

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE

# Fresh Pond Shared Use Public Engagement Process Recommendations



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All public comments were submitted via email and mail to Meredith Sciarrio at the Consensus Building Institute from June to August 2011. The Consensus Building Institute compiled these comments into the following document for consistent formatting and sorted them alphabetically by the names of the submitters. The Consensus Building Institute did not alter the content of any public comments; however, all contact information was removed for privacy reasons.

**Alster, Kristy**

Hello –

Thank you for inviting comments on the Final Report on the Fresh Pond Shared Use Public Engagement Process. Kudos to the committee for its hard work and thoughtful report. The “Communication, Education, and Outreach” approach seems to me to be an excellent way of approaching the use of this shared treasure.

For the past 30 years, I have been a “walker with dogs” at Fresh Pond. I’m very pleased with the recommendations allowing dogs off-leash, when under voice control, and in certain areas. As mentioned in the report, Fresh Pond is the only place in Cambridge where off-leash dogs and their owners can cover a lot of ground together. Dog parks work well for some dogs, but not for those who need more vigorous exercise, or who just stand idly by watching the action. I hope that the Water Department will include these recommendations in its Implementation Plan.

When the restoration work began at the reservation several years ago, the perimeters of some restricted areas were fenced, either permanently or temporarily. This has been a plus for me as a dog owner, because I don’t have to be so vigilant about keeping my dogs away from those areas. The fences do that for me, so I can relax and enjoy the walk. Also, the fences limit opportunities for the dogs to run into the woods and roll in stinky things! I’d suggest keeping the fences, and perhaps even adding more in those areas in need of protection.

Over the years, communication and education has resulted in a much higher level of responsible behavior among dog owners. There was a time, for example, when few picked up after their dogs. Now it’s unusual for owners not to do so. Ranger Jean Rogers has helped immensely in this regard. (And in helping all Pond visitors – not just dog owners -- to understand and comply with expectations.)

Looking forward to many more happy walks at the Pond with my dogs . . .

Sincerely,

Kristy Alster

## **Anders, Rosalie**

Hi, CBI. I appreciate the effort that has gone into the FP process, but I believe it was flawed—fatally—from the start. Many people, myself included, do not spend time at Fresh Pond because of all the dogs, so that use is restricted, especially for seniors, others with mobility impairments, and people with young kids, unless they are unusually dog-tolerant or live nearby. This large group has been left out of the process.

I have tabled at the high-rises near Fresh Pond to encourage people there to attend Fresh Pond Day. I found that most of the families I talked with do not spend time there, though it is nearby. These are families without yards, mostly without cars. It would be helpful to figure out what could make the reservation more attractive to them. I don't think that they are dog owners.

I am a former dog owner (before moving to the city) and dog lover—but I see the many negatives of dog ownership in a crowded urban environment. Dog owners, of course, love their dogs, and it is hard for them to see their dogs as a nuisance or a threat, but they can be, just by fulfilling their dog nature. I don't think it is practical or enforceable to have some areas that are off-leash and some that are on-leash. This weekend I had a chat with a park ranger at the Arnold Arboretum, where there are many fewer dogs per acre. His main task is to make sure dogs are on-leash, and he said that dog owners often see lots of land there and how much their dogs love to run, and want to let the dogs go, but they just don't understand the issues; he said that a consistent regulation is key to creating a norm that works.

I'd like to see the reservation become more friendly for the wider population of Cambridge to experience the natural world in a more relaxed way, without having to worry about dogs. I hope that in the end there will be some outreach to this wider population before completing the process.

**Berman, Doug**

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for attempting to solve existing problems at the Fresh Pond Reservation; a spectacular resource for those lucky enough to live nearby. I attended several of your meetings, and have read the final report.

I find that I am supportive of your usage recommendations, which reflect, and expand the variety of ways in which residents use the facility. But there is one important recommendation that is glaringly absent, and without which, I cannot support the final report.

You propose to label certain areas of the refuge as areas for people and on-leash dogs only. That's great. But you have no suggestions about how to peacefully and effectively accomplish this cordoning. This is a crucial omission. If you want to keep dogs out of certain areas of the reservation, you have to be willing to install reasonable fences.

They need not be six foot chain link fences, but neither can they be the flimsy, plastic, 24 inch temporary fencing that I see dogs of all sizes jump over and crawl under. Without adequate fencing, enforcement will be a continual battle, users with various preferences will be frustrated, and the attempt to improve the experience at Fresh Pond will lead to less enjoyment by all parties.

Think of it this way. It's fine to say "children may play freely next to the china shop." But if the china shop has no walls and no door, it's not going to be a relaxing or fun experience for the parents, the children, or people inside the china shop.

So, for everyone's sake, make your recommendations include an explicit call for adequate fencing around the no-dog, or on-leash only areas. It's an unreasonable burden to expect dogs to read the signs, and an unreasonable burden on dog owners to change the rules from sector to sector without providing some reasonable help to those who are happy to obey the new rules.

Thanks for your consideration. If you fix this omission, I would be happy to support all of your recommendations.

Best,  
Doug Berman

**Black, Suzanna**

Here are my comments/ questions about the Shared Use Process Recommendations:

:re protection of environment: even with increased on leash areas for dog walking, the majority of the Fresh Pond Reservation is still unprotected.

:re protection of sensitive areas: this will require signs and fencing; will these options be acceptable under the Fresh Pond Master Plan guidelines?

:re signs: signs currently posted regarding dogs on grassy or sensitive areas are consistently ignored; how will this be changed?

:re resources for implementation: will the City and the Water Department have available or allocate resources for signage and fencing? This could be very expensive.

:re education and enforcement: at least initially, a ranger should be available and onsite whenever the reservation is open, for education of people who are unaware of or ignore rules and to take appropriate action for those who continue to ignore them.

:re congestion: I'm ambivalent about having the reservation for Cambridge use only; on the one hand, sharing is good but on the other hand there are more and more people using the Reservation, some from out of town

(some web sites cite the Reservation as a dog park) and from some who say that their towns have no off leash areas, therefore they come to Cambridge.

:re dogs off leash but within sight: dogs off leash often lag behind owners; waste that gets deposited then is often not noticed and therefore not picked up.

Thank you, CBI, for your efforts in what must have been a very challenging process.  
Sincerely, Susanna Black

## **Blagg, Teresa**

I have lots of concerns with making Kingsley Park and the wooded slopes off limits to unleashed dogs. I think it will overcrowd the perimeter paths, which is where I imagine is the main cause of most complaints from bikers, joggers, elders, etc., because unleashed dogs on the paths can dart in front of them, or cause them to fall. In the summer, when we dog owners can't go into the woods, the heat will make the use of the allowed areas unbearable, because there is no shade there and no place for humans to sit down and rest.

I think using the bowl area will be fun for some folks and their dogs, and will be the scene of dog fights and accidents for others. It's too small an area and without any fences, it will be impossible to keep the dogs out of the meadow area, and from running out into the parking lot, and up into the woods.

