ISSUE AT-A-GLANCE

The Administration proposes repealing the City's regulations for the creation of new off-leash dog areas, with the goal of simplifying and expediting the process, as well as providing new safeguards when hazardous conditions or sensitive environmental resources warrant closure to dogs. This change would move the planning and management of off-leash areas into the existing framework used for other significant changes to parks and open space amenities, which do not require the Council to amend City code. *Staff note: by shifting the designation and creation process for new off-leash areas out of City ordinance, the Council would delegate one of its current roles to the Administration's proposed process.*

These proposed changes build on previous Council discussions about the challenges of balancing increased resident demand for off-leash dog areas with other City parks and trails uses. In 2014 and 2015, the Council agreed that the existing process—commonly known as Resolution 52—has proved cumbersome for adding and managing off-leash dog areas. In practice, few new spaces for recreation with off-leash dogs have been added since the resolution's adoption in 2004. As part of the current proposal, the Administration identifies a number of specific difficulties with Resolution 52:

- Each new off-leash area must be designated in Salt Lake City ordinance, a time-consuming process that requires Council approval.
- It is difficult to find a sponsor willing to adopt each proposed off-leash park, taking on the task of keeping the park reasonably clean of dog waste and related litter. Under Resolution 52, a signed letter of understanding to clarify sponsor roles is required for new off-leash areas to be approved.
- The "Parks for Dogs Advisory Panel" (which was intended to monitor off-leash area use, raise funds and work to make the off-leash areas successful for dog owners and non-dog owners) has never been established.



- Existing ordinances do not provide the authority to close specific areas to dogs in cases where public safety becomes a concern, or when sensitive resources need to be protected. The proposed changes would authorize the director of the Public Services Department to close certain areas to dogs under those conditions.

Goal of the briefing: *A straw poll to indicate whether the Council supports the proposals to repeal Resolution 52, delegating the process of creating new off-leash dog areas to the Administration, and allowing the Public Services director to close certain areas of parks, trails and open spaces to dogs.*

POLICY QUESTIONS

1. *The Council may wish to consider the following options in moving this conversation forward, after reviewing the policy questions listed below:*

- Adopt the Administration’s proposal to eliminate Resolution 52 (which would delegate the dog off-leash designation process to the Administration), and other proposed amendments
- Maintain existing Resolution 52 as-is.
- Preserve some role for the Council in the dog off-leash designation by, for example:
 - adopting off-leash dog areas into City code, but without the other Resolution 52 requirements;
 - asking the Administration to provide an annual status report on dog off-leash designations; or
 - asking the Administration to provide a regular inventory of all parks and open space uses.

2. *The Council may wish to request the Administration discuss the successes and challenges, including any increased budgetary needs, associated with the creation of new off-leash areas.* The number of new off-leash areas has increased substantially since Council discussions of the issue began in 2014 (see list in Attachment C1). In 2015, the Council supported creation of planned off-leash areas in Fairmont, Rosewood¹ and Rotary Glen parks, as well as testing a new concept for limited “off-leash hours” each morning and evening in seven different neighborhood parks. As part of an effort to minimize the need for residents to travel by automobile to a dog off-leash area, one park in each Council District was selected for a year-long trial period. Because staffing constraints in the Public Services Department make the evaluation of these new areas time-consuming, these part-time off-leash areas have been introduced on a staggered basis in recent years. The Administration also states in its transmittal that all of the new areas were developed outside the Resolution 52 process due to specific criteria in the guidelines that would have prevented them from being established in a streamlined timeframe. The Council suggested this approach in discussions in 2015.

As indicated in the table below, sections of Warm Springs and Wasatch Hollow Parks already have been approved administratively for permanent part-time off-leash use, following a one-year trial period. Parts of Jefferson and Parley’s Way Parks are nearing the end of their one-year trials and an administrative evaluation will determine their eligibility for permanent status. Areas within Madsen, Glendale and Richmond Parks are scheduled to go through the test phase in the future.

¹ The Administration continues to work with the community on design for this park, and estimates that a construction start date will be in mid-September or early October. The site identified within Rosewood Park for an off-leash area is a sludge pit Superfund repository site approved for open space recreational land use. There are restrictions regarding this site that make development costly and will extend the construction time to meet all required approvals. In January of 2017, the Council approved \$220,000 in impact fees for this park.

<i>Approved Part-Time Off-Leash Dog Areas</i>	<i>Part-Time Off-Leash Areas Currently in Trial Phase</i>	<i>Planned Part-Time Off-Leash Areas</i>
District Three: Warm Springs Park (since June 2016)	District Five: Jefferson Park (pilot program began in June 2017)	District One: Madsen Park
District Six: Wasatch Hollow Park (since August 2016)	District Seven: Parley's Way Park (pilot program began in September 2017)	District Two: Glendale Park District Four: Richmond Park

