

# ROYALTON AREA DOG PARK

March 21, 2017

## OVERVIEW

### 1. Mission

To establish a fenced in, off-leash dog park where canine citizens and their caretakers can exercise and socialize in a clean, safe environment. To develop a maintained space open to dog lovers in South Royalton and surrounding communities who are willing to uphold the park's rules and restrictions. To view this park as a community partnership with the Town of Royalton, designed to meet the needs of dog owners and non-dog owners alike.

### 2. Need

We have recently formed a private Facebook group, Let's Start A Dog Park, of nearly 50 community members who actively support filling this need in our town, and we are confident that there are many more residents, students, and other town dog owners who would be willing to volunteer and support this park. Many local dog owners drive long distances to find parks, while others are (unfortunately) letting their dogs run on restricted town properties out of desperation. The joke of South Royalton is "it must be a requirement that law students get a dog upon acceptance at VLS". But none of us, students or residents, has a safe, legal place to let our dogs get tired out, play Frisbee, do agility training, and socialize.

### 3. Location

Dog parks are typically built on town owned land due to insurance issues of private landowners. Town Park insurance for a dog park can be a higher cost, though was considered "a slight increase" for both the town of Hartford and Enfield when they built their parks.

#### Possible Locations in Royalton:

- Crawford Property
- Stoddard/Bridge Street Property (town buy out from the flood)
- Hope Property

### 4. Site Needs

The property would ideally be at least 1 acre of land, fenced in with 4-6' tall chain link fencing that is also sunk a foot into the ground, with no 90 degree angles in the fence line (to avoid any one dog feeling cornered and threatened during play). The fence would include a double gated entrance area to prevent run away dogs and to facilitate wheelchair access. The park should have natural shade spots and/or a covered shelter, and natural boulders and trees (visual barriers) or manmade agility and hiding spots, and benches. There should be several "waste stations" placed around the fencing, regularly filled with bags, to encourage clean up (scoop and take away? Or do we pay for trash pick up?), signage for rules and hours (dawn to dusk), parking lot plowing, and grass mowing within the park.

### 5. Benefits to the Community

59% of US households have at least one dog. A dog park serves a wide variety of community members, attracting the most diverse and multigenerational users, and offers recreation for every age and ability level. Dogs that are socialized and stimulated and tired from proper exercise are better community members (less property damage, less

noise issues, less dog waste in public areas). In the Royalton area, many dog owners drive 25 minutes + to reach a dog park. Having one here in our community could make our town and its businesses an attraction for other townspeople, and for future home buyers. Dog parks are truly community building, and they are proven to increase house values.

**6. Budget**

The Mascoma Valley Dog Park nonprofit leaders have been very kind and encouraging, and have sent us much information on how they went about their dog park. They said “it costs \$50,000. It just does.”. \$25,000 of that was fencing and installation. Then well digging (\$5000), signage, parking, “poop bags” (which cost them \$2000 per year). wetland survey, ground breaking, benches and landscaping (visual interest pieces), shade structure, etc. The Town of Hartford built their own park as a part of a larger town park. Enfield contracts the land to a nonprofit (for free) that runs their dog park. Both have membership fees (though use of the park is technically free to anyone) of \$25/year to offset annual costs of plowing, mowing, and poop bags, etc.. Mascoma also offers a \$100 membership in collaboration with a local business that gives payers a discount at their store. There are grants, dog park contests (that award \$25,000), and fundraising that can be done on behalf of the town for the park, or by a nonprofit if the town will contract the land.

**7. Volunteers**

Volunteers will gather signatures for a petition (if needed), will fundraise at farmer’s markets, town concerts, hand out flyers, put up fundraising jars, as well as write grants, research rules and regulations, design the park, and do any necessary work to get this built. That core group of volunteers would also hold work parties several times per year to do light maintenance, clean up days, refill poop bags, and “police” the park when they are there.

In short, we are willing to do the work, or work with the Town of Royalton and form a dog park committee, to get this built within the next few years.

The members of Let’s Start A Dog Park thank you for your time and consideration, and look forward to our next steps!

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Shannon  
Stoddard