If you REALLY wanted to create a safe area for kids, elders, picnic-ers, and basically anyone who doesn't want to deal with dogs, why don't you fence off some areas for them, which could be accessible from one or more parking lots that dog owners would be restricted from? It would be a simple solution that would be better for everybody, dog owners, included. The dogs could run freely outside that (or those) area(s), and everyone could feel good about it. Paths could be made that incorporated part of the wooded areas, at least one of the overlooks, the tot lot (which could be expanded), and picnic tables and grills could be set up. It would all be free from the threat of unleashed dogs and dog poop, and it would be awesome!

We could all share the rest of the areas, just like we do now.

Why is this so hard?

If the restrictions that have been proposed go into full effect, I will probably just drive a little farther over to Beaver Brook like we often do, where my dogs and I actually feel a lot more welcome. They don't restrict people without city permits, the dogs can run in the woods, go into the water, play on the grassy fields, and people of all ages seem to somehow get along just fine with their picnics and jogging, and biking. I'm sure it's just a matter of time before someone demands a committee look into that!

Thanks for taking my input!

Teresa Blagg, long time Cambridge resident & taxpayer



**Blimes, Linda J.**

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a former Cambridge resident and a current resident of Belmont. I am also a member of the National Parks Service Advisory Board, in which capacity I advise the federal park system on a variety of issues including the designation of national landmarks, zoning and easements in lands adjacent to National Parks, and issues of land usage and budget.

I want to express my strong support for a policy that allows *both* Cambridge and non-Cambridge dogs to be walked off-leash around Fresh Pond. I live just adjacent to the Payson Park Reservoir, (which is an integral part of the Fresh Pond water system), in an c. 1880 farmhouse that was originally built for the Hittinger family that owned 40 acres of land abutting the northern side of Fresh Pond, and farmed ice in the Pond until the 1920s. The Pond is part of the historical heritage of Belmont, as well as Cambridge; I can see the reservoir from most of the windows in my house.

The Fresh Pond reservation is part of the wider local community water and eco-system, and it would be extremely unfair to deny access to dog-owners who happen to live across the Cambridge border. As long as the dog has a valid license from a local jurisdiction (to show rabies vaccine, etc) it should be permissible for us to use the reservation for dog walking. (I have no objection if Cambridge chooses to charge a small fee to non-resident dog users to cover any additional costs for administering this program).

Additionally, I want to voice my support for keeping the Reservation as rustic and un-manicured as possible. It should be a respite from city life, not a botanical garden.

Yours Sincerely,

Professor Linda J. Blimes

## **Boothe, J. Roger**

I am writing as a 36-year resident of Cambridge. I have also been an employee of the city for 33 years, serving as Director of Urban Design in the Community Development Department. In that role, I was the Chair of the Peer Review Committee for the design of the new water treatment plant that now sits beautifully in the landscape of Fresh Pond Reservation. The fundamental goal of our committee was that the character of the plan and its site be welcoming and accessible for everyone in Cambridge. The building, its setting in the landscape, and the management by my very capable colleagues in the Water Department all work towards meeting that goal.

There is, however, an unacceptable impediment to the enjoyment of Fresh Pond by people in Cambridge. Allowing unleashed dogs throughout the Reservation keeps many people away. I have one friend who was severely bitten by an off-leash dog – the dog and owner promptly vanished, so my friend had to delay a planned vacation and endure a painful series of rabies shots. I have another disabled friend who loves to walk, but is simply afraid to go to the Reservation because she is very small and vulnerable to being knocked over by bounding dogs. I have seen a young girl knocked off her training bike by an over-eager dog. There are many unhappy stories like these, and many Cambridge citizens who do not feel welcome in this special community place because they are intimidated by the presence of uncontrolled dogs. This is not right.

Fresh Pond is the largest open space serving our dense community, which does not have as much parkland as other nearby communities. Thus, it is especially galling that many Cantabrigians cannot enjoy their own reservation, while people coming from anywhere in the region are allowed to dominate the place with their free-running dogs. The current proposal does nothing to change the status quo, and would make the situation worse by condoning this unhappy situation. A more appropriate solution would be to allow Cambridge residents to bring their dogs to the Reservation, but only on a leash at all times. This approach would be a compromise, because some people do not like being approached by dogs at all, even when the dogs are on leashes. Only with such reasonable restrictions (ones that are the norm for most water supply reservations) will Fresh Pond become a safe and welcoming place for all Cambridge citizens.

Sincerely,

J. Roger Boothe

**Bozek, Jessica**

Hello,

I just wanted to weigh in on off-leash use of Fresh Pond. I am a dog-owner, but visited Fresh Pond even before I had a dog. I have never encountered a conflict between dogs/dog owners and non-dog owners. I'm aware that unfortunate things happen (a dog gets bitten by another dog), but overall, things have seemed to work just fine as they are.

What seems more problematic to me is bicyclists riding very fast. When people and dogs and children walk/run and bicyclists maintain a reasonable speed, the trails are harmonious places. We cherish Fresh Pond as a place where we can get a bit of exercise and our dog can run and swim.

I imagine, too, that dog walkers make the trails safer for everyone, by being out at dawn and dusk with their dogs.

Best,  
Jessica Bozek

## **Caraganis, Sally**

Dear Fresh Pond Shared Use Committee:

I am writing as a Cambridge resident and dog owner. I know that Fresh Pond has to be shared among walkers, families, joggers, bike riders, as well as dogs – as it always has been and should be. But I beg you not to curtail the only real outdoor experience available to dogs in Cambridge.

Fort Washington, while off-leash, is small and not fenced in. Pacific Park, from what I have heard and seen, is not very popular: "gross" is a comment I've heard a number of times -- muddy, no place to sit, no shade. And Danehy: while it's nice to have a large off-leash area for dogs to play together, is not very "nature" -- in fact, it seems more like a Zen meditation garden. The two dogs that I have had since it opened have never shown any interest in playing there. My old Lab who died this spring had no interest in running around or chasing her ball there (though she would spend an ecstatic hour at Fresh Pond, running, fetching, and swimming). My 3-month-old Lab puppy, who I thought would be delirious to be let off-leash to run and chase her ball, just looked at me as if to say "What am I supposed to do here" and lay down in the kiosk (as did another dog there at the time). On the other hand, she loves FP, even though she can't be let off leash yet. Other owners whom I've talked to at Danehy have the same reaction -- their dogs just don't like the dog area or want to play in it.

I am also writing as a 32-year Cambridge homeowner. My taxes for all those years have gone to support a school system (and playing fields and playgrounds) that I have never used. The same applies to most of the dog owners in my neighborhood -- mostly young singles and couples and older residents like my husband and me. While I'm happy to pay whatever I have to to keep Cambridge the wonderful city that it is, I would like to think that some of my tax dollars are going towards amenities that mean a lot to me and all the other dog owners in the city.

Thank you for your attention -- I hope that all will be resolved so that all FP users are happy, especially the dogs.

