



## **DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

Meeting Minutes

February 7, 2023

7:00 PM

Room 9, Acton Town Hall

**Present:** Peter Darlow, (Chair), David Honn, Richard Keleher, Holly Ben-Joseph, Tom Doolittle, John Cappetta (Planning Board Liaison)

Public Attending: Tom Gillespie, chair, Acton Dog Park Committee; Claire Siska, Acton Dog Park Committee; Dennis Dale, Dale Design (landscape architect for Acton Dog Park); Joe Will, chair, Acton Recreation Committee

### **1. Opening**

Chair, Peter Darlow opened the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

### **2. Regular Business**

A. Citizens' Concerns: None

B. Approval of Meeting Minutes:

- a. Minutes for the meeting of October 20, 2022 were reviewed and unanimously approved with revisions by roll call. Tom Doolittle to correct and submit to town for posting.
- b. Minutes for the meeting of January 10, 2023 were reviewed and unanimously approved as submitted by roll call. Peter Darlow to submit to town for posting.

### **3. New/Special Business**

- A. Acton Dog Park: Members of the Acton Dog Park Committee and the design consultant presented the current plans for the park. The park has been under development for five years, and has recently received funding through the Stanton Foundation. The committee studied several other dog parks in preparing the design for the Acton park. The design incorporates existing features of the parcel, including stone walls and boulders. It will provide two separate areas for large and small dogs, each of which will be fenced in. There will be a walking path that circles each area, and seating will be provided along the path. The dog runs will be accessed through fenced vestibules. A location has been identified for a future covered pavilion. The surface of the dog areas has not been finalized, but wood fiber or stone mulch are being evaluated. There will be a parking lot for approximately 14 cars. Because the site slopes away from Main Street, much of the dog park will not be visible from the street. Plantings around the dog runs will be of



species native to the area, and will draw from the senior housing project nearby.

The board asked a number of questions regarding details of the design, and offered suggestions for enhancements or alternate approaches. These included considering moving the parking to the rear of the park, increasing the amount of seating, better integration with the senior housing project, and the relationship between the dog park and the Main Street improvements being made as part of the Kelly's Corner project. The Board also discussed plans for lighting and signage. Following the presentation and discussion, the Board concluded that it was comfortable with the design of the park as presented.

Refer to the attached Review Memorandum for additional information.

- B. Draft Summary Memo – Residential Tree Yard Bylaw: The Board reviewed the latest draft of the residential tree yard bylaw outline prepared by Richard Keleher. The following revisions were proposed: Clarify that the intent of this bylaw would be to prevent speculative removal of trees prior to planning approval of a specific project; the intent and purpose sections of the outline should be reversed (intent should be first); a penalty clause should be incorporated to improve its effectiveness; and the exception for single family homes should be modified to only apply to lots that are less than two times the size of the underlying zoning. RK will update the draft and submit for review.
- C. Draft Summary Memo – Land Clearing Bylaw: The Board reviewed the latest draft of the land clearing bylaw outline prepared by Richard Keleher. The following revisions were proposed: The intent and purpose sections of the outline should be reversed (intent should be first); the intent should be clarified to indicate that the bylaw would be applicable to all development other than single family residential; paragraph C.2 (reference to Cape Cod Commission bylaw) should be eliminated; and that language designating areas of lots where tree must be protected should be added. RK will update the draft and submit for review.
- D. Draft Summary Memo – Tree Preservation: The Board reviewed the latest draft of the tree preservation bylaw outline prepared by Richard Keleher. The following revisions were proposed: The intent and purpose sections of the outline should be reversed (intent should be first); remove the term “heirloom” from the intent; sections C (standards) and D (applicability) should be reversed. RK will update the draft and submit for review.

#### **4. Adjournment**

At 9:30 p.m. it was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,  
The DRB



TOWN OF ACTON  
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD  
Review Memorandum: Acton Dog Park  
February 07, 2023

DRB Members in attendance: Peter Darlow (Chair), David Honn, Richard Keleher, Holly Ben-Joseph, Thomas Doolittle, and Jon Capetta – Planning Board liaison.

Proponents in attendance: Tom Gillespie, Chair and Clare Siska – Acton Dog Park Committee and Dennis Dale, Dale Design, Inc. – Landscape Architect working with the Dog Park Committee.

Documents Reviewed: A power point presentation entitled Acton community Dog Park, dated 2/7/2023.

