

Commission Meeting (07/25/02)

Commissioner Michele McCormick's statement:

I will tell you what Kim already knows. I am the doggiest person any of you are going to encounter as you go through this process. I have two dogs and no children, everybody who knows me have seen pictures of my dogs and gotten mail about my dogs, and my life evolves around my dogs. My dogs sleep in the bed with me at night under the covers. I spend many of my weekends traveling to events where there are dogs. It is very typical for me to be at weekend events with my dogs where there are 2000 dogs. And so I think it would be very arrogant of me to claim that I am an expert on this topic. But I will claim that I have some expertise in certain areas. And I also need to say that along with all that dog stuff I am also a steward of the Parkway. And I regard that very seriously as well. In fact more seriously I have to say. A lot of information has been said, we have read a lot and heard a lot. In here there are several things that have struck me.

One of them is that there is a clear need for a facility of this type. There is no question about that, that there is a need and I would love to be able to work with Kim and others and try and find the right location for that facility. Certainly I am a tremendous advocate, as everyone here knows, of any fenced off-leash area in the Sacramento County Parks area. I am very happy that we will have one at Mather, **I wish we had more and a very _____ a facility is needed.** Of all the things we talked about, and we have talked about a quite a lot. I made a few notes; there are just a couple I will pull out that have really struck me.

One is the question of voice, and that is where I will claim some fairly sufficient experience. Let's just all be earnest, there is no voice control. I have been training my dogs; we go to class once a week for several years. I show them at weekend competition, I am with the best of the best. I don't know any person, I know one woman. On my 25th Wedding Anniversary I told my husband I am sorry I can't be with you this weekend dear, because the National Expert and Obedience is giving a seminar in Stockton this year and that is where I'm going to be and that's where I was. I believe she has almost complete voice control. But no one else really does, dogs are situational your dog may be very responsive to you in very very limited situations. But we don't know what dogs will do in new situations. And so I think that the issue in voice control is one that I simple have to disregard. Even among those people who are very focused on their dogs and train very extensively its dubious in the type of situation that we are describing that they would have voice control and most people do not devote that amount of time.

The second issue that has struck me in particular is the issue of a trial period. I don't feel a trail period is necessary, because there has been a trail period. It's very clear a trial period has been underway for some time. And I think that this is extremely irrelevant, I think it played against opponents of this issue. I think it reflects the fact that the Parks Department is under-funded and understaffed. Not able to do all things that the Parks Department should be able to do. And so there has been routine use of the area as an off-

leash park, you said you are all subject to the legality feedback of people who has experienced it. It is not unusual for there to be dogs off-leash in that area, and that has not been legal for a long time, and I think that is going to change now. I think we will see some enforcement of the priorities in that area.

I also think, unfortunately, that it under-minds the credibility of people who want to enforce/want to impose a fairly complex set of rules such as certain hours and other limitations, where for a long time there has been a fundamental disregard of one very clear ruling which is the dogs aren't on leash. And that fundamental disregard for a long period of time also led me to suggest that it is unrealistic to expect that while there may be a corporate of people who may very easily approach the rules, but there are many others who wouldn't be able to bring themselves to conform to those types of rules.

The final point that is overwhelming to me, and that I really cannot yet begin is that several people express, and that is the issue of choice. I believe that having an off-leash area deprives other people of the choice of whether they want to participate in that activity. The way to resolve that is to have a fenced area, or to have an off-leashed area that is more remote from other types of activities. Someone made a comment about other areas in the Parkway different. I had this strong feeling that they were going to say that the ARP is not unique, but they did not quite go there. The AR Parkway is unique; it belongs almost to all the citizens of people that live in that community and I must oppose any activity that would restrict them of it. If it was skiing or buck shooting or whatever, and if it is an activity that restricts the enjoyment of other people, then I have to oppose that in this location. I think this is a great ideal, it's a wonderful thing, but the wrong location. And certainly if I had any doubt about that, I have to be very earnest with you and say the comments from the soccer club leader, the school principal and National Parks representative _____.

And so I have great respect for the work that has been done, Kim is a fabulous leader; it kills me to be on the opposite side, it's not a typical place for me to be, and it is not a place I like to be. I feel the same about Frank. We got the best of the best leading the issue. It's like they say in Real Estate, location, location, location. It's a great ideal; it is not the right location. I have to absolutely agree with what the director has suggested, that we should put the ideal of an off-leash dog area, an unfenced off-leashed dog area in or near the ARP to rest and whatever we can do to put that to rest forever I certainly strongly support.

Motion by Commissioner McCormick, seconded by Commissioner Zimmerle

“Move to support staff recommendation that we ask that the complete leash law be enforced, and that the issue not be included in the ARP Plan.”