

6/4/07-6

**Don Johnson**

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**From:** Glenn Rifkin [grifkin@comcast.net]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 08, 2007 5:08 PM  
**To:** Dore' Hunter  
**Subject:** Re: NARA dogs

Mr. Hunter,

Thanks so much for your thoughtful response to my email. I appreciate your open-mindedness on this matter and I think a discussion at the June 4 meeting is very appropriate. I will alert my fellow dog-owners and suggest they send in their own thoughts on the matter to you prior to the meeting.

Let me just say that I fully appreciate that there are people in every town who do not care for dogs, do not want them off leash, and have every right to feel that way. Even as a dog owner and dog lover, I have seen my share of obnoxious pets. That is why I believe my compromise suggestion will satisfy all constituencies in this matter. I don't know if you use NARA at all but as a long-time visitor to the park, I can assure you that there are no children there in the early mornings, especially during the winter months, and so these off-leash hours would have very little chance of creating a problem in that regard.

If there were others in the discussion about all this besides the gentleman from last night, so be it. My concern with someone like him is the hysteria factor that results in gross exaggerations that are unnecessary and unproductive in any discussion of the matter. It is enough that some people do not want dogs off leash near them. We all have to respect that. Period. Claiming multiple dog attacks, scores of bitten children, etc. etc. is simply inconsistent with the facts and serves only to alienate the two sides in the matter.

So I look forward to seeing you again on June 4 and I hope that our suggestions will meet with approval at that time.

thanks again for your interest.

Sincerely,  
 Glenn Rifkin

----- Original Message -----

**From:** DoreHunter@aol.com  
**To:** grifkin@comcast.net  
**Cc:** bos@acton-ma.gov ; manager@acton-ma.gov  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 08, 2007 4:33 PM  
**Subject:** Re: NARA dogs

Mr. & Mrs. Rifkin,

Thank you for your email.

The issue of control of free running dogs has been debated off and on in Acton for many years, and was the subject of two rather intense Town Meetings when a "lease law" was placed on the books, and then taken off at the following Meeting. The uneasy compromise between folks disturbed by free running dogs became a town wide By-Law that required dog owners have effective voice control of their dogs. However, I still occasionally see dogs about in Acton out of sight of their owners. The Town has some public places where dog owners do exercise their pets, NARA Park is but one such place. A public place should be equally accommodating to all comers, dog owners, runners, walkers, people out with small children, etc.

As I explained to you last night we have received complaints about dogs acting in threatening manner toward small children, and received some recommendations from those folks charged with oversight of recreational areas in Town in this regard. I don't think it is an issue of frequency, it should not happen at all.

6/1/2007

There are some folks in Town, other than the gentleman that you referred to in your email, who are not in favor of free dogs around them. On the other hand there are dog owners, perhaps like yourself, who are passionate about their dogs and love to see them race about. It seemed to the Board, as it was previously constituted, that perhaps the best way to address the concerns of those folks who are uneasy sharing the outdoors with apparently free running dogs, and perhaps their litter, was to preclude free running dogs in one place in Town and see how that worked out. This matter was discussed several times in open public meetings of the Board of Selectmen, along with all the other issues that the Board hears. I regret that the Board deliberations are not better covered by the press, they are, of course, televised and we are very pleased when folks attend the meetings .

As I told you last night it seems to me to make sense to see how things work out for a while. Rather than engage in "order, counter order, confusion", as the saying goes, i.e. that it would be better to ride with the current situation long enough to see if those folks who would be more comfortable without the dogs running free increase their park usage without such. Obviously you are a dog owner who wants to let a dog(s) run free, that is temporarily at least prohibited at NARA Park. You seemed to indicate that you were not familiar with the area behind the South Acton Fire/EMS Station which I understand is a favorite location for dogs to be let free to run, so that is an alternative, there are probably others.

Part of my responsibility as the Board Chairman is to manage the Board's Agenda. We are dealing with some serious issues and are going to be working our way through other unusual business. We had an Agenda last night that was intentionally shortened to allow more time to be spent on a selected issue. I nevertheless allowed Citizens Concerns to expand into a mini-debate. I anticipate that the next meeting (21 May) we will be beginning our meeting at 6 p.m. in Executive Session which will be followed by a regular meeting at 7 p.m. There is some possibility, based on the last time we did this in regard to the issue involved, that we will go back into Executive Session at the end of the regular meeting. And I expect the regular meeting Agenda to be quite full. In recent months the Board of Selectmen has not completed meetings on occasion until 12:30 a.m. and 1:00 a.m., long after the audience left, at least in part due to the length of the prior business. We run a real risk of not functioning well in the late hours, and it is not fair to the Board members who hold day jobs. One of the things I promised to the new Board was that I would keep the meeting lengths under control. We still did not end last night until about 11:15 p.m.