Sally Caraganis

**Castellan-Mullins, Luciana**

Dear Ms. Sciarrio,

I just wanted to weigh in on the Fresh Pond Recommendations. I'm a resident of Cambridge, frequent user of Fresh Pond, dog owner and dog walker.

For the sake of being brief I'll just say that I agree with the comments made by Eric Hermanson and Peter Wilkins in the document with the recommendations. Dog owners and walkers don't just walk dogs. They connect with people in the community. We help those who are in a jam, our presence deters crime, we report crime, we clean up after public places - not just the poop but we pick up the place in general.

We're aware of what's going on and we know our neighbors in a way that other groups don't. We are the spontaneous eyes, ears and caregivers of the city. I am a naturalized citizen and a veteran who has lived abroad as well as all over the United States. Therefore I have a different perspective on things. I'll just say that too much regulation takes the charm and the spirit off things. The places Americans love most to go to when they want to relax and reconnect with the world are places where there are fewer regulations. Ireland, the Caribbean, Brazil to name a few.

So basically I'm for off leash for dogs all over the park, common courtesy for all. If a dog is out of control, barking and starting fights, which I have never witnessed, report it to a park ranger and they can ask the offending group to leave or control their dog.

My best,  
Luciana Castellan-Mullins

**Dillard, Susan**

Dear Ms. Sciarrio,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the final recommendations of the Public Engagement Process for the use of Fresh Pond reservation. I will try to limit these remarks by adopting comments of others, where possible.

- **There should be no discrimination against non-Cambridge residents.** The category of users the group established called “Non-Cambridge Residents” should be eliminated. (I find it interesting that Cambridge Residents are not a user group.)

I agree with the overall value of preserving the park’s **public** traditions expressed by Peter Wilkins, Eric Hermanson, and Nicolai Cauchy.

To have the City of Cambridge discriminate against “outsiders” is offensive and runs counter to the values of most residents of this municipality. If this public space in Cambridge is to become a “gated” space with restrictions against people from other towns, states and countries, it is a change in important public policy. I question whether this group or even the Water Authority has the legal authority to limit public use in this way.

If the group believes a case can be made to the City Council for such discrimination, then the rationale should be made clearly in the “Recent History” section. The Group should include a description of when and how Fresh Pond became a non-public open space, and the data and rationale that supports the discriminatory public policy.

- Dogs should be allowed at Black’s Nook if on leash and at heel.

I agree with Jane Beal, Nicolai Cauchy, and Elizabeth Feigenbaum. It sets a dangerous precedent, and changes the long-standing dog-friendly culture of Fresh Pond.

I also do not see a rationale. A dog on-leash would damage the environment just as much as a person on-foot. Banning dogs is unnecessary.

- Creating an off-leash path between the golf course and Blacks Nook

I support Elizabeth Feigenbaum’s interesting idea. It would decrease congestion on the perimeter pathway. Everyone would enjoy such a path, not just dog walkers.

- Priority should be given to the elimination of poison ivy.

This would definitely improve enjoyment of the park. And, it could be done without adding another rule or restriction!

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important document.

Very truly yours,

Susan Dillard

## Glass, Jamie

First let me thank all of the people involved in the process of the Shared Use Plan on behalf of Cambridge citizens and Fresh Pond users. I walk the Pond everyday and love the break from traffic fumes and noise as well as the beauty of the area.

In reading the report there are a few areas I would like to comment on:

1. Dogs: I can see based on the report that this is indeed a hot-button topic, but my impression as a (non-dog-owning) walker is that Fresh Pond, on any given day, looks like it is a dog park. I would much prefer (and indeed feel safer) if all dogs were required to be leashed everywhere as it's apparent that a lot of owners cannot be relied upon to follow the off-leash norms. To make certain areas off-leash and others not would only make awareness of this regulation and its enforcement very difficult.

Moreover, I've recently been attacked (large dog jumped up to my shoulders, scratching my belly on its way down) by a "friendly" dog while the owner chatted on her cell phone and did nothing to stop it, even the second time the dog jumped on me (this was near the playground in Kingsley Park, by the way.) I feel that in a public space, especially one with the priority of protecting our water supply and its ecology, it is logical and considerate and within reason to expect dogs to be leashed. I can't express how much I relish the nearly dog-free paths of Butterfly and Lusitania Meadows. Some of the anti-leash comments rely on the "historical" precedence of it being an off-leash area but this process needs to look at present-day and the volume of visitors to the pond is a lot for the space given to users and take into consideration people who do not own dogs, and indeed might not feel comfortable around them at all. (Might the City acquire land for a dogs-only park to appease the dog-owners?)

2. Bicyclists and runners: Many times these folks have come uncomfortably close to me at high speed and do not seem to realize that it is worrisome to walkers.

3. Paths: I have been using what I thought was an actual path (it's wood-chipped) that leads to the top of Kingsley from the far pond side and am unclear whether that is/will be permitted?

3. Reporting misuse or other suggestions: I definitely think the idea of an online suggestion form is worth pursuing. Also, are calls to report misuse allowed on the "Emergency" phone stations?

4. Enforcement: Is it possible to have a consistent and noticeable staff presence to enforce the norms? Otherwise, they will continue to be ignored.

5. Golf Course: I have wondered why public land that borders the heavily-used Fresh Pond paths is restricted to a comparatively small and elite membership of people rather than opening that beautiful area to walkers and runners. This seems like a bad idea to me, especially given the congestion on the pond's paths.



Again, thank you for the time and effort you put into making Fresh Pond a wonderful place to frequent, and for this opportunity to submit my own comments.

Thank you,  
Jamie

## **Hannon, Christine**

I know this is the last day for comments. I have walked the pond for 29 years-almost daily. I have been involved with various committees over the years to try and make the pond a more pleasant place for all. It was the perfect spot for us as a family, with a dog, to walk and get exercise for ALL of us-important, when I had babies. And as my children are grown, we have enjoyed meeting other young families who are delighted to have their kids meet dogs and have a chance to pat them. It is part of the charm of fresh pond. I know it has been said that people need a place to go for peace and quiet. There are many places in Cambridge for that. There are many places to run and ride bikes. It is also NOT a park for kids in the sense that there are only three swings. There are MANY fabulous parks /playgrounds for kids in the city where dogs are not allowed. This is the one and only place for families with dogs to get the exercise we all need at one time. I understand that it is a water reservoir and I respect that. I also respect and admire the environmental work done at the pond over the last few years. I do not think dogs off leash will undo this work. I really hope in the end that a reasonable set of regulations will be put in -place. Also, eventually hope that enforcement will be part of the process-especially about picking up after dogs poop. This is a treasure for all of us and I hope it will remain as such. Christine Hannon

**Kahn, Julie**

While I appreciate the thoughtfulness and hard work of everyone involved in this shared use plan I find it to be a move in the wrong direction for the community I have come to know while walking around the reservoir these past 15 years. The proposed plan strikes me as unenforceable while giving complainers more rules that they can complain about. It is very confusing and it divides further an already divisive small space. The rules are also weighted in an anti-dog sensibility rather than in a way that would promote good dog/human interaction.

