

Puptown Quarterly Meeting
Wednesday, April 14, 2009

Meeting Summary

Attendance

Volunteer board members: David Goyer, John Lenti, Bernie Heidkamp, Ellen Szalinski, Eric Wagner

Plus: Judy Joyce, Christine Cupaiuolo, Rebecca Mark, Terry Daly, Jacob Stover, Stephanie Aldorf, Kathy Stack, Wes Groot, Ken Miller, Jim, Troy, Gail and other park supporters

Special guests: Jack, Sue and Keith Forshaw

DAVID WALLACE MEMORIAL FUND

Dave Wallace's friends Jack, Sue and Keith Forshaw, on behalf of David's family, offered their insight on an appropriate legacy to the dog park in memory of Dave and his dog, Tyler. Discussion focused on: 1.) a simple permanent display bearing Dave and Tyler's name; 2.) the allocation of the remaining funds from the \$5,900 in donations. Options discussed included:

- Commemorative plaque affixed to heavy, durable faux rock and placed in center garden (\$500; Park District's estimate to affix its standard plaque to the "kick wall" was \$1,500)
- Exterior park signage (subject to park district approval, estimated at \$1,000)
- Second gate to prevent packing behavior leading to aggression (estimated at \$10,000)
- Area for small dogs (feasibility has not been investigated)
- Flowering tree (\$600-\$800)
- Additional safety fencing for Margate Park along the outer drive
- Cover \$2,000 cost to run electricity to the park (actual lighting for the park would not be included)

The remainder of the funds would be designated to the area of greatest need at the discretion of Puptown Dog Owners Group. Once a suitable memorial is decided upon, PDOG will work with the Forshaw and Wallace families to schedule a dedication ceremony.

TREASURER'S REPORT: DAVID GOYER

- **2008 summary** – Income: \$13,111 Expenditures: \$11,700
- **Year-to-date report:** We have \$11,977.11 in the bank; \$5785 is from the David Wallace memorial fund. Large donations from 2008 -- \$2,500 Purina grant and the \$1,500 anonymous gift -- cannot be counted on this year.
- **Membership status** – As of 4/14/09, 34 members are current on their \$30 annual dues, totaling \$1020. In addition, an extra \$255 has been donated.
- **Annual operating cost** -- Based on the 2008 financial report, annual costs equal approximately \$1,400 (\$2,400 if we need new gravel, as we did last year), including gravel redistribution and power washing with disinfectant (as required by the Park District), bleach, yard tools, web hosting and costs for occasional printing and brochure boxes. (This does not include expenses invested in fundraising efforts.)

MAINTENANCE

- **The first cleaning of the year** is done professionally, at the same time that the gravel is changed. May 2 is the target date; thereafter, all clean-ups will be conducted by volunteers

every 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month (starting at 8 a.m.). David will follow up with the maintenance company for the professional cleaning.

- Bernie Heidkamp suggested that **two people head each clean-up**: one to act as "greeter," explaining the clean-up process, directing people to the cleaning "foreman" to see what needs to be done, sharing general information about the park, soliciting memberships and selling Puptown merchandise. Bernie will issue an e-mail call-out for volunteers to lead cleanings.
- We will create a new sign to advertise the park cleanings -- Bernie and Eric Wagner will follow-up.
- **Plant maintenance** — John reported two plants are dead but will be replaced under warranty.
- **Central garden** – Kathy Stack recommended watering 3-4 per times week. Jay Stover volunteered to help. John and Kathy will go after more soil and investigate getting "leftover" flowers from the park district as we have in years past.
- **Garden fence repair** – Wes Groot (<http://cityboyforge.com>) will help.

MAY 16: MEMBERSHIP DRIVE/WAG FOR THE BAG

- **Wag for the Bag** event, co-sponsored by Green Paws Chicago and Zoomagreen.org to promote green living in the doggie community, will take place at Puptown on May 16 and feature a juried competition of artists who have designed creative doggie waste bag dispensers made of recycled products. Businesses, community leaders, other dog park groups, and media will be invited.
- In exchange for hosting, Puptown will receive biodegradable bags as well as sponsorship fees for those wishing to set up a booth or table. The suggested fee is \$100 for sellers, and \$50 for nonprofits or those offering giveaways. Green Paws and Zoomagreen have been asked to inform all interested parties that they are responsible for their own set-up. John Lenti is the point person for the co-sponsors. Ellen Szalinski is assisting with communications.
- The annual **Membership Drive** will kick off May 16, the same day as Wag for the Bag.

PROJECT STATUS: SECOND GATE

- As noted above, the Park District estimate is \$10,000 for labor and installation of a new double-gated entrance and pathway into the park. A suggestion was made to divide the existing double-gated area to create an entrance and exit; however, there was concern that there would still remain one central crowding place for dogs. A second gate (likely located at the north end) would more effectively reduce the packing. This has been the observation of those who have attended other dog parks with two entrances, including Wiggly Field, Grant Bark, and out-of-state parks. Further discussion is needed. John Lenti has been taking the lead on this with the Park District.

FUNDRAISING

- The annual **Howl-o-ween** costume contest and fundraiser will be held Saturday, Oct. 24 with rain date Sunday, Oct. 25. We need someone to chair the event. Any interested parties should contact past chair Ellen Szalinski for more details about what the job entails. Last year we had a great committee that did much of the leg work. Contact Ellen at ellen@puptown.org.
- **Merchandise** – t-shirt sales were successful last year. From May through October, we sold all but 18 from the original order of 100. Eric will explore both t-shirts and baseball caps as options for this year's Puptown merchandise. The potential net on t-shirts is \$900.

OPEN FORUM

- **Enforcement of park rules** especially with regard to DFA tags, poop pick-up, aggressive dogs – it was determined that the only option is to post rules as visibly as possible and to continue to self-police. Members should feel free to educate others about rules and "etiquette," especially new users. Comments were made about additional signage or display cases that would allow room to post the "nuts and bolts" of Puptown — rules, history, volunteerism, membership information, etc. — in addition to event announcements, park photos, etc. No assignments were made for follow-up.
- **Small dog area** –Stephanie was the only small dog owner in attendance, but John reported getting at least one inquiry per week re: the possibility of setting aside an optional area for small dogs. He also reported that the Park District opposes such a plan because of the difficulty enforcing size guidelines. Wiggly Field sets aside a "time-out" area which is used unofficially for small dogs. No action was made for follow-up.
- **Open elections for board leadership** – The five people currently serving on the board stepped up as volunteers because of lack of interest on the part of others to share or support leadership. Most have served three years or more. A request was made to open up elections to Puptown members and park users to attract people with new ideas and expertise to complement the talents of those currently serving as board members and to help thwart board burnout. [NOTE: A plan to transition to a volunteer committee structure is underway -- more information will be posted at the park and online.]
- **Membership engagement and development** – Puptown needs more members and park users to support the usual volunteers by becoming involved in events, clean-ups and decision-making. Gail volunteered to convene a brainstorming session to strategize ways to make more people feel like this is their park. If interested, contact Gail through info@puptown.org.