

Mt. Tabor GNA Advisory Group  
Meeting #1 Summary  
Western Seminary - Chapel Basement  
February 9, 2005

Committee Members Present: Chuck Arnst, Ron Bates, Sharie Dietz, Mike Foster, Gay Greger, Cathy Kuehnl, Paul Leistner, Teresa Miller, Sharie Moss, Mary Mowrey, Sue Parish, Gina Patriarca, and Michael Schindel,  
Committee Staff: Diane Redd, David Yamashita  
Facilitator: Elaine Cogan  
Notes: Keely Edmonson

#### Acronyms

PP&R = Portland Parks & Recreation  
OLAC = Off-Leash Advisory Committee  
OLA = Off-Leash Area

The meeting was called to order by Elaine Cogan, who welcomed everyone and introduced herself as the meeting facilitator. She said that she been a resident of Mt. Tabor neighborhood for over forty years and reared her children there as well. Cogan was the facilitator for the Mt. Tabor Master Planning Committee in 1998-99. She thanked everyone for volunteering to serve on the committee. All meetings will start and end on time. Cogan reviewed the meeting agenda, explaining that there would be time at the end of each meeting for public comment. She asked that committee members introduce themselves, share a bit about their background, and complete the following sentence: "This process will be a success if..."

#### Ron Bates:

Ron worked at Warner Pacific College for many years and was involved in the Mt. Tabor Master Plan process. He has retired, but is still consulting and has been asked to join this committee as a representative of the college. He has also worked over the years as a Real Estate Broker, and in banking. "This process will be a success if everyone cooperates and does the best they can"

#### Cathy Kuehnl:

Cathy has lived in the neighborhood for the past twenty-seven years. She enjoys the park. She has a seven-year-old English sheep dog that she exercises on-leash. Cathy has worked as a social worker for twenty years and is now retired.

"This process will be a success if somehow we can find a middle ground."

#### Sharie Dietz:

Sharie D. is a Gemologist; she spends most of her days looking through a

microscope. She is on the committee to represent Friends of Mt. Tabor Park. She owns a dog but is neither an on or off leash advocate.  
"This process will be a success if everyone keeps an open mind"

Sharie Moss:

Sharie M. is a Mt. Tabor neighbor. She has two children (two and five years-old).

"This process will be a success if we realize compromise is the best way to solve the problem"

Teresa Miller:

Teresa came from the Richmond Neighborhood two years ago to reside next to Mt. Tabor. She has walked Mt. Tabor for the past 22 years; for the past five years with her dog. She uses the off-leash area as well.

"This process will be a success if people can hear and listen to each other."

Mary Mowrey:

Mary has been a resident of Mt. Tabor for the past 42 years. She reared her children in the house she still lives in. Her house backs up to the off-leash area.

"This process will be a success if we have mutual respect for one another."

Sue Parish:

Sue is an adjacent neighbor to the off-leash area. She has been there since 1972. Her house borders the merry-go-round. Her kids think of the park as their yard.

"This process will be a success if we work together - there can be a solution"

Chuck Arnst:

Chuck has lived next to Mt. Tabor Park since 1996. His house also borders the park's off-leash area. Chuck has a yellow lab he walks there daily.

"This process will be a success if we preserve the things that the park has to offer."

Gina Patriarca:

Gina is the proud mother of a Labrador retriever. She has visited Mt. Tabor park every day for the past three years.. She uses the off-leash area and is secretary of C-SPOT (Citizens for Safe Parks with Off-leash Territory).

"This process will be a success if people are truly here to make it work."

Paul Leistner:

Paul is immediate past president of the Mt. Tabor Neighborhood Association and a current member of the board. He is on this committee as a

representative of the N.A. He was a member of the Mt. Tabor Master Planning Committee.

"This process will be a success if we don't just say what we want to say, but are honest about the resources we have."

Michael Schindel:

Michael is an Ecologist for the Nature Conservancy. He is a dog owner, but does not walk his dog off-leash.

"This process will be a success if people see impacts they have on other park users/uses."

Gay Greger: Gay is a Community Relations Specialist for Portland Parks & Recreation. . She has been involved with the off-leash issue since the trial program started in '03. Although she does not live next to Mt. Tabor Park, she lives close by. She is the PP&R resource person on this committee.

"This process will be a success if we come up with a solution that is respectful of all park users and neighbors."

Mike Foster:

(arrived later in the meeting) Mike and his wife are dog owners. He has used Mt. Tabor Park with and without his dogs as a place to run, hike, and picnic over the past ten years.