Slide titles:

- 1 Title Sheet
- 2 How We Got Here
- 3 Existing Conditions Images
- 4 Existing Conditions Images
- 5 Dog Park Plan (Without Leaching Field)
- 6 Key Features
- 7 Day to Day at the Dog Park
- 8 Q&A and Feedback
- 9 The Campus

The proposed Acton Dog Park is to be located on the north side of Main Street adjacent to Route 2. It is the western third of a three parcel campus that, in time, will also include an adjacent proposed Senior Park and, further east, the future McManus Manor senior housing project. Each portion of the campus are in various stages of planning. The land parcel designated by the town for use as the Dog Park is a partially open and partially wooded sloping site that had initially been targeted to be used as a leaching field for McManus Manor, upon which the Dog Park could be developed. With the decision to extend the town sewer district to service McManus Manor, the Acton Dog Park will be able to develop upon the existing land conditions.

Having carefully studied various local dog parks and researched and discussed the design and operation of the same with neighboring community members, a program for the Acton Dog Park has taken shape. The park will be primarily comprised of two fenced in open areas, one large, (12700SF), offering plenty of opportunity for running and exploring and one small, (3,200SF), for smaller dogs that may not be socially comfortable in the larger setting. The fenced in areas will be ringed with ADA compliant walking paths, several small seating areas, and in time, a covered pavilion space offering some shaded seating. The open

areas may be finished with a wood fiber “carpet”, though other material options are under study, and likely will include several large partially buried boulders and other feature play objects. A parking lot for approximately 14 vehicles is proposed immediately adjacent to Main Street. Access into the fenced park areas will be via a pair of “gated vestibules” allowing for a transition for the dogs to acclimate. The dog park will not be lit and will only be open dawn to dusk during the non-winter seasons.

The fenced park areas and parking lot are generally sited within the existing open space available. The wooded wetlands existing, generally tight along route 2, will be maintained in situ with possible walking paths proposed allowing for the public to enjoy the many existing natural features.

Due to the existing topography that drops away to the north of Main Street, much of the dog park will not be visible from Main Street. Landscape treatments, such as rock walls, possibly rusticated wood fencing, and native plantings consistent with details planned for McManus Manor, will be used to screen the parking lot immediately adjacent to Main Street. The town is currently studying a continuation of the complete streets program to extend from Kelley’s Corner to McManus Manor which potentially will provide for buffered sidewalks along Main Street as this passes by the Dog Park.

With financing in place, through an award from the Stanton Foundation, the committee is in a position to proceed with implementation upon review and acceptance with the Select Board.

Following are comments/recommendations made by the DRB:

- DRB members are comfortable with the programming decisions made and with the general design direction presented.
- Though it is understood that the parking lot placement close to Main Street is the more economical approach, DRB members would prefer for the enclosed Dog Parks to be more prominent visually. Would it be feasible to rearrange the major park components, bringing the fenced dog areas closer to Main Street by placement of the parking deeper into the site, to minimize the typical view of parked cars so common along Acton’s commercial zones.
- Whether relocated or not, DRB members recommend that the parking lot not be paved with asphalt. A hard gravel parking area will feel more in keeping with the natural topography and offer a less commercial, softer visual of the park from Main Street.
- The current siting of a shaded seating area does not feel purposeful. DRB member David Honn suggests that the pavilion be considered as a visual element that could mark the primary entrance into the larger fenced area by setting up a pair of small covered seating areas flanking the entrance vestibule. The thinking is this will offer an opportunity to establish a specific visual feature unique to the Acton Dog Park.
- With respect to providing a visual identity for the park, the DRB recommends that signage along Main Street be thought through carefully and be visually prominent.
- DRB members are very pleased with the intent of blending the adjacent Senior Park design with the design of the Dog Park. The clear overlap of the uses will be well received by seniors as much as it will be users of the Dog Park. The DRB suggested consideration of more benches within and outside of the fenced area to allow for seniors to enjoy the dogs at play.

- Though not a part of the Dog Park, given its close proximity to Main Street and the park, screening of the proposed sewer pump station structure should be a high priority. Understanding that an access way to the pump station is needed, DRB members recommend this not be hard surfaced, but rather recommend the use of pervious paving blocks that allow for grass to grow to reduce the visual impact.
- DRB members are hopeful that the complete streets planning along Main Street incorporates sidewalks buffered from the curb consistent with the design in play for Kelley's Corner.

Design Review Board members are otherwise comfortable with the general approach to the Acton Dog Park design concept as proposed.

Respectfully submitted,

The DRB