As a member of AARP (taking fossamax, I might add) I am well aware of the dangers of falling. I have had daily conversations, all extremely pleasant with elderly men and women with my dogs sitting by in a well behaved fashion. Often I have been told how it is no longer possible for them to own a dog and that seeing dogs at the pond is a happy occasion. Mindfulness and kindness is preferable to restrictions and other isolating techniques.

Nor do I see the reason to separate dogs from children. I have many lovely memories of what would otherwise be nearly intolerable urban winters from time spent watching sledders who have in fact sometimes brought the family dog along. I teach my dogs to sit for children so that we can all enjoy each other.

Let's not lose what we have by solving problems with unenforceable rules and boundaries.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Julie Kahn

## **Keats, Shane**

Dear Mr. Healy, Mr. Corda and Ms. Sciarrio:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed recommendations of the Fresh Pond Shared Use Public Engagement Process.

I am a dog owner who uses Fresh Pond at least once per day. The new restrictions on off-leash dogs are founded in emotion rather than fact, punitive, and contrary to the spirit of community that we justly pride ourselves on.

### **Lack of Data**

I attended the first meeting of the process and a number of people asked for evidence that off-leash dogs were disruptive or dangerous. If experts had explained that the introduction of off-leash dogs had led to the destruction of habitats X, Y and Z, I would feel differently. If the police had said incidents of serious dog bites had climbed from a handful a year to dozens, I would feel differently. But neither the Water Board members, the CPD officers in attendance or the CBI staff could point to a single piece of quantitative data in support of these concerns.

### **Punitive and Unfair**

The new restrictions single out dog owners exclusively. All other stakeholders are treated with kid gloves. Why no significant new restrictions on speeding bicyclists? What about road race teams that intimidate people (and dogs) when 10, 20 or more people race by? Reading the final report, it is clear that dog owners' worst suspicions were borne out.

### **Dissenting Voices**

40% of the members withheld their approval from the recommendations and 55% signed but with reservations. Consensus will never be achieved, but these numbers show that this is a deeply flawed proposal. This isn't "good enough." It deserves to be rejected outright.

### **Contrary to Cambridge community standards**

A couple of times a month, I grumble when a bicyclist rides too fast, or when a dozen race runners pound by, or when a dog owner fails to pick up after his animal. But in a park as busy as Fresh Pond, in a diverse, urban environment like Cambridge, these kinds of "annoyances" are no more than that. It is a price I am happy to pay to be part of this community. Rather than new regulations, the community should be encouraged to do more of what it already does so well - develop its own norms of behavior. It is the best way to address all of our desires that Fresh Pond remain a place of great enjoyment for so many.

Sincerely,

Shane Keats

**Kraus, Rozann**

Since I'm sure there are many messages to read:

Mixed use mean that all users must be aware of and respectful of all other users.

Slow movers should keep to the right; pass on the left

Bicyclists should signal around corners and when they're passing

For safety issues, if you are using headphones be very visually aware of what's occurring around you.

Off leash dogs should be trained to keep away from bikes and to stay out of the way of runners

Maybe not possible to enforce: Every cyclist must wear a helmet while inside Fresh Pond.

Thanks for all your hard work.

**Leslie, Crystal A.**

## VIEW OF AN ELDERLY CYCLIST

I am 70 and can't walk well so I like to bike. Note that there are quite a few people who cannot walk well but can bike. I live just 2 minutes bike ride from the pond and try to use it 3 or 4 times a week. From this selfish viewpoint I find that unleashed dogs are a complete menace and a real threat to my safety. A leashed dog is a safe dog from the cyclists point of view and you would see a lot more elderly cyclists and walkers if dogs were leashed

Because of the increase in dog numbers that majority of which are unleashed I use FP less and less and this I think must be true of others...especially the elderly and those young and old who are afraid of dogs. I foresee that by the time I am 75 that the risk of hurting myself by being knocked off my bike will become just too great. I have already had one incident of being knocked off my bike at FP by a running dog and dozens of close calls. Because one has to be so vigilant the ride is becoming less and less relaxing and pleasant, I have made some informal observations to illustrate this .

A. First I avoid going at busy times when the dog population can be 40 plus on one circuit of the pond. At less busy times going round the main loop once I would meet 2 to 3 other cyclists and 25 to 30 dogs. If there are MORE dogs than this I have to give up as the ride becomes too fraught. The other cyclists are generally middle aged or else very young on trikes or kids bikes. Despite what was said at the meeting only very rarely do I see "speeding bikes". Yes, maybe once or twice a year I have seen a group of teens going faster than they should but this is rare, because "teens" are not frequenters of this path for biking.

B. Another issue is that in the 30 years I have lived in the area the use of FP for all activities has hugely expanded. At some point there will HAVE to be constraints as how many dogs, people, cyclists etc. can use that narrow path at one time. You cannot keep pouring more and more people/ dogs / runners into a space that is not expanding.

I suggest that whoever is considering this report should actually get on a bike and cycle round the pond. If they do this they will discover the following:

1. OFF LEASH dogs are like toddlers...they are unpredictable and a cyclist has no idea in what direction a dog will go. Unleashed dogs are NOT under voice control of their owners in the main because even if the owner sees you approaching they rarely pay any attention or even think about calling the dog to heel. Even the best of dog owners rarely call their dog to heel when they see you. I have known this to happen just once in my years of cycling in FP.
2. Dogs are often very far ahead or behind the owner. One is always worried that they will they run up and jump around your bike. Although this happens rarely it happened to me just last week, so it is not rare enough.

3. Another worry is that dogs will come hurtling all excited out of the woods. This happens fairly often and I am very nervous and alert when I pass this wooded area.
4. The dogs are often far from their owners and where there are group of dogs it is hard to know who is the owner. Owners tend to hurry away or not respond when the dog misbehaves.
5. There are the dog owners walking multiple unleashed dogs. One wonders if they are a dog walking service and should this be allowed?
6. There are dog owners who gather in the path to meet and greet with 5 to 7 dogs milling about, a nightmare for the cyclist. People do not pay attention to a bike bell so I have found the safest approach is to say "Coming to your R or L". They are so busy getting out of your way they never look about for their dog. Should such gatherings on the path be permitted?
7. I have been shouted at for saying " Coming on your Right ". One lady told me "Lady this is a park for dogs, and cyclists should not be here". In fact that is how I increasingly feel...that there is no room in the park EXCEPT for unleashed dogs and their owners. If there are crowds of people strung across the path with their unleashed dogs I generally have to dismount my bike to avoid the dogs. How many times can you do this if you want a pleasant ride?
8. I have seen unleashed dogs with long trailing leashes, an extreme danger for a cyclist.
9. There are the dogs whose owners throw them sticks and balls along the path. It is very tricky to avoid a dog rushing back to its owner all excited with a stick or ball. Should this be allowed? I was knocked from my bike in one such incident.
10. Then there are owners who don't even hear your shouts to move right or left because they are so absorbed in cell phones conversations or in listening to music. I have found that bike bells do not attract attention and I have to say loudly "coming to your right of left "to get their attention. However when people have their ears plugged they cannot hear you! Should cell phones and head phones be banned if you are in charge of a dog or child?
11. The dogs have more privileges than me as a cyclist since as I understand it is now recommended that cyclists have NO access to Lusitania meadow and other areas round Neville Manor where DOGS are now allowed on leash.
12. My needs are less than the non Cambridge residences who walk their dogs in FP off leash. Surely they should be lobbying their own towns to allow dogs off leash in their parks.

