



City of White Bear Lake
Engineering Department

MEMORANDUM

To: Lindy Crawford, City Manager
From: Paul Kauppi, Public Works Director/City Engineer
Date: January 28, 2025
Subject: **Order Public Hearing to Receive Public Feedback Regarding the Operations of the Dog Beach at Matoska Park**

SUMMARY

The City Council will consider adopting a resolution ordering a public hearing for its February 25, 2025 regular meeting to receive public feedback regarding the operations of the dog beach at Matoska Park.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

At its February 28, 2023, meeting, the City Council approved keeping the dog beach open and directed staff to coordinate the following improvements:

1. Install improved and easy to read signage at the dog beach and 7th Street swim dock to help aid users to better understand the rules and expectations.
2. Install permanent fencing to separate the dog beach from the swim dock area including fencing that will close off the shoreline area which can be adjusted based on fluctuating lake levels.
3. Install gates at the top of the stairs to the dog beach and swim dock.
4. Install an improved buoy system to separate the dog beach from the swim area.
5. Continue existing dog beach leash rule.
6. Maintain pet waste bag stations and nearby trash containers.

These improvements were in place by the end of the 2023 summer season and all of 2024.

In the spring of 2024, the City Manager requested that the Parks Advisory Commission (PAC) make visits to the dog beach area once again to review the effectiveness of the improvements made in 2023 and determine whether any additional changes are necessary. In addition, it was requested that the Police Department make regular visits to the area to help ensure dog beach rules were complied with.

When the lake level dropped over the summer of 2023, staff worked with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and White Bear Lake Conservation District (WBLCD) to get the necessary approvals to extend temporary fencing onto the dry lakebed to aide in separating the dog beach from the 7th Street swim dock area.

Over the course of the 2024 summer, PAC members made trips as time allowed in their schedules to observe how the dog beach was functioning and the effectiveness of the improvements made in 2023.

Overall, observations were quite positive, with PAC members noting that the biggest violation was that most dogs were off leash, however owners were generally in control of their dogs and the buoys and fence appeared quite effective at keeping dogs within the designated area. There were a few barks, but no excessive barking was heard, nor was any aggressive or fighting behavior between dogs witnessed. The area was generally very clean and there were only a couple of occurrences where dog excrement was observed, or a forgotten dog waste bag was found.

There were 10 police calls for service between June 1 and September 12 from the vicinity of the dog beach and Lake Avenue. The call logs show one lost dog brought to the Police Department, one barking complaint, and eight "dog at large" calls which were dogs observed off leash. These calls were in addition to regular Police Department visits to the dog beach area.

The dog beach / 7th Street swim area and Memorial Beach are regularly tested for E. Coli to ensure the safety of users. Over the 2024 summer, the water was tested 11 times. The dog beach / 7th Street swim area testing ranged from 13-291 MPN/100ml while Memorial Beach testing ranged from 5-2420 MPN/100ml with five samples exceeding 600 MPN/100ml. The Minnesota Department of Health recommends that no single sample exceed 235 MPN/100ml or the average of five samples exceed 126 MPN/100ml. Based on that criteria, Memorial Beach was posted once with an advisory and once with a closure. There were no advisories or closures at the dog beach / 7th Street swim area. The testing indicates that dogs using the area did not appear to elevate the levels of E. Coli and that the E. Coli may be from waterfowl in the area and general water flow / water depth in each area, which is not uncommon.

Parks Advisory Commission Recommendation

Based on its summer 2024 observations, the PAC believes that the dog beach provides a great amenity to the community and that the existing location is a good area due to the generally confined boundaries with the fence and the steep hill leading up to Lake Avenue. Having a defined and regulated location keeps most people using the lake for their dogs to one area versus people just finding a spot to take their dogs to use the lake. The PAC observed many park visitors sitting on adjacent benches enjoying viewing the dogs swimming and playing as well. The PAC does not recommend the dog beach be relocated or closed.

The PAC recommended the following additional changes be made to the dog beach area and its operations:

1. Remove the leash requirement at the dog beach to align with City Code which does not require a leash while in a designated area. Revising park rules will assist the Police Department in properly enforcing public safety.

2. Revise dog beach signage to clearly delineate the boundaries of the designated dog beach area including the following:
 - “Entering” Dog Beach Area
 - “Leaving” Dog Beach Area – Leash Up
3. Support the addition of seasonal community service officers to assist with education and rule enforcement at all amenities along the lake.
4. Continue to monitor and extend the buoys, separating the dog beach and swim area an additional 50 feet.

The PAC presented their 2024 observations and recommendations to the City Council at the November 19, 2024 work session. The City Council directed staff to bring this item to a regular City Council meeting in early 2025 for public comment and final consideration prior to the 2025 summer season. Therefore, the next step is for the City Council to conduct a public hearing on the matter. Staff is requesting the City Council order a public hearing for the February 25, 2025 regular City Council meeting. Following the public hearing, the City Council may make a decision and direct staff regarding the operations of the dog beach.

RECOMMENDEDATIONS

Staff recommends the City Council adopt the attached resolution ordering a public hearing for its February 25, 2025 regular meeting to receive public feedback regarding the operations of the dog beach at Matoska Park.

ATTACHMENTS

Resolution

Draft Public Hearing Notice