"This process will be a success if we could all agree on something."

David Yamashita:

David is a Landscape Architect and Planner with PP&R. He will work with the committee on design elements.

Elaine Cogan thanked the committee for their introductions. To clarify, she explained that we are a committee reporting to Mt. Tabor Neighborhood Association., advising the NA on what recommendations should be made to the Parks Bureau. Diane Redd, Chair of the Mt. Tabor Neighborhood Association was introduced by Cogan to provide a background on off-leash use at Mt. Tabor Park.

Diane Redd> It has been almost ten years that the N.A. has been working with the City of Portland to provide off-leash use in the park. (Gay Greger distributed a handout detailing the history of off-leash use in Mt. Tabor Park at this time). Redd thanked Paul Leistner and Gay Greger for agreeing to sit on the committee. Paul has extensive experience with the off-leash history in the park. Gay is a trusted representative of the Parks Bureau. Last year, results from a neighborhood survey that went out as an insert in the newsletter showed that:

- The off-leash issue is one of the most polarizing issue at the park

- Respondents want to see increased enforcement and education
- Less than half of the respondents felt the area should be removed
- More than half felt that an area should be provided for off-leash use

The Neighborhood Association feels that they need to play a role in helping to make the off-leash program work. This is not a new problem but there is increasing pressure to find a solution. It appears that more people own dogs than ever before, that more people own more than one dog, and that more people own big dogs. In the last ten years, many locations in the park have been considered and three have been tried. At this time, we are dealing with the current location. Moving or removing the off-leash area is not on the table.

Diane added that as a Neighborhood Association, they believe that a solution can be reached. She thanked everyone for attending and extended a special "thank you" to Elaine, who is a professional meeting facilitator and is volunteering her time to make this work. Redd is hopeful that the committee can work together to craft recommendations before spring break. She added that we recognize there will be many issues to be dealt with. Gay is here to help negotiate for the Parks Bureau, and Paul for the Neighborhood Association. "Be honest, creative, thoughtful and considerate."

#### Discussion

Ron asked how the off-leash area is currently defined. (At this time, Gay passed around copies of the Off-Leash Advisory Committee's recommendations for the park that were approved by City Council.) There is no fence in the off-leash area to define the boundaries. Paul said that in the Master Planning process for the park, the committee was unable to find a space that fits the criteria for an all-hours fenced site. .

Teresa asked if someone could please clarify the committee's charge. Diane answered that the charge is to examine the concerns of both parties (the neighbors and the off-leash users) and find solutions for solving these problems. Elaine added that the committee should focus also on what the park can handle. Gay said that the Citywide Off-Leash Advisory Committee (OLAC) recommended expanding the off-leash area to the east so people could throw a ball or frisbee for their dog, but nothing has been decided.

Sharie D. asked how far the area would be expanded if it were to be. Gay answered that this is one of the reasons that the committee has been brought together - to see what makes sense. Elaine asked Gay to go into a bit more detail regarding the OLAC and their recommendations. Gay explained that when the off-leash program was put in place in September 2003, at the request of City Council, PP&R established the OLAC. She acknowledged Nancy Norby, who was in the audience, as a member of the committee. The OLAC

spent a year evaluating the program as a whole and each individual site, and produced general and site-specific recommendations for the program. The entire report is online and can be viewed at [www.portlandparks.org](http://www.portlandparks.org).

Paul asked if the committee could obtain copies of the overhead views of Mt. Tabor Park in order better understand the exact location of the off-leash area and other park features. David Yamashita referred to an aerial photo of the off-leash area and east meadow, pointing out the current area and the potential expansion line, which is 100 feet (lining up with 70th St.). Mary noted that if this expansion were to happen, the off-leash area would back right up to the house nearby. Elaine asked if David could return to the next meeting with individual copies of the map with the boundary line highlighted. Audience member Sandra Lucas pointed out that the only evening lighting comes from a street lamp near her house and that people congregate there after dark.

Mary told the committee that she did some research on this topic in '97 and spoke with Dewy Potter from Seattle Parks & Recreation. She learned that the one off-leash area SP&R had to remove after their trial program was one located too close to homes.