#### In Summary

I only attended the last meeting which was very acrimonious with many groups such as my own not represented or seemingly not allowed to speak (elderly, disabled and parents with kids). This last session seemed to be entirely dominated by those who wanted to walk their dogs

unleashed. Larger issues were ignored, i.e. the golf course which occupies a large subsidized space for those with the means to pay for access.

With respect to this smaller issue of unleashed dogs, I feel squeezed out of my local park because of these unleashed dogs and I think there are many groups who were not represented at these meetings such as elderly walkers, the disabled, and those who are afraid of dogs who have just given up using FP because of unleashed dogs.



**Li, Michelle**

Dear City of Cambridge,

Thank you for the public engagement process in determining a Shared Use Plan for Fresh Pond. I am writing to address several points in the Fresh Pond Shared Use Public Engagement Process Recommendations (Final Report).

First of all, I am profoundly befuddled by the characterization of core groups in the report. So many times I've visited Fresh Pond and see people engage in a variety of activities such as walking, walking with dogs, walking with small and large children, enjoying nature, bird watching, nature watching, jogging, jogging with baby stroller and dog, biking, biking with child(ren), biking with dog, biking with both, etc. Nowhere in this report is this mixed used demographic represented. Instead, it seems to paint Fresh Pond users into a balkanized state. I object to this characterization.

Also I am writing in support of not discriminating against non-Cambridge residents. Surely Cambridge does not aim to exclude and support the notion of itself as elitist. All visitors to the park should abide by the same rules. Asking non resident walkers with dogs to purchase a medallion to identify themselves as non-residents is discriminatory. If a medallion program is adopted, all dogs owners should be subject to buy-in. Please consider the revenue that non-residents bring into the City when they visit Fresh Pond reservation. I believe that state funding is used in the upkeep of the park as well, which should compel the city to welcome users of this public space regardless of residency.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Michelle Li

**Lukas, Henry**

I attended the program about the Fresh Pond study on Monday but was not able to stay for the whole meeting.

One tangential question I have regards the use of the railroad tracks - both those that run along the east side by the Parkway plus the extension that runs under Huron Ave toward Watertown.

I walked to the meeting on Monday and while crossing the Huron Ave bridge over the tracks, I was wondering if an extension could be made of the Pond reservation to use this track area which is very lush in trees and growth as part of the overall Pond plan. It would make a great walking, running or bicycling path. It might even be a good path for the dog walkers. I assume the city does not yet own this right-of-way but I am asking if there are any plans in the works to use this space in the near future.

I look forward to your response.

Henry Lukas

## **McClellan, Anita D.**

I am a dog owner and a parent of school-age children who uses Fresh Pond at least daily with dog and children, both young and teenagers. Why is it that New York City's Central Park is able to handle MILLIONS of annual visitors with and without dogs, so is London <http://tinyurl.com/44vcbrw>, where deer and exotic fowl roam free, while Cambridge is either busy reinventing the dogs-in-park wheel or writing absurd and unenforceable regulations?

### **Deja-vu all over again**

The June 15, 2011, proposed

Fresh Pond Shared Use Public Engagement Process Recommendations from the 2010-11 process, which I participated in, have totally failed to live up to the consensus-seeking process among stakeholders through Consensus Building Institute's facilitation, as dissenters to the public report have written. The report is a throwback to the 2006-07 Water Department's attempt to impose mandatory city-issued Dog Medallions for a fee along with recordkeeping by medallion number on people's/dogs' Fresh Pond behaviors.

Both City Council and City Manager ruled in April 2007 that the Water Board overstepped its authority. See the article in Cambridge Chronicle: <http://www.traildogs.org/freshpondpostponed.htm>

### **Nothing but Anecdotal Evidence at public meetings; No Data in Final Report**

No member of the Water Board staff or any Cambridge municipal officers in attendance at the meetings produced hard data regarding a critical mass of dogs at Fresh Pond displaying violent, threatening, or otherwise disruptive behaviors. In fact, one could as well substitute adolescents at Fresh Pond off-leash, err, unsupervised, for the same anecdotes. Dogs and teens--both well- and not-so-well behaved--dog lovers, dog shunners, the feeble, the strong, the fearful, the fearless make up our community. Let's all try to get along at Fresh Pond without stigmatizing any user or, groan, writing up draconian rules.

Let's just agree to abide by the universally honored preschooler's guide to group behavior. Everything we need is in there somewhere.

- Share everything.
- Play fair.
- Don't hit people.
- Put things back where you found them.
- Clean up your own mess.
- Don't take things that aren't yours.
- Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody.
- Watch for traffic and stick together, holding hands or leashes when necessary.
- Flush--pick it up.
- Wash your hands before you eat.

- I would only add (from The Dog Trainer's Guide to Parenting by Harold R. Hansen) to reward good behavior, practice patience, and invoke the 3 golden commands useful for dogs, under-21s, and the unruly--Sit, Stay, Lie down.

By the way, folks, Cambridge faucets do not pour out potable water directly from Fresh Pond Reservoir. See the recent Cambridge Water Dept. mailing to residents "Drinking Water Quality Report June 2011," page 3's "Where Does Your Water Come From?"

Regarding the rising number of Fresh Pond users, well, I am sure Camb PD records will show that rapes, assaults, and other unsavory practices at Fresh Pond have dropped in direct proportion to the rising number of visitors. That's a good thing.

**Milmoe, Catherine**

Hello,

I attended the first and last meeting of the FP shared use engagement process. I classify myself primarily as a dog owner/walker at FP. I am a life-long city resident. I have been at FP almost on a daily basis the past 11 1/2 years. I have seen the Pond become more crowded over the years, but still find it a great refuge in a busy city. The Pond has also become more beautiful over the years, which I greatly appreciate and enjoy.

My one comment from all I heard at the last meeting is this: I do not agree with opening Kingsley Park to dogs. I find that it has become a pleasant spot for those w/o dogs and believe it should remain this way. My feeling is there is plenty of space for dogs at FP, no reason this beautiful space needs to be opened to dogs. There are plenty of parks in the area; Tobin, Glacken, St. Peters to name a few, for dogs to run. Kingsley Park was overrun with dogs before they were banned. It is now so beautiful. I would hate to see all that come to an end. It's also a nice alternative to walkers who can't or choose not to walk around the Pond, for instance, my 84 year old mother no longer walks the Pond because it's too much physically, but also because she is very fearful of being knocked over by dogs off leash. She finds Kingsley to be a pleasant and manageable alternative.