3. During discussions in 2014, the Council expressed informal support for an off-leash dog policy goal, and a number of supporting policy statements (see Attachment C2). ***Would the Council like to consider formal adoption (by straw poll or by resolution) of this policy goal and some or any of the policy statements?***
4. ***The Council may wish to consider how to best involve community groups, such as FIDOS, for education, policy input and actively encouraging self-policing.*** In previous Council discussions, community group involvement was considered necessary for the success of off-leash areas, given the City's limited resources for regulating compliance with leash requirements and providing waste clean-up. In fact, the majority of the 190 statements received from the public on Open City Hall expressed concerns about dog owners failing to respect on-leash areas or pick up dog waste.
5. ***The Council may wish to ask whether the City's Parks, Natural Lands, Urban Forestry & Trails Advisory Board (PNUT) had any additional feedback on the topic of dogs in these areas.***
6. In a June 23, 2015 meeting of the City Council with Salt Lake County elected officials, several attendees expressed interest in creating new off-leash areas in cooperation with the County, as well as formulating shared off-leash rules and regulations. ***Does the Council wish to initiate, or request that the Administration initiate, another meeting with the County to consider these topics?***
7. Formal compliance with City ordinances regarding dogs in parks and other public spaces is contracted through Salt Lake County Animal Services. ***The Council may wish to ask whether the interlocal agreement that governs this relationship provides adequate funding and resources to meet current needs in off-leash areas, as well as planned expansions.***
8. Under the Administration's proposal, *Chapter 15.10, Parley's Historic Nature Park Use and Management*, which dates from 2011 and includes detailed off-leash dog regulations as well as other rules, remains in City code (Attachment C3). ***If the Council chooses to delegate the off-leash area processes to the Administration by repealing Resolution 52, would the Council also like to revisit Chapter 15.10, or request that the Administration do so?***
9. ***The Council may wish to inquire about the status of any of the new dog off-leash areas and additional items that the former Council supported in straw polls during the March 17, 2015 briefing.***
 - a. A potential off-leash area in Jordan River Par 3. In 2017, the Administration indicated that it was working with a consultant to develop a broader plan for Jordan River Par 3.

- b. A potential off-leash area Bonneville Shoreline Trail. In 2017, the Administration indicated that an application was submitted in April 2015 to create an off-leash area at Morris Meadows Reservoir, under the Resolution 52 guidelines. The proposed area is 453 acres owned by Public Utilities with the exception of 20 inaccessible acres, owned by Parks and Public Lands, near a heavily used section of the Bonneville Shoreline Trail. The land identified includes a future site for a reservoir adjacent to the existing reservoir. The area around the Morris Reservoir has been used as an unofficial off-leash area for many years. Parks and Public Lands has had discussions with Public Utilities to define a boundary area that will meet the goals of both departments. Ongoing maintenance for this type of Park, is estimated to be similar to the off-leash area at Parley's Historic Nature Preserve. Assuming that approximately 40 acres of land could be opened to off-leash dogs, an annual maintenance cost of about \$1,500/acre, or \$60,000 is estimated per year. Additionally funds for parking, restroom facilities, signage, waste bins and dog bag dispensers, and physical barriers (fencing) will need to be secured. A land use management agreement between Public Services and Public Utilities is also required.
- c. Off-leash use during off-hours at golf courses.
- d. Winter shifts in the location of some off-leash parks under icy conditions. *Staff note: this may be an issue that could be handled under the new provisions for closure in the proposed ordinance amendments.*

10. Some additional questions that Council Members may wish to ask about off-leash dog areas may include the following:

- a. Does the Administration perceive a need for additional off-leash areas, beyond those already planned?
- b. What is the annual cost of maintenance, signage, waste bags and receptacles, and other off-leash dog amenities?
- c. What kind of community outreach was undertaken when new Rosewood, Rotary Glen and Fairmont Park off-leash areas were created? How were any community concerns addressed?
- d. What kind of community outreach was (or will be) undertaken for the part-time off-leash hours in seven neighborhood parks? Were specific new items of concern uncovered during outreach or the pilot periods and, if so, how has the Administration addressed these? Are compliance problems substantially different in the part-time off-leash areas than in traditional (full-time) areas?

ADDITIONAL & BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Chronology of Recent Actions Related to Dogs in City Parks, Trails and Open Spaces

April 2014	The City Council received a briefing regarding potential options for dog off-leash areas and potential next steps. By straw poll, the Council created a Council-led community Off-Leash Working Group to discuss options.
April, May 2014	Off-Leash Working Group meetings. The group consisted of select Council members, Administration staff and members of the public.
July 2014	Off-Leash Working Group's recommendations were presented to the Council. The public comment period began on Open City Hall and remained open through July 2016 (complete Open City Hall comments are attached to the Administration 2018 transmittal).

- January 2015** The Council identified the topic of dog off-leash areas as one of its ten “active projects” for 2015. The Council continued to explore options for how to meet its dog off-leash policy goal of creating new off-leash areas while minimizing potential negative impacts
- March 17, 2015** New off-leash areas in Fairmont, Rosewood and Rotary Glen Parks received support from the Council in straw polls.
- June 2015** In the Fiscal Year 2015-16 budget, the Council allocated \$10,500 for signage and dog waste supplies to support a pilot program of morning and evening dog off-leash times in one existing neighborhood park in each Council District.
- October 2015** The City Council agreed to re-evaluate options for Resolution 52 after additional information was gathered during the test periods of the proposed off-leash areas for Fairmont, Rosewood and Rotary Glen Parks and the part-time (morning and evening) off-leash hours in neighborhood parks.

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

Attachment C1: Salt Lake City Off-leash Dog Areas

Attachment C2: Council Policy Goal and Statements

Attachment C3: City Ordinance for Parley’s Historic and Nature Park