



Robert Malley <robert.malley@capeelizabeth.org>

FT Williams Park

1 message

Rioux <rioux@maine.rr.com>

Wed, May 31, 2017 at 10:06 AM

Reply-To: Rioux <rioux@maine.rr.com>

To: cetowncouncil@capeelizabeth.org, Malley Robert <robert.malley@capeelizabeth.org>

To: Ft Williams Committee and Town Council

An article in the May 24 Cape Courier and recent incidents have prompted me to write to you. I want to encourage you to review the rules about the off-leash area for dogs at Ft Williams. I have attached a Word document which will explain my concerns.

 **Dog Park.docx**
13K

An article in the May 24 Cape Courier and recent incidents have prompted me to write to you. I am including a couple of paragraphs from the article so you will get the gist.

Cape Elizabeth: A special place for you, your dog

"It perhaps seems obvious, but it bears repeating, that those who are not fond of dogs perhaps should walk, jog or picnic somewhere else. If a person lays out a picnic blanket and lunch in an off-leash area, he or she should expect four-legged visitors. There is plenty of room in the park for all, and the on-leash areas might be better for those who aren't interested in sharing that burger."

"Those with small children also should pay attention to where the off-leash area is. A well-meaning dog, completely under voice command, may approach a toddler and accidentally knock them over. By the same token, when bringing a dog to the off-leash part of the park, it is the responsibility of the owner to watch the dog, and not get so lost in conversation with other people as to not know exactly what your pup is up to at all times."

Before I proceed, let me say that my wife and I have a beautiful chocolate lab that we take to FT Williams for exercise. We love dogs. This is obviously a very inviting area for dog lovers who want to let their dogs run free.

As you can see the article is very inviting to dog owners. What it does not reference is that a large part of the off-leash area is actually a children's athletic field. This field was dedicated in 1999 and was paid for by donations from Cape Elizabeth residents. I am certain that the donors did not expect that the athletic field would become a dog park. The athletic field is the primary area where dog owners and professional dog walkers let their dogs run free.

This is an athletic field where children are supposed to play soccer, lacrosse, football, baseball, etc. This year the Little League organization asked for and got permission to move its t-ball division to the multi-purpose field. Previously the games were played next to the parking lot for the parade ground. This area became very congested whenever the children were there and the turf is in poor shape. The multi-purpose field is contains much better turf, provides better parking and allows for 10 teams to play at the same time. The field is also being used by some of the soccer teams during the spring months.

You may not know that there was an issue with a dog that was running free on the field during a t-ball game. The children were frightened because, as you might expect, the dog was very excited to see all of the balls and ran through the crowd. Fortunately no one was hurt. Given the rules of that area, the dog had a right to be there. Therein is the problem and why I am writing this letter. Dogs should not be allowed to run on an athletic field. There are many reasons including risk to children who are playing at the same time and health risks when dogs urinate or drop feces on the field. Some owners are irresponsible and do not clean up after their animals.

I understand that the Town Council made the decision to include the field as an off-leash area and only they can make a change. In the recent past a temporary fence was assembled to protect the children who were using the field. I suggest a permanent fence be added to protect a valuable asset. We have so many sports teams in town who are competing for field space and we are looking for more. But first I suggest we must make most efficient use of what we have. Please consider making a change to the off-leash area as soon as possible if a fence is not possible in the short term.

Roger Rioux
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