Thanks for all your hard work.

Catherine Milmoe

**Moriarty, Brian**

Good Morning,

I am a resident of Somerville and I enjoy walking our dog at Fresh Pond. I would love it if there were some way that non-Cambridge dogs could be allowed to be off leash. Maybe a non-resident pass system or something similar so that the city can be sure there are measures in place for safety.

Brian Moriarty

**Moriarty, Jessica**

Hello,

I absolutely loved going to the fresh pond reservation until I learned that the rights of a non-Cambridge dog were different than if you lived there. What a great space for everyone to be able to enjoy the environment with the same rights as all visitors. Looking for the rule to be changed where non-Cambridge dogs have the same rights as a Cambridge dog to be off leash all the way around the reservation.

We look forward very much to walking the trails again.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jessica Moriarty  
and sweet Abby (our dog)

**Muehe, Michael J.**

Dear Ms. Sciarrio,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Fresh Pond Shared Use Public Engagement Process Recommendations, dated June 15, 2011.

As you know, Sandy Durmaskin, Board Member of the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD), forwarded to you on March 16, 2011 our recommendations for changes to the February 16, 2011 Draft List of Norms and Expectations by Use/User Group (see below). Ms. Durmaskin also offered many other suggestions and comments throughout the public engagement process regarding the use of Fresh Pond by persons with disabilities.

Frankly, we are disappointed that the expressed interests of this identified user group, people with disabilities, are largely absent from the final report, and we respectfully request that the following comments be documented for the record:

- The final report implies that there was little input from persons with disabilities, when in fact, five of the seven meetings were attended by at least one CCPD member, who verbally offered specific suggestions, in addition to providing written comments, such as those below. Two persons with disabilities signed up as CORE volunteers at the first meeting and a third gave contact information and volunteered to review materials and give input. The CBI represented at the first meeting that they would “do outreach to underrepresented groups.” If the CORE volunteer dropped out after the first CORE meeting, why was there no outreach to persons with disabilities to fill this gap?
- Requirements as legally mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (521 CMR) are not included and prioritized in the report. Ten years after City Council approved the Fresh Pond Master Plan, there remains no implementation plan or timetable. For example, is there a plan to level/widen/maintain paths that are not ADA-compliant? This should be prioritized, to comply with law and for safety and access of all users. It should also be noted that the only pathway that is accessible to persons year round is designated as an off-leash area for dogs, giving many persons with disabilities needing to avoid canine contact no other options.
- There is no mention of service dogs. For example, policies and signage indicating areas where no dogs are allowed must contain language such as “except for service animals.” In addition, the report’s suggestions on how to approach and interact with dogs are not appropriate for service animals. As offered in our comments of March 16, specific language such as “Get permission from a person with a disability before approaching or interacting with his/her service animal” should be included in the report.
- The last bullet point under “Norms of Behavior” on page 7 should be changed to “to



provide equal access to seniors and persons with disabilities and to ensure full compliance with accessibility laws and regulations” and “to provide for children” should be a separate bullet point.

Thank you very much for your consideration of these recommendations. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best regards,  
Michael

## **Robillard, Paul**

Dear CBI Coordinators,

Thank you for organizing the “Shared-Use Plan” public meetings. I believe the process improved public awareness as well as achieving a framework for future planning objectives.

### **OVERVIEW:**

As CBI and the City of Cambridge implement the “Share-Use Plan” (SUP), I suggest that the following three criteria be used to guide the process (in order of importance)

1. Public safety
2. Protection of Water Supply
3. Provide appropriate recreational opportunities for Cambridge residents

Since I am a daily walker at Fresh Pond, I have casually noticed that the majority (possibly as high as 90%) of the users of Fresh Pond are respectful and courteous to all user groups. In fact, I believe that the SUP meetings have already increased public awareness and understanding of the “shared-use concept”.

Despite the respectful environment at Fresh Pond, there are problems that need to be addressed:

1. Conflicting uses do put the public safety at risk.
2. The public does not fully appreciate the need to protect the Cambridge Water Supply
3. Actual and potential conflicts do impact user groups differently.

*A few examples of these concerns include:*

1. Unleashed dogs have bitten people. “Dog bites account for about a third of homeowners’ insurance liability claims”. Approximately 4.7 million Americans are bitten by dogs each year. The average claim exceeds \$24,000 (Insurance Information Institute, reference attached). In addition unleashed dogs intimidate and pester other Fresh Pond users.
2. Speeding bikes are seen every day. They are a potential danger to all user groups, including other bikers.
3. Many users desire a peaceful and enjoyable walk around Fresh Pond. This is not always possible in the current environment. The quality and safety of recreational uses and appreciation of the restored natural environment of Fresh Pond should be emphasized in SUP.

### **MOVING FORWARD WITH THE “Fresh Pond Shared-Use Plan”**

Many of these comments and suggestions are included in the current SUP presented at the June 16, 2011 meeting, which I support.

1. Develop a “soft” 1-2 year educational program which builds on the June 16 SUP plan. Organize and strengthen user groups that participated in the SUP process (walkers, bikers, walkers with dogs, birders, protectors of the natural environment, etc.....). An example would be a “coaches clinic’ to lessen the tension of “pack runners” or races (pack leaders warn teammates to move to right as walkers and others approach). Monitoring and control of speeding bikes will lessen possible serious harm to children, other people and dogs. Maximum speed should be 5mph – the equivalent a slow jog.
2. The main perimeter path (approximately 30ft. wide) should remain a general use area for all stakeholder groups. The perimeter path is currently essentially a “park” used by all stakeholder groups. Usage will likely grow substantially in the future, particularly as restoration projects conclude and mature.
3. All remaining reservation lands should be designated as “habitat areas”. These areas should represent past, present and future protected and restored habitats as determined by the “Fresh Pond Master Plan”, Friends of Fresh Pond and public input. Designated habitat areas can be as small as the recently designated “Woodland Restoration and Native Plant Demonstration Project” or as large as the Northeast Sector Project. These areas should remain protected areas with bikes, dogs and any disruptive activities not allowed. Fencing may be required as determined by the CWD. Example map attached.
4. Educational materials should be expanded to emphasize protection of the Cambridge Water Supply. The standard for watersheds draining to public water supplies includes forested areas with no public access. Using this standard, data is generally not needed to determine whether an activity impacts the water supply.
5. Following a 1-2 year “educational program”, the CWD, along with stakeholder groups, should implement a more aggressive plan, which deals with disrespectful visitors and rogue individuals. More stringent rules and enforcement procedures should be adopted as needed.
6. Report incidents: Dog bites, bike accidents, etc.) should all be reported to the ranger station. When offending parties leave the scene, a description of the party should be included in the report. It is important that an reported incident be dealt with immediately.

## **TOOLS**

1. Continued support and involvement of user and stakeholder groups identified during the SUP meetings of the past year are critical to the implementation phases of SUP.
2. Encourage City Council to support SUP as it evolves

3. Maps, incident reports as well as other information and resources should be made available at the Ranger Station.

4. Signage is needed. As a minimum a sign indicating where the ranger station is located is needed immediately. This sign should welcome visitors and indicate that information about Fresh Pond is located in the station.