You did suggest a reduction in the hours during which dogs would have to be on leash at NARA. There is some possibility that such an arrangement might work, and we could discuss that when we have some idea how the current complete ban works out. Accordingly I have tentatively indicated to the Town Manager that I intend to put a further discussion of the extent of the dogs running free ban at NARA Park on the Agenda for the 4 June Board of Selectmen Meeting, and expect to hold the discussion to 30 minutes. We will ask staff to report how the ban has worked over what will then have been about a months time, and solicit observations as to what effect, if any, it has had on the non-dog owner use of the facility.

You are, of course, free to attend the meeting and speak to that Agenda item. If there are folks with a differing viewpoint present I will try and give equal time to both sides. It is always helpful for the Board to receive written statements in advance. If any such statements are received in Town Hall by mid-day on the Friday before a Selectmen's meeting they can be included in our weekend packet and read by the Selectmen before the meeting.

Regards,  
Dore' Hunter  
Chairman of the Board of Selectman & VSO, Town of Acton, MA  
Telephone: 978-263-0882  
Email: dorehunter@aol.com

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## Don Johnson

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**From:** Glenn Rifkin [grifkin@comcast.net]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 08, 2007 6:48 AM  
**To:** Board of Selectmen  
**Subject:** NARA dogs

Selectmen,

I spoke at the meeting last night about the new leash regulations at NARA Park. I am writing to follow up my comments since my original email to your committee did not reach you. I feel that I now have much more information and I would still very much like to put this discussion on the selectmen's agenda for the next meeting.

I have been an Acton resident for nine years and have been bringing my Golden Retriever to NARA Park without incident for the past eight years. My wife and I are among dozens of residents who have enjoyed this park with our dogs over the years and we were all stunned to see these new regulations posted.

While every one of us owners would clearly regret any incident at the park in which anyone was bothered or hurt by a dog, we are also deeply concerned that new rules were instituted without a fair hearing. If attempts were made to inform the public that this discussion was underway, I can assure you that none of us knew about it or we would have come forward at the time to join the discussion.

Therefore, given the nature of the single person who has made this complaint--which we all got to see in person last night-- it seems only fair to allow us to discuss compromise solutions for NARA now, not at some undetermined future date. The implication that this gentleman made, that there have been numerous incidents of this nature at NARA is simply false. If the single incident he described happened, it is indeed unfortunate and unacceptable, but it is hardly a reason to punish a large group of citizens whose dogs have used this facility free of incident for years.

Among the compromises that we might all agree on are off-leash hours, i.e. prior to 9 a.m. and after 6 p.m. during the summer months. During the winter months, we dog owners are usually the only people at NARA, surely in the morning hours. If there is snow, families show up to sled but rarely before 10 a.m.

We might also consider dog-free areas like near the beach and the fenced-in children's playground. We could restrict our dogs to the fields beyond the amphitheater and to the path around the lake away from the beach.

If the goal is to protect children--which the gentleman seems to be focused on--these compromises would surely suffice. At the very least, it is fair that we have a chance to bring them up and discuss them in a public forum. We are entitled to be part of this discussion as taxpayers and again, we would like to be put on the agenda of the next meeting.

We had a group of dog owners at last night's meeting in a show of support and only two of us were allowed to speak. The gentleman who proudly claimed to be the cause of this new regulation got his chance to speak yet again though none of our voices had been heard at the outset of all this.

So in the interest of fairness, we would urge the selectmen to reconsider this issue now and not put it off to some later time.

Sincerely,  
Glenn and Jane Rifkin  
5 Windingwood Lane  
Acton  
978 266 1323

6/1/2007

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06-01-07

**Maryjane Kenney**

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**From:** balaji gourishetti [balaji20@hotmail.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 30, 2007 2:51 PM  
**To:** Board of Selectmen  
**Subject:** Nara park environment

Hello,

I am a acton resident, memorial day weekend some of my friends from other town came to my house with their families. I taken them to NARA Park with their kids, they all love the park with nice and clean beach and I noticed some change like "Dogs must be on Leash" and I also noticed there is not much dog feces on the side walks and grass. Most of the dogs were on leash, it's a good thing.