Elaine asked the committee take list what is working and what is not working. Discussion produced the following:

#### What IS Working

#### What is NOT Working

- People are using the site appropriately
- This is the first time there is a legitimate dog area to use
- People seem to leash their dogs as they exit the OLA
- Majority of dog owners pick up the poop
- The isolated location is good because people who do not/ cannot be near unleashed dogs know to stay away from that area
- Wider range of hours accommodates different schedules
- People are aware of penalties
- Rules are clear by now

- Trail improvements look nice
- New trail has improved accessibility to OLA
- Seems to be a willingness to form a stewardship group to deal with issues
- Warner Pacific parking or other issues have not been a problem
- Rangers are at the park weekly

- Off-leash dogs are still in other areas of the park
- Not enough enforcement
- Rules have changed over time and signage has become unclear
- Boundaries are not clear
- Some groups (bikers, hikers, runners, etc.) are being displaced by having the OLA in this location
- Trail is overused now
- Not enough space for big dogs
- No amenities (benches, etc)
- Concerns about yard (residential) contamination
- Dog health risk due to sloping area (hard on joints)
- Park's operation vehicles are causing erosion problems by driving through

to pick up trash

- Dog owners are not waiting to unleash until arriving in area. Dogs running out of cars, across access road & into OLA.
- Residents have difficulty parking
- Dogs are running into the playground and mixing with the kids
- Meadow area is being eroded
- Dog owners not staying on path - causing erosion
- Noise amplification due to geography
- A lot of noise in early morning & evening
- Conflicts between leashed/unleashed dogs
- Dogs chasing wildlife
- Poor lighting - users feel unsafe
- Difficult to locate poop in wooded area
- Trails are not accessible
- Removal of underbrush along trail may be causing bird population to leave
- Dogs running and defecating in yards

Discussion (continued):

Gay - many of the things being discussed were addressed by the OLAC recommendations, such as the addition of boundary markers and improved signage. While the OLAC suggested fencing the play area, the point was to provide a more formal separation. Elaine summed up that we are finding most people using the site appropriately, but there are things that need to be worked on.

When Ron asked why the fence was removed, several responded that there never was a fence for this particular off-leash area. Dogs are to be under voice control. Cathy said that the boundaries need to be clearly defined. Teresa said she is not sure there is enough wide open space within the current boundaries and she would like to consider some expansion. Paul would like to see amenities to make the OLA a more comfortable place to be

(ie. benches, kiosks, scoop bag stands, etc..)

In summing up, Elaine said the issues seemed to fall into a few general categories: irresponsible dog owners, erosion & environmental problems, boundary clarifications, and proximity to play area. Mary would like to see some sort of buffer to protect run-off of feces into neighbors' yards.

Paul recommended that as a next step, the committee make a list of everything related to management and design issues as a way to organize future discussion. Sharie D. asked about the possibility of a larger area for the dogs to run, such as Mt. Tabor Yard. Gay said that PP&R recognizes that the current off-leash area at Mt. Tabor is far from ideal. A better long-term solution is needed. The yard could be an option, but not in the very near future. PP&R would like to make the present site work until a viable alternative can be found. In response to a question about wildlife habitat, Paul explained that the Master Plan process included an evaluation of habitat areas in the park. This particular area was ranked low for habitat values.

Elaine suggested that the committee focus first on possible design solutions to deal with several of the issues that were identified and then move forward to talk about management, and signs. All agreed. The following list was created for David to include in the options he will develop for the next meeting:

- One or more places to put information
- Distinct separation from neighbors - possibly by vegetation
- Fencing
- Drainage issues - topography
- Sound buffer
- Rotation of area to preserve grounds
- No expansion
- Lighting
- Partition 50 feet back
- Vegetation to help with run-off
- Shrubbery along pathway to define trail
- Environmental soil testing
- Drainage
- More defined trails
- Place for poop bags
- Signage
- Trash receptacle(s)

David will bring back 3-4 options at the next meeting. They will be intended to generate discussion and identify which elements work best. David said that the major challenge is the configuration of the site. He

cautioned that a solution to one problem can produce another. The committee will need to come to some agreements and meet somewhere in the middle.

Mary added that if the dog owners would start self-policing it would help & could be peaceful. In response to this, Paul pointed out that Gina is in C-SPOT and that perhaps the neighborhood could work with the group on some sort of site stewardship. Sue suggested that scoop bags be placed next to the kiosks. Gina said that many people bring empty bags and leave them tied up to signs in case anyone forgets to bring one. Gay added that feedback from the public meetings showed that people were not as interested in having Parks provide the bags, but they would appreciate a place for bags that users can refill themselves.

Paul suggested that an operations person join the committee for at least one of the meetings. Gay responded that she has asked Don McTaggart to join us for the next meