

Section B Memorial Park

Alternatives as discussed at the Oct 11, 2012 PR Commission meeting

The alternatives listed below are derivatives from discussions that have taken place since the Parks and Recreation Commission began discussing possible changes to the use of Section B at Memorial Field in May 2012. Each for the alternatives below were discussed at the PR Commission meeting on Thursday, October 11, 2012.

Alternatives W, X, Y, and Z were included in a memo from staff to the PR Commission. Alternatives Z1, Z2, and Z3 were added to the list as part of the discussion at the Oct 12, 2012, PR Commission meeting.

Alternative W

Reseed Section B to regenerate healthy grass for the use of children five and under sports programs such as T-ball and soccer. Additionally, the grass area could be used for adult classes such as Tai Chi and Boot Camp as well as Albany High School P.E. classes. Outdoor programming for preschoolers and kindergarteners is popular and typically well-attended. Boot Camps for adults as well as more passive classes such as Tai Chi are also popular. Classes/programs could be offered intermittently throughout the week and weekends with no early morning or late evening time slots.

Using the area for such programs would mean no dogs at any time. Although most users pick-up after their dogs, some do not and there is the issue of dog urine. There is no way to clean-up dog urine and dog urine makes keeping the grass healthy more challenging. Moreover, it would be difficult for parents of young children to buy-in to using the area for small children knowing that when a child slides or falls on the grass there is a much higher possibility that the child will fall/slide in an area saturated with dog urine.

Additionally, currently there are issues with divots and holes in the ground due to dogs digging and scratching the ground and grass. This also makes maintenance more challenging and creates safety issues for users stepping in the holes/divots and twisting an ankle or falling.

Enforcement would be straight forward as no dogs would be allowed on the sports field at any time.

Maintenance would be in-line with what is being done on the larger field, Section A, with no additional annual costs.

After discussion of this alternative, the Commission decided that it was too extreme and removed it from the list of possibilities.

Alternative X

Turn Section B into a dog park exclusively. There are a number of residents who are interested in having a fenced in area to exercise and socialize their dogs. A surface other than grass that is conducive to a dog park could be installed making maintenance less challenging.

Using the area as a dog park exclusively would make enforcement much easier. Hours could be established such that in the early mornings and late evenings, no dogs are allowed. Signage (such as the Good Neighbor sign), pet amenities, and self-monitoring would need to be refined for this alternative.

Attachment 2: Alternatives presented at Oct 2012 PR Commission meeting

Challenges for this alternative include funding for the amenities and the new surface. Having recently adopted a two-year budget, no funds were budgeted for such a project. Additionally, turning the area into a dog park exclusively does not address the issues raised by some residents living near Section B; dogs barking, dogs fighting, owners yelling at dogs, odors from urine and feces, and aesthetics of installing a surface other than grass.

If the area is to be turned into a dog park, staff suggested keeping the grass and closing Section B three months out of the year to rest the field and reseed the area. Fields are closed in Albany each year from the end of November to the beginning of Feb (approximately two months). This alternative would mean closing Section B through the beginning of March (approximately three months). The additional cost to refurbish Section B each year would be approximately \$2,000.

Other surfaces used in dog parks included wood chips, decomposed granite, synthetic turf, and sand. Each of the surfaces listed have their own challenges with cost maintenance as well as aesthetics. After discussing other surfaces, grass is preferred.

After discussion of this alternative, the Commission decided that it was too extreme and removed it from the list of possibilities

Alternative Y

More restricted hours when dogs are allowed in Section B, for instance a few hours on weekends only, or a few hours throughout the week. This alternative could reduce maintenance issues as well as reduce the frequency of the issues raised by nearby neighbors; however, the hours would need to be significantly restricted in order to reduce maintenance needs for keeping the grass healthy.

Consistent, easy to understand hours when dogs are allowed in Section B would help with enforcement, but officers would likely still be called out for enforcement of those hours.

This alternative could mean that the Section B sits empty when dogs are not allowed. This would be beneficial to the nearby neighbors given the nature of their concerns; however, it is a poor choice for maintaining the area for multi-use. There would remain the issue of holes and divots as well as urine and feces which would negate the ability to offer the types of programs listed in Alternative W.

If the area is to be turned into a part-time dog park, staff suggested keeping the grass and closing Section B three months out of the year to rest the field and reseed the area. Fields are closed in Albany each year from the end of November to the beginning of Feb (approximately two months). This alternative would mean closing Section B through the beginning of March (approximately three months). The additional cost to refurbish Section B each year would be approximately \$2,000

Alternative Z

Maintain the status quo; however, improve signage and implement some of the ideas generated from the working group that met in August. Better signage, more self-monitoring, a volunteer maintenance program, another garbage can for feces, modifications to the irrigation system, and clearly stated hours when dogs are not allowed.

Attachment 2: Alternatives presented at Oct 2012 PR Commission meeting

Similar to Alternative Y, this alternative would negate the use of Section B for other programs as is evident now. Given the condition of the area, programming for other uses is not possible. The area would essentially remain a “de facto dog park.” Moreover, very few of the issues raised by nearby neighbors would be significantly reduced or resolved.

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After discussing Alternative Y and Z, the Commission directed staff to pursue a combination of these two alternatives. These two alternatives, particularly Alternative Z, include recommendations from the working group. Staff was also directed to ask the working group, the Dog ad Hoc Committee, and nearby neighbors to suggest hours when dogs are allowed in Section B. The working group addressed hours in their meetings in August; however, the Commission still preferred getting an updated poll of the hours the working group suggests.

There were three additional alternatives discussion at the Oct 11, 2012 meeting

Alternative Z1

Remove three sides of the perimeter fence surrounding Section B, keeping the fence separating Section A and B. This would decrease the “prison” looking fences that some neighbors have complained about. This scenario would create an open space similar to the open space at Memorial Park next to the play area and the tennis courts. This could create a more multi-use feel for the area and could be landscaped to be more aseptically pleasing.

After discussion of this alternative, although considered a feasible alternative, the Commission felt it was not the best alternative.

Alternative Z2

Move the dog area to the plot between the Vet’s Hall and the tennis courts where the high school garden is currently located and relocate the High School garden to Section B.

It was determined after discussion that this alternative did not provide enough space for a dog area and activities at the Vet’s Hall would be negatively impacted.

Alternative Z3

Remove the “new” fence separating Section A and Section B and return field to one big field.

It was determined after discussion that this alternative did not benefit any of the users and would create a safety problem for those wanting to be in Section B while organized sports are using Section A.