

February 10, 2011

Parks and Recreation Commissioners
Waterfront Committee Members
Albany, California

Dear commissioners and committee members:

I just got home from the February 10th meeting at which you heard comments from the public on the proposed policy for dogs at the Albany waterfront. (In this letter I am using the terms “Albany waterfront” and “waterfront” to refer broadly to the entire area including the City of Albany’s land, the Eastshore State Park lands, and the privately owned lands.) Unfortunately I arrived at the meeting too late to get my name on the speaker list, but I would like to submit my comments to you because I have experienced the Albany waterfront as a dog owner and as a person who does not own a dog. I therefore have a rather different perspective from the speakers I heard at the meeting (I did not stay to hear all of the speakers on the list)

The speakers I heard engaged in quite a bit of revision of history, and in so doing seem to want to establish a number of myths as fact. I would like to provide counterpoints to those myths in support of a policy that allows all members of the public, whether they are dog owners or not, to enjoy the waterfront

Myth number one It has always been this way

It did not take me long to “discover” the waterfront after moving to Albany with my family in 1998. At that time we did not own a dog, and the waterfront immediately became my preferred place to run. Three times a week I would run from my home on Madison Street, down Buchanan Street, circle around the bulb, and run home. Sometimes on weekends my family and I would spend time enjoying sunny afternoons on the beach, and/or walking among the artwork along the north shore.

For several years we encountered almost no dogs there. In fact, we encountered almost no people. The solitude and silence in the midst of the giant urban area in which we live was part of the beauty of the place. At some point, I can’t say exactly when but maybe it was around 2004 or 2005, the number of dog owners walking their dogs there off leash increased exponentially. It seemed that overnight the place became more crowded than Solano Avenue. All of a sudden it was not nearly as pleasant to spend time at the waterfront. Nevertheless, I continued my three runs a week there.

Albany beach or along the trails on the neck and bulb, he looks like he is experiencing sheer joy. How delightful to run with him three times a week along my old, original route! I also discovered that when I am with my dog at the waterfront, the other dogs ignore me. They want to play with or investigate my dog. I no longer have a problem with dogs charging and being aggressive toward me (occasionally some of them are aggressive toward my dog though)

So now, what can I say about the proposed policy? I appreciate the efforts of the Waterfront Committee and Parks and Recreation Commission in tackling this issue. As a public park, the Albany waterfront should be welcoming to everyone. I think it is entirely reasonable to have the bulb open to off-leash dogs and requiring dogs to be on a leash in all other areas. Therefore, I fully support the city's proposed policy.

The most important thing, however, is enforcement. Nothing will change unless the new policy is enforced. It would take an intensive effort at first, for a few months or some period of time, until people got the message that the city is serious about the policy. Once the public realizes that, enforcement efforts could probably slacken off. Could the city and the State Park division pool their resources somehow to beef up enforcement?

Thank you very much for considering my opinion.

Sincerely,

Carl Wilmsen

Ann Chaney

From: Abiud Amaro [abiud@parkoneprop.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 13, 2011 7:00 PM
To: Ann Chaney
Subject: Albany Bulb and dogs

My Comments in Albany Patch

Sorry folks but off-leash is a problem. I don't go there often but the last time we went with the family and my leashed dog, two dogs came within inches of me, my leashed dog and my family with a sheepish owner trailing behind telling me that the dog did not bite. My daughter was bitten by a dog whose owner did not have it leashed in another Albany park. I reported it to Albany Police and the owner got some training for his dog. These problem owners are handled by Berkeley Animal Control so there is a way to deal with these folks. Albany police is at (510) 525-7300.

At least I did not get a dog barking and jumping towards me at me while off leash, which I also saw happen while walking there. Twice. By the same dog. All within an hour. A person trying to get a calm, peaceful walk in the wilderness gets barked at by a dog with no owner nearby. That can ruin your day. Maybe the commissioners need to spend a few hours observing the situation to make their own conclusions. Unfortunately, one bonehead dog owner can spoil it for all.

Granted the beach has become a place for dogs to roam and we let him roam there with other dogs, but I did not know that it was against the law. Moreover, if humans want to use it then the dogs need to leave the humans alone. Is there disagreement on this?

And while we are at it, Memorial Park is also supposed to be for leashed dogs. As an Albany-Berkeley Soccer member I cannot tell you how many times we had bonehead owners leaving these dogs running wild while our kids are playing. I personally saw one dog get too excited in another field and actually bite a kid in the hand. Sorry is too late.

--
Abiud (AJ) Diaz-Amaro, M Sc
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Ann Chaney

From: Bryce Nesbitt [bryce2@obviously.com]
Sent: Monday, February 14, 2011 9 15 PM
To: Ann Chaney
Subject: Dog policy at waterfront - Save some beach for the children

Dear Ann,

I am writing in public comment to the proposed dog policy changes at the waterfront. I am generally in support of expansion of dog access and off-leash dog areas.

However, I request that any proposal include a dog-free section at the beach. Dogs in water are extra hard to control. Every single time I've tried to enjoy the beach with my small children, there have been dog problems. And that's not counting the poo issues. Dog and non-dog halves for the beach would work fine... though I do admit there is a challenge for how to sign and fence that sort of split.

Bryce Nesbitt
99 1/2 Ardmore Road
(child of Albany Schools)

Ann Chaney

From: Eileen Harrington
Sent: Friday, February 11, 2011 9:36 AM
To: Ann Chaney, Penelope Leach
Subject: FW: Contact the City of Albany

-----Original Message-----

From: Cityhall@albanyca.org [<mailto:Cityhall@albanyca.org>]
Sent: Friday, February 11, 2011 8:11 AM
To: City General Email Box
Subject: Contact the City of Albany

Submission information

Submitter DB ID : 5219
Submitter's language : Default language
IP address : 207.200.116.139
Time to take the survey : 21 min. , 21 sec.
Submission recorded on : 2/11/2011 8:10:44 AM

Survey answers

Your Information:

Name bill brewer
Email berkeleyhandyman@aol.com
Subject Albany Bulb

What can we do for you? Although I missed the meeting last night, I thought I should add my voice to those who have concerns about the Bulb. Visiting the Bulb, I never find the dogs to be a problem, the vast majority of dogs and dog owners/walkers are responsible. The single issue that prevents me from visiting the area more are the homeless camps and the trash, pollution and danger that come with them. I have been harassed by homeless people while wandering the trails on the Bulb. I would suggest a cleanup of the homeless camps, and a continued effort to prevent them from returning. Looking further into the future, I would like to see the main routes of the Bulb paved or otherwise made accessible to emergency vehicles and disabled people; I think the only route that would need modification would be the upper trail with the wooden bridge. The National Park service has discovered that paving trails in high use areas reduces erosion and off-trail damage because people will naturally stay on the easiest path, and not trample plants or bush-whack their own route, thus keeping the area more natural. This would also facilitate policing and maintaining the area. I have visited other Bay Area parks made on recovered landfills that have implemented paved bike path size trails. Volunteer efforts to cut down dangerous rebar near trails would be nice, too.