Additional signs should be located at all “emergency call boxes” indicating that incident reports and other information can be obtained at the ranger station. All signage should be aesthetically presented in conjunction with the CWD restoration efforts.

5. Ranger help. During high volume visitor days, Ranger Jean should be assisted by a person on bike to monitor the perimeter road as well as other high usage areas in the reservation. The assistant should ride (very slowly) around the pond every 1-2 hours identifying problems and distributing a brief summary of SUP guidelines.

Thanks again for organizing this important planning effort. All visitors to Fresh Pond Reservation will benefit from this process and plan.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if additional details or clarification of my comments are needed.

Paul Robillard

**Seelman, Elizabeth; Shur, Janet; Thompson, Claudia; Wendel, Josefine**

TO: Consensus Building Institute, the City Manager and Mayor of Cambridge  
RE: Public Comment on the “Fresh Pond Shared Use Public Engagement Process Recommendations” (June 15, 2011)  
FROM: Josefine Wendel, Claudia Thompson, Janet Shur, Elizabeth Seelman

We write from the perspective of participants in the process, as all of us served as members of the “Core Group” that engaged in lengthy deliberations throughout. We committed extensive time to participate in the process because initially we hoped for an equitable outcome, but this did not prove to be the case. We dissented from the final recommendations for the following reasons.

It became clear as the Core Group was selected and then began to meet, that it would not serve to represent the citizens of Cambridge as a whole. Amongst the Core Group, approximately 50% were active dog walkers at the Reservation and their concerns expressed at meetings focused almost exclusively on that issue, rather than the constituencies many had pledged to represent. The Core Group as a whole lacked diversity, as its members were almost all white and middle class. Ethnic minorities including Blacks and Hispanics were not represented, even though they comprise a significant portion of the City’s population. Furthermore, during deliberations, several Core members explicitly stated that our job was NOT to represent the City as a whole. Instead, they maintained that the process was intended to recognize the interests of simply those who were able to come to the public meetings, and especially groups that could mobilize the loudest voices.

The importance of Fresh Pond as our City’s water supply also got short shrift, with no attention to, or acknowledgement of, the impact of our human activities on water quality. We debated over uses as if the Reservation has no other purpose than to meet our recreational desires, and this gross oversight did a disservice to the process and the outcome.

Emphatically, and given these shortcomings of the process, we ask that City officials take a big step back before proceeding with any plan. The final decisions of the Water Department need to:

- Ensure the safety of our public water supply, first and foremost;
- Protect the Reservation as the City's largest open space, including its importance to wildlife and to local environmental quality; and
- Prioritize the right of all city residents to enjoy this wonderful place as a refuge from busy urban life, over the interests of a minority group of only dog owners.

Well into the process, we were instructed that any proposals to require dogs to be on leash on any portion of the Perimeter Path were simply “non-starters” and “off the table.” Thus, there was never any serious discussion about a wide range of options that could have gone much, much further to make this a genuinely SHARED USE plan. With the mandate we were given, the views and interests of a large number of Cambridge residents were

declared, effectively, unworthy of discussion. This was wrong. Policy making should not have originated with a requirement to continue the current practice of treating the Reservation as a place for off-leash dogs first and foremost, above all other needs. The responsible starting assumption should have been the same as it is at any of the other parks throughout the City—dogs are presumed to be on leash first, and any designated places or times for dogs to be off leash must ensure public safety and the ability of all users to enjoy the space. Finally, given Fresh Pond’s importance to our water supply, it is extremely disturbing and should worry all of us that the Reservation is now listed as a regional destination “Dog Park” on numerous websites ([www.bringfido.com](http://www.bringfido.com), [goby.com](http://goby.com), [www.ecoanimal.com](http://www.ecoanimal.com), and many more).

Before implementing any final plan, we ask the City to:

- Gather more accurate and complete data about all current users, including quantifying the numbers of people in different user groups, and to survey a representative cross section of these user groups (by an independent consultant) to get a more accurate picture of all user concerns and preferences;
- Reach out to City residents not currently using the Reservation to determine the reasons why they don't come, including how many feel unsafe in coming or have stopped coming because of a fear of off-leash dogs;
- Scientifically document how the safety of our public water supply can be ensured given the high intensity of dog use currently present and supported in the proposal, especially in light of MA 310 CMR 22.20B, which prohibits livestock and domestic animals within 100 feet of reservoirs and public water supplies for health reasons.
- Develop policies that reverse the trend turning Fresh Pond Reservation into regional dog park, now being widely publicized on the web, and serving dog walkers from throughout the Metro area over the interests of all Cambridge residents.

As Members of the Core Group, we appreciate the opportunity to share more fully our reasons for dissenting from the recommendations.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Seelman  
Janet Shur  
Claudia Thompson  
Josefine Wendel

**Siperstein, Dr. Linda J.**

Greetings,

I have been staying abreast of the plans at Fresh Pond, including the recent set of recommendations. I am a big fan of FP, and use the area frequently. When I bring friends, they are always impressed with how FP is so well tended and the variety of people who can make use of its resources.

My main concern going forward is that if we are to have areas that are "people only" that there be a well planned way to realistically ensure those areas are separated from the other "dogs and people" areas. I am a big fan of the short permanent fencing that is now in place in a few spots around the pond. It does keep dogs on their side (the temporary fencing is too soft and curls up, so it really isn't much of a fence at all) and makes it a straight forward matter to determine where dogs and their people are supposed to be.

Please consider using some sort of hard fencing to delineate and separate the people only areas, so that dog owners are *able* to be good dog owners.

Thanks for all the work you put into our beautiful Fresh Pond.

Cheers,  
Dr. Linda J. Siperstein

**Small, David**

As a frequent user of Fresh Pond and longtime Cambridge resident I wanted to share my comments on the Recommendations.

My main concern is regarding the possible restriction of use by dog owners, such as myself. The current rules for use of Fresh Pond by dogs work very well for me and my 3 year old goldendoodle. He especially loves to swim at the little dog beach. I basically wanted to say that I am in agreement with the comments made by Jane Beal on page 23 of the report and would oppose new restrictions on off-leash dog use at the park. The current rules are strict enough and I think strike a good balance.

Sincerely,

Dave



**Strang, Susan**

As a long time Cambridge resident and Fresh Pond neighbor I and our family have used the Reservation for decades. Cambridge and the surrounding towns have all doubled the number of dog licenses in the last decade. There are simply more dogs in these towns and there are now more dogs at Fresh Pond. Since I walk the pond at least twice a week, I have observed numerous off leash dogs who are usually far from their owner or dog walker and most are not responsive to verbal commands. They are a nuisance and the safety of a public place is not guaranteed. I grew up with a dog, one of our daughters has a dog but there is a reason for leash laws, particularly in urban areas.

