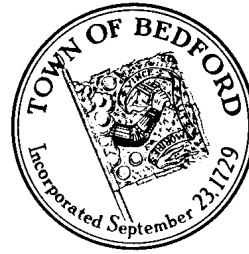


TOWN OF BEDFORD  
BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS 01730



**POLICE DEPARTMENT**

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To: Richard T. Reed, Town Manager  
From: Robert Bongiorno, Chief of Police  
Subject: Dog Park Data from Various Local Communities

On November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at the Special Town Meeting, residents voted to approve Article 16 under the Community Preservation budget to approve the Towns grant match for potential construction of a dog park in Bedford.

Town Manager Richard Reed tasked the police department with collecting data from various local communities that had an active dog park in their respective communities.

I was able to collect limited data from the following communities: Arlington, Chelmsford, Melrose and Wilmington. This report will also include information gathered from the Police Chiefs and Animal Control Officers from each of the above communities.

**Arlington**

The Town of Arlington hired a part time compliance officer to monitor the dog park. The following information is a two month (March- April 2017) review of his observations at the dog park.

The following were daily visual observations by the compliance officer for the month of March;

- 43 dog fights over toy
- 41 dog fights – aggressive dogs
- 58 excessive barking
- 250 not picking up feces
- 20 more than 2 dogs per owner

The following were daily visual observations by the compliance officer for the month of April;

- 62 dog fights over toy
- 33 dog fights – aggressive dogs
- 38 excessive barking
- 135 not picking up feces
- 10 more than 2 dogs per owner

It seems that that the biggest problem Arlington faced was people not picking up after their dogs. They also allow only two dogs per person which apparently is not followed. It appears based on the information collected that the majority of the dog fights occurred while dogs were off leashes and outside the park itself in the parking area.

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## **Chelmsford**

The following is actual data collected by the Chelmsford Police Department from January 2016 to present.

- 7 disturbances
- 1 report of female with a gun – (This was amongst two dog owners at the park)
- 1 Assault by Means of a Dangerous Weapon
- 2 Harassment calls
- 3 dog bites
- 1 dog fight
- 1 aggressive dog
- 4 general complaints
- 1 loose dog in park with no owner.

In Chelmsford as a result of the increased calls to the dog park, the Town installed a video surveillance system with a live feed to the police department. Also, the Town was forced to separate large/small dogs within the dog park due to excessive complaints and dog fights.

## **Melrose**

The following is actual data collected by the Melrose Police Department from January 2016 to date.

- 4 dog bites
- 4 complaints
- 1 vandalism

The current dog park is located opposite Melrose High School. The cities of Melrose and Malden are currently in the process of building a 25k square foot dog park at Pine Banks located at 1 Main Street in Melrose.

## **Wilmington**

The following information is actual data collected by the Wilmington Police Department from July 2016 to August 2018.

- 8 reports of dog bites – ( 7 dog vs dog, 1 dog vs person)
- 1 report of aggressive dog
- 1 report of children playing in the dog park

In Wilmington, the dogs are also separated by size.

The other common problems or potential problems to avoid which were communicated; parking issues (the ability to provide adequate parking (having strict enforcement of parking rules), excessive barking, fights (including dog vs dog and person vs person) and litter not being picked up. One community did not have the resources to have the Town pick up litter. As a result they initiated a “carry in- carry out policy” it has been a failure to date. The ability to permit revocation for repeat offenders was suggested but does present legal challenges.

All communities have very stringent rules which if the dog park is approved in Bedford should be posted to the entrance of the park. It should indicate the purpose of the park, hours of operation, phone number to report problems. General rules should include; no dog toys, only two dogs per person, pick up feces, keeping control of aggressive dogs, and leash requirements, if any. Postings should include dogs be licensed and vaccinated to be allowed in the park. Children should be supervised. Any other special requirements should be displayed at the entrance.

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Due to the Bedford Police Department's and the Animal Control Officers lack of resources to adequately police this potential dog park it is imperative that a strong education campaign be enacted and that enforcement of rules be self-initiated amongst the dog park users.

It is also recommended if construction of the dog park is approved by the Bedford Selectmen the Town review Article 42 (Dog Regulations) of the General Bylaws for any revisions or amendments.