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Public Forum

An open letter to Mayor Trotter and Members of the Moraga Town Council, from Bill Carman:

Thank you for recognizing the dog owners of Rancho Laguna (RL). Mayor Trotter in your interview with the PTA last election season you demonstrated the deepest understanding of this issue. The Town Council has been receptive and fair to our complaints thus far.

Rancho Laguna is one of America's oldest (limited use) off leash dog parks since 1979. Ohlone Park in Berkley is the first recognized fenced in Dog Park (1979). Dogs have roamed free to play with other dogs at RL for 30 years. No incidents of human injury from dogs have been reported at RL.

The 8.4 acres of Rancho Laguna, has served as an informal dog park to the Lamorinda Community. It has operated as a sports field, a camp ground, and training area for dogs off leash. In the morning and evening, the dog's owners had access to the park. The rest of the day was for people. We have had show dog champions, agility dogs, and dogs trained in search and rescue. Rancho Laguna has been a family place where the WHOLE family can come out to play with the dog.

Rancho Laguna has the ability to attract a majority of the 12,718 licensed Lamorinda dog owners. It is a limited use dog park by definition[i]. If Rancho Laguna were a publicized dog park it would rank like our school system, one of the best. If it was an all day dog park it could pull 60 + cars per hour to Moraga, this cannot be done with the commons proposal. Currently we don't want this to be an all day dog park. This summer the park will be overfilled during dog park hours now that the word is out. Bummer, It was Moraga's best kept secret until the winds of change came blowing through the trees this January carrying a bad smell.

Moraga has 3,570 licensed dogs[ii], for 5285 homes.[iii] Moraga had only 10,009 Registered voters in 2008, 7000 could be dog owners. There are 12,718[iv] licensed dogs in the Lamorinda community whose owners are potential users of the park. Moraga Dog owners spend \$35,700 in license fees annually to use this park. We support a pet store, a groomer, professional dog trainers and 4 veterinarians. The Moraga Safeway has 1/2 aisle dedicated to dogs. Rite Aid, Home Express, Tuesday Mornings and OSH sell dog supplies too. The Town of Moraga receives 9.25% of every dog taxable item sold. Dogs are good for business!! We have the only thing close to a dog park in Lamorinda.

City	Homes	Licensed Dogs	% Homes with Dogs
Lafayette	9532	5282	55%
Moraga	5285	3570	67%
Orinda	6958	3866	55%
Total Lamorinda	21775	12718	58%

Many of these businesses support Lamorinda Weekly, and Contra Costa times. Dog owners spend money at Chows, and Metro in Lafayette, many of the dogs are from Moraga. In Moraga the dog friendly restaurants are Bianca's Deli and Amoroma's. The newly owned Ranch House will gladly invite dogs at the picnic

tables.

The proposal for Amendment 12.08 of the Moraga Municipal Code has stripped all off leash dog use from the Moraga Commons, Mulholland Ridge, and if we did not protest, I believe they would take Rancho Laguna from us too!

We did not want a dog park, we thought we had one. We wanted to share this park as it is. We tried to rent the park out for camping event in August. We asked how much money they wanted, but were denied. In November we were attacked by an out of control, animal control officer. Some protested at a town meeting in January. Then we were hit with a barrage of dog gone dogma by the PR&C in March after the council asked them to correct the ordinance in February.

As a fan of Rancho Laguna's off leash use hours I just want the Moraga Town Council, and The Moraga Parks and Recreation Commission to recognize the value of this Off Leash Park to the community. Keep the park as a multi use facility; make the park an Official Dog Park during the following hours.

1) During the period from October 1st through March 31st, animals are allowed off leash daily from park opening to 9:00 a.m. and from 4:00 p.m. until park closing.

2) During the period from April 1st through September 30th, animals are allowed off leash daily from park opening to 9:00 a.m. and from 6:00 p.m. until park closing.

The Parks and Recreation Commission proposal to limit our dogs on just the paved path and turf area created a variety of unpleasant emotions. We suggested a fence or hedge row between a few picnic tables and the tot lot's. Below is a simple concept graphic (which was not presented).

We do not want to get political. We want to enjoy our town's beauty and recreate with our dogs. If the proposal 12.08 passes as written 12,700 dog owners in the Lamorinda community might start barking. My fantasy is you will just proclaim Rancho Laguna an official limited use Dog Park, allow a hedge like barrier around the tot lot's and group areas, keep the majority of the park open to dog users and put a knowledgeable pro dog person on the PR&C. They are going to be working on how to ruin a good thing over the next 12 months, let us help minimize the damage, and maximize revenue for Moraga. Ask us for help in creating the new vision.

Bill Carman and his dog Juneau can often be found at Rancho Laguna..

[i] Wikipedia Dog Park http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dog_park 4/1/08

[ii] Contra Costa Animal Control Pet Emergency Services

www.Lamorindacert.org e-mail 3/23/09

[iii] Lamorinda Weekly www.lamorindaweekley.com v3#1 3/ 18 /2009

[iv] Contra Costa Animal Control Pet Emergency Services

www.Lamorindacert.org 3/23/09

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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