

CITY OF ALBANY  
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
STAFF REPORT

Agenda date: July 12, 2012

**TO:** Parks and Recreation Commission

**FROM:** Penelope Leach, Assistant City Manager/ Community Services Director

**SUBJECT:** Memorial Park Section B

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

That the Parks and Recreation Commission discuss with community potential solutions for maintaining Memorial Park ball field Section B in a manner that will provide multi-use opportunities currently and in the future. Staff is also recommending that no additional amenities such as the suggested benches, water fountain for dogs, and a double gate be installed.

**BACKGROUND**

At the May 10, 2012 Parks and Recreation (PR) Commission meeting residents requested and Commissioners agreed to discuss with the community the possibility of installing benches inside Section B at Memorial Park ball field. Please see the attached photo indicating the location of Section B.

Since the May 2012 PR Commission meeting, staff received additional information from residents regarding concerns pertaining to the condition and use of Section B. Given that the installation of benches may impact the use of the area, a broader discussion regarding current conditions and use of the area was warranted. At the June 14 meeting, the Commission discussed with the community concerns regarding the large number of dogs using the park on a regular basis, parking, noise from owners and barking dogs, and the deterioration of the turf. Dog owners frequenting Section B also spoke of its popularity for use as a place to exercise and socialize dogs and requested amenities for dogs be added to the area such as benches, a watering fountain for dogs, and a double gate.

In May and June of 2011, the PR Commission discussed and recommended to Council the installation of a fence separating Section A and Section B. Council approved the installation of the fence June 6, 2011. The purpose of the fence was to allow concurrent use by those permitted users on Section A and those wanting to use the field on an ad hoc basis in Section B.

## DISCUSSION

During the discussion regarding the fence installation separating section A and B, the PR Commission stated that the hours of operation and newly adopted ordinance regarding use would not change due to the fence installation.

The ordinance adopted by Council on October 19, 2009 reads:

It shall be unlawful for dogs to be designated areas during designated times and days in Albany's parks as set forth by the Albany City Council. The specific days, areas, and hours shall be adopted by resolution after considering recommendations from the Parks and Recreation Commission. At no time shall dogs be permitted inside the play structure areas of any of Albany's Parks. (Ord. #98-02, §1; Ord. #04-03, §1; Ord. #09-08, §1)

Via resolution #09-45:

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that no dogs are allowed on the sports field at Memorial Park on Mondays and Thursdays from 4:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and Saturdays from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Additionally, no dogs are allowed on the sports field when a field user has acquired a permit through the City of Albany for use of the sports field (and when any sports activity is present).

Since the fence was installed in July 2011, many residents assumed the sports field was separate from Section B and the hours when dogs were not allowed on the field were not applicable to Section B. However, there has been no action by the PR Commission or City Council that indicates Section B is no longer part of the sports field. The intent of section B was to allow for concurrent use for a variety of activities. Per comments during the PR Commission discussion and the discussion by Council members, the area is to remain available for multi-use to allow City staff the opportunity to schedule programs and events for the community as needed. The area was not to be designated as a “dog park” exclusively.

Staff also stated to neighbors that the only way to have the ordinance enforced was to contact the Albany Police Department. The Police Chief and his staff are making every effort to respond to calls in a timely manner and will continue to do so.

Although the intent is to keep Section B available for City run programs and activities, as well as those without dogs wanting an open space to play, the area has not recently been used for those purposes. Section B is primarily used by dog owners exercising and socializing their dogs. Staff reseeded the turf earlier this year; however, due to the high volume and frequency of dogs on the turf, the turf is again in very poor condition. Staff is not recommending a surface other than grass at this time.