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Yorktown dog owners howl for a park

By Adriane Tillman

Friends of the Dog Run of Yorktown are still chasing hopes of finding a place to unleash their pets in Yorktown, since the prospect of a dog run at FDR State Park appears dead. The group submitted a petition to the state to create a dog park at FDR State Park in 2002, but has still not received approval.

Now the group is back before the Yorktown Recreation Commission to discuss acquiring a town site for the dog run.

“According to the Yorktown website, we have over 1400 acres of town and state parks...but no off-leash park,” stated Friends of the Dog Run President Laura Wuerth, who spoke before the Yorktown Recreation Commission on October 4.

Wuerth presented more than 500 signatures in support of the dog run, and said 40 people are active in the group.

There are 1,425 dogs registered in Yorktown, according to the state Department of Agriculture and Markets, who registers the canines. However, Wuerth is reluctant to base her figures on the number of registered dogs because she said many owners don't register their pets. Wuerth estimated that 4,897 households in Yorktown own at least one dog, based on 2005 US pet ownership statistics that are compiled by American Pet Products Manufacturers Association.

The Recreation Commission, however, wants more accurate information on the number of dog owners who would use a dog park in Yorktown before it considers the proposal further. At the October 4 meeting, Commissioner Robert Gironda said he supports diversifying parkland use but wants to ensure the dog run will be used.

Friends of the Dog Run decided to use the Ossining Dog Park at Cedar Lane Park (www.ossiningdogpark.com) as a case study for the number of dog owners who might support the use in Yorktown.

According to Ossining Dog Park Treasurer Paula Cronin, the dog park once tracked 1,000 visitors two years ago for the month of December, but has since stopped keeping count. Two hundred members belong to the dog park, with 65 of them from Ossining and Briarcliff Manor.

“It's a very popular park,” Wuerth said. “It's nearby. I assume it's the same demographic [in Yorktown].”

Dog owners interested in showing support for a dog run in Yorktown can register at www.yorktowndogrun.com

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Friends of the Dog Run also suggested locating a dog park at the former Shadow Creek Golf Course on Route 6, donated to the town this past July, but the commission had reservations about the site.

Park and Recreation Superintendent Jennifer Fava said the former Shadow Creek Golf Course was not the most appropriate spot for a dog run but they should continue discussing possibilities. Wetlands may be an issue at the site, according to Commission Chairman Jim Hackett.

The issue will be discussed again at the Recreation Commission meeting on December 6 at 7:30 p.m. at the Parks and Recreation building on 176 Granite Springs Road.

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Statements 7:30 p.m. (Doors open 7:00 p.m.) Putnam Valley High School Cafeteria

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