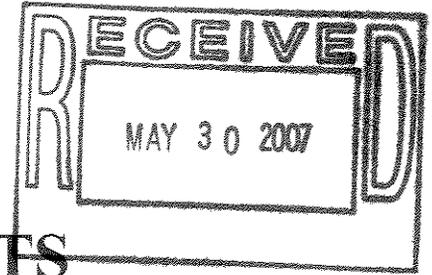
we spent almost 4 hours in the park , everybody enjoyed.  
Thanks for maintaining the park neat, clean and safe.

regards,  
Balaji.

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THOMAS J. ROGERS  
45 HAYWARD ROAD  
ACTON, MASSACHUSETTS



Board of Selectmen  
Acton Town Hall  
Acton, Massachusetts

May 26, 2007

Dear Board Members:

I am writing you to oppose the dog leash policy at NARA. I am a dog owner (black lab named Molly) who visits NARA every morning and several afternoons each week. I feel forcing me to leash Molly prevents her from playing ball, frisbee or taking a swim on the back side of the pond.. Molly and I prefer NARA for these activities because the water is clean, unlike Great Hill where water quality is unhealthy, and the Concord Road Pond where there is no easy access to the water. It is my experience that Molly always takes a drink from the pond while playing in the water and her health is always my prime concern.

As for Mr. Lessard's complaint, I would advise you that there are always two stories to every event and the other party to this event has a very different story from Mr. Lessard's. I recommend you read the police report on this incident. I personally spoke to this party and he told me the child with Lessard called to his dog, who responded by approaching the young child to say hello. Mr. Lessard subsequently tried to kick this dog after which the dog owner told Lessard that if he tried to kick his dog again, he would punch him out (or words to that effect.). The dog in question was a small lap dog, I would estimate to be ten pounds or less. Subsequently, Lessard retreated to the parking lot where he called police and demanded the other party be arrested. I would submit that if Lessard had simply put his leg between the dog and the child as he stated, the dog owner would not have been angry as described above.

I think restricting dogs from the beach and child play area would suffice to protecting those children and adults who fear dogs. I personally would be happy with just the back side of the pond area as space for playing with Molly. The Town by-law to have control of ones dog would suffice in this area. Additionally, I want to tell you that I spoke to Tack Palmer, the Town's Dog Officer, and he told me there has not been one dog bite at NARA since the park opened.

I would also like to go on record as stating that there is no expectation of privacy in a public park. As a frequent visitor, I had my car struck and dented by a foul ball during a baseball practice and my leg struck by a wildly thrown frisbee. It never crossed my mind to petition the BOS to outlaw baseball or frisbee at NARA.

Thank you in advance for considering my letter before rendering your decision.

Sincerely,

Tom Rogers  
978-263-6929

**Maryjane Kenney**

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**From:** stuart [stuartfromeurope@yahoo.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, June 01, 2007 2:36 PM  
**To:** Board of Selectmen  
**Subject:** Common Sense not Paranoia

Dear elected Acton officials,

I have lived in Acton since 1991, and am compelled to write to try to make some sense of a hand full of dog haters that seem to be being appeased, and for the wrong reasons which are laced with wrong facts, paranoia and emotion.

I rarely take my dog (a chocolate lab) down to Nara Park but am disturbed to hear they have now posted signs saying dogs must be leashed. Knowing this I am upset as it will only be a matter of time if common sense is not used before it happens in other areas, and for all the wrong reasons and to appease a few that would love zero dogs in the town (or elsewhere). Their motives should be questioned before you throw the baby out with the bath water and upset a tremendous number of Acton residents. I live close to the Arboretum so that is usually where I walk my dog who is well behaved, a big softy and Children always rush over and say can we pet him (as with the majority of dogs I see there). Putting this aside I see dogs everywhere I go in Acton, and the majority are regular dogs who would not hurt anyone and have owners who are all very kind caring sensitive people. Of course there are some bad apples, there are bad apples in many areas of life but we don't make laws that throw the baby out with the bath water. I live on Main st and find trash thrown from cars everywhere, we could stop that by banning all cars on Main st but that's extreme and punishes people who do things correctly. The bad apples will let there dog go to the bathroom and not pick up, everybody should not be punished and I'd like a \$1000 fine for trash thrown from cars in Acton and yes a \$1,000 fine for ANYONE caught allowing their dog to go to the bathroom if they don't pick up. This may be extreme but at least it targets the culprits, and does not punish all. We have speeding laws to stop speeding but they only touch the offenders, and all drivers are not punished.