I welcomed the group meetings, I attended some but not all. The Core Group process was hijacked by dog owners who volunteered to represent other groups, bike riders, runners, etc. Therefore people who walk without dogs who would prefer that dogs be leashed were at a disadvantage. This is not news, it was openly discussed in conversations at the last public meeting. This is unfortunate. This issue will not go away and the City and the Water Board will need to continue to work toward a better solution.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Strang

**Strauss, Monica**

The following three suggestions are made regarding the Fresh Pond Shared Use Report:

- A major requirement of any landscape work at Fresh Pond should be Poison Ivy marking and eradication. Poison Ivy is extremely toxic, especially to children.
  
- The swamp area in the "dog bowl" should be fenced in.
  
- Bins for recycling glass, plastic, cans and other standard recyclables should be placed near the parking lots and other entrances to Fresh Pond.

**Strell, Barbara**

I read the final Fresh Pond Usage report and am concerned that the plan doesn't go far enough in providing for habitat preservation. I believe that all access paths from the surrounding roadways into the Perimeter Path should require dogs to be on-leash. Dogs in Kingsley Park should be on-leash as well. The Kingsley bioswale, as well as the Woodland Restoration and Native Plant Demonstration Project at the other end of the reservation, are beautiful areas that have served as important places to teach about native plants. Dogs in these areas may destroy the plants that some are striving so hard to preserve. Fresh Pond is an oasis in Cambridge that can help provide an opportunity to teach generations about the natural world. I hope the beauty of Fresh Pond can be preserved for years to come.

Barbara Strell

## **Voiland, Luke**

Dear City Councilors and others,

As a dog owner, I would like to inform the council of several issues related to dog ownership in Cambridge and suggest a potential solution. I have owned a dog in the city for several years now and have seen a disturbing increase in conflict between dog owners and non-dog owners. In my experience this conflict falls into three categories. First, the enforcement and management of leash laws. Second, increased competition for the use of public space. And third, a failure to manage dangerous dogs within the community.

**Enforcement and Management of Leash Laws** - It is my understanding that dogs are required to be on leash at all times except for in specific areas of the city (Fresh Pond, etc.). These areas are distributed unequally across the city resulting in areas with no off leash access. Responsible dog owners understand that dogs (like people) require adequate exercise in order to live a well adjusted life. Except for a few small dogs, it is difficult for a dog to be properly exercised on leash. This puts responsible dog owners in the unfortunate position of having to break the law in order to properly care for their dogs. While I understand the leash laws were enacted to manage unpredictable and dangerous animals, this unfairly penalizes responsible dog owners who have invested the time and energy to train their dogs. It seems a solution that can distinguish between trained and untrained dogs should be sought.

**Competition for use of Public Space** - In East Cambridge there seems to have been a surge in usage at the local park. Competing uses include several organized sports (softball and soccer), informal sports (volleyball, basketball, frisbee, kite flying) and dog walkers. As competition for space increases tensions have flared. Understandably many parents are concerned about dogs that are not properly trained or under control. As a parent myself, I want my dog and son to be able to play together in a safe environment. If there were a way to distinguish between trained and untrained dogs, it might go a long way to alleviating non-dog owners anxiety in crowded parks.

**Management of Dangerous Dogs** - Responsible dog owners in the local community know and understand which dogs are problematic. We understand that not every animal should be off leash or should even be around other people or other dogs. Owners within the dog community need to take greater responsibility for reporting problem animals and working with Animal Control to solve problems as they arise. Unfortunately, since responsible owners cannot exercise their dogs off-leash there has developed a certain animosity and distrust of Animal Control since there is always the threat of a citation. This removes any incentive for working with Animal Control and results in an acrimonious culture around dog issues. If there were a way for dog owners to demonstrate their commitment to responsible dog ownership, an improved relationship with Animal Control authorities could develop. This would result in a closer working relationship that will help us manage the problems related to irresponsible ownership.

Given these issues, I would like to propose a potential solution that might work to alleviate many of these concerns. The city, with the help of dog experts, could establish a set of criteria required for a dog to be allowed off leash in Cambridge. Dogs that meet the criteria would be issued an "Off-Leash License". The AKC program for Good Canine Citizens ([http://www.akc.org/events/cgc/training\\_testing.cfm](http://www.akc.org/events/cgc/training_testing.cfm)) has requirements that could be a starting place, though these would have to be amended for off leash use. The city of Bookline has a similar program as does the city of Newton. Both, though, do not require a test. At a minimum, it seems all off-leash dogs should receive an AKC Good Canine Citizen badge in Cambridge. Of course, the city could charge a licensing fee (\$100-\$200) that would help cover the cost of the program. Licensed dogs would receive a special collar or tag that would allow Animal Control to easily identify licensed dogs. Through this measure it seems responsible dog ownership will increase in the city of Cambridge and enforcement will become much easier for Animal Control officers.

Please consider these important concerns as the council addresses dog related issues in the future. Responsible dog owners would be more than willing to participate in this sort of program if it were offered.

Sincerely,

Luke Voiland

**Wilkins, Peter**

**There should be no discrimination against non-Cambridge residents (N-CR) in regard to allowing their dogs to be off-leash at Fresh Pond (FP).**

Let us not cry "Wolf" and "The sky is falling." by citing one or two incidents and exaggerating that minute percentage of incidents into a permanently occurring hazard or state of affairs. The reality is that in general FP users from all contiguous communities get along extremely well and are considerate, responsible, respectful users of FP. Cambridge as a whole has a very effective, existing, means of controlling numbers. Parking in Cambridge is notoriously sparse for non-residents. There are many fine restaurants and shops in Cambridge that I, from Belmont, would happily frequent very regularly...I don't because of the lack of non-resident parking. The same applies to FP, although I, like many other N-CRs, can walk the short distance from my house to the pond.

Cambridge has a justly earned reputation for being a welcoming, non-discriminating city. Why be xenophobic on this one small issue?

- FP users are a cohesive community in themselves comprising members from contiguous towns whose catchment area is probably a maximum of 2 miles radius from FP.
- FP has been improved using MA taxpayers, N-CR, money as part of CPA funding.
- At least one N-CR has donated and erected a public seat at FP.
- Many N-CR dog owners already help at FP by picking up trash left by picnickers, teen drinkers, runners, and other users as they walk around FP.
- Many senior N-CR dog owners could not afford to pay an extra fee to Cambridge after already paying a license fee to their own towns.
- Statistics show that if you reduce the number of people in an area like FP, then both crime and vandalism increase.
- **N-CRs are not looking for parking spaces**, but merely to have the same off-leash privileges for their dogs as Cambridge residents.
- If a Cambridge resident is caring for the dog of an N-CR friend is that Cambridge resident also discriminated against?
- Enforcement of the non-resident dog issue detracts from enforcement of other more serious issues at FP.
- There will be no huge influx of N-CR dog walkers to FP as a result of allowing N-CR dogs to be off-leash. The existing parking restrictions will prevent that from happening.
- Cambridge does not discriminate against undocumented immigrants, why does the city discriminate against your good neighbors who are hosts to your water sources and reservoirs?