

Dog park: It probably won't happen without mayor's support

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Linhart says it's an attainable goal. Many Washington communities have successfully established parks, often with help from community coalitions and grants.

In 2011 and 2012, Linhart did research and visited a dog park in Warrenton to learn more about how to set one up. To make it happen, city officials would need to purchase, lease or trade for a suitable property, Linhart said. They would also have to pay for fencing and a source of fresh water.

City Administrator David Glasson says finding a location is the main obstacle.

In 2012, the city identified a school district-owned lot east of Culbertson Park as an ideal site. But district leaders were wary — in the event that the district needed to reclaim the land, it would surely prove complicated and unpopular to decommission a dog park.

In summer 2014, a local man offered to sell the city his property near the dog shelter. But council members said the asking price was too high and it wasn't in the budget.

"Where is the next spot? That is the issue. We haven't really come up with a next spot," Glasson said April 24.

A reluctant council

Frustrated with the lack of progress, Perez in September 2014 made a motion to add a line-item for the dog park in the 2015 budget. That might have gotten the project back on track by setting aside dedicated funds, but his effort fell flat.

"The mayor did not ask for a second, so I asked the council and no one seconded, not even Steven, who is



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Sam, a standard poodle, drew lots of attention at the 2014 Doggie Olympics on the Long Beach (Wash.) Peninsula.



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Piper, an oversized papillon — which means butterfly in French — competed in the baseball toss and retrieve event at the 2014 Doggie Olympics.

'The mayor's the CEO. He's the bottom line on who does what with what.'

— Steven Linhart
councilman

on the shelter board," Perez said in an April 23 email. "So the issue is dead in the water if it has no council support."

When asked why he didn't second the motion, Linhart said he feels that Perez has a history of stirring up conflict, so he was reluctant to align himself with Perez, even for a cause he supported.

"It's because of the blood between Mark Perez and myself," Linhart said. "That was small of me ... I shouldn't have done that."

Councilman Jerry Phillips, who plans to run for mayor later this year, said

he didn't second the motion because there wasn't adequate time to discuss it during the council meeting, which lasted about seven minutes, according to city records.

"It would have been better to bring it up in a workshop," Phillips said. "We need to have the staff do research ... that's not something you can do in the middle of a council meeting."

Phillips says he supports the dog park, "if it can be built in the right location at the right cost." But he says the city needs to pay for other projects, including street and water system maintenance before setting aside money for the park.

An ambivalent mayor

Linhart and Perez do agree on one other thing — the park probably won't

happen without support from the mayor.

"The mayor's the CEO. He's the bottom line on who does what with what," Linhart said. He says when he has tried to broach the topic, Mayor Bob Andrew has never specifically said "no."

"He just didn't say anything about it," Linhart said.

When asked whether he favored building a dog park, Andrew declined to answer

the question directly, saying that responsibility for the dog park lies with the council. While the council does have to vote to approve new projects and policies, the mayor is expected to provide leadership by suggesting goals and policies for the city, proposing the annual budget and making sure city staff implement policies, according to "The Mayor's Handbook," a publication of the Association of Washington Cities.

"I don't think the City Council has made up their mind what they want to do. It's not been on the front burner," Andrew said April 24. "At this particular time I haven't seen the interest level of pushing forward."

Andrew said, "There are plenty of places in Long Beach where people can take their dogs without having a dog park." For example, he said, "the beach." However, the new city policy requires leashes anywhere but private property. At an April 20 city workshop, council members and staff noted that with a potentially volatile mix of vehicle traffic, pedestrians of varying ages and abilities, no fences and few waste receptacles, the beach is not an ideal place for dogs to play off-leash.

When asked where else citizens might take their dogs, Andrew said, "A fenced area," but couldn't name any such areas that are available to the public.

Andrew said he would support the council if they decided to revive the project.

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