It was very upsetting to listen to the man at the town hall rant and rave about how all dogs should be leashed, they prey on young children he said as he waved pictures of dog bites at people and it's their instinct to go after smaller things IE children, he also said he knows vets that recommend only leashing. I'm hoping everybody understood that was just baloney and ridiculous fear tactics. Dogs have been around for thousands of years, and are called mans best friend for good reason. I know many vets and dogs are territorial when on a leash and cannot socialize which they have to do, they are at their worst when on a leash. Dogs if not allowed to socialize (not possible on leash) and run to get exercise will become neurotic unpredictable animals that will cause far more problems. Good caring owners will have good dogs, bad owners will have bad dogs and that's no coincidence. The majority of Acton residents are not bad owners, and it would be a pity to treat them so.

As I said I go down to the Arboretum regularly and have since 1991 and everybody gets on fine, 95 percent are dog people (definition being either with a dog or wants to talk and ask how old is your dog etc) but you'll always have exceptions. I have found used diapers left by benches and thrown off the trails (do we ban all people with babies? of course not) my dog has cut his paws on broken bottles, trash is continually left, and the dogs of course don't do that.

As I stated this I think common sense should be used. What ever you decide you decide as you are the elected officials, and have that right but often the quick fix only creates more problems. You need to be aware though if dogs are allowed to be in town which they clearly are, and many Acton residents own them that to start enforcing leash laws will only make those minorities pushing for it not stop there, they will keep knocking at the door for more and more areas to be restricted. The end result is a lot of

Acton residents will be very unhappy. There will be many neurotic dogs which comes from being left alone, not allowed to run and not allowed to be socialized, far more policing will be needed. Just like in every other area of life there will always be people who are not considerate of others but the majority of dog owners are, I suggest the inconsiderate people who cause problems with their dogs like every area in life should be made to pay but not everybody.

Sorry it was long but it needed to be said, and hope you will look at the big picture and long term consequences here. you had mentioned maybe a compromise of certain times off the leash at Nara, better than nothing but I only see that being addressed again as certain people against dogs will continually come back for more. I think if possible big signs saying keep your dog under control if other non dog people are around should work, if nobody is around it seems crazy to not let a dog run. Thanks again for you attention.

Best Regards,

Stuart Barrie

1200 10 2007  
06-04-07

**John Murray**

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**From:** Robert Lessard [Robert.Lessard@fmc-na.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, June 01, 2007 12:04 PM  
**To:** Board of Selectmen; Recreation Department; Recreation Commission  
**Cc:** Robert Lessard  
**Subject:** Re: NARA park is much cleaner and safer - Good job!

Selectmen,

For the past month I have noticed that most dogs are now on leashes at NARA park. This makes the park safer for small children and people with serious health problems that could be harmed by dogs off leash. While compliance is not 100%, it is a big improvement with most dog owners putting their dogs on leashes. During the month of April, I could easily find about 5 to 10 new dog poops each evening when I walked around NARA park. During the entire month of May, I was only able to find 3 small dog poops which were picked up the next day. Outstanding!

When these issues at NARA park first come up last summer, the town newspapers had good articles on the subject of leashes at NARA park in addition to the discussions that were televised at the selectmen's meetings so the town's dog owners did have fair warning that the town may change the rules at NARA park and time to develop counter arguments of their own. When the selectmen voted for the town managers plan pertaining to dogs at NARA park it was televised and the town paper (beacon) did publish this fact in March 2007 over one month before the signs went up, so I fail to understand how anyone can say the selectmen, the recreation department, or the town manager pulled a fast one without allowing the dog owners to debate their points. On more than one occasion, I have attended meetings of the selectmen and recreation department and was allowed to present arguments that were listened to by the boards as is right and duty of America citizens to do when they feel something is broke and needs fixing. When people choose not to get involved or speak up when they are given a chance to influence the outcome of an important political decision then the town government has not failed but they have failed to be vigilant and be active participants in their own and their towns future.

On this first day of June, 2007 I feel the town has done a great job at making NARA park safer and cleaner and my thanks go out to town employess in the recreation department who are working at NARA and keeping it so clean. Good job!  
Thanks,

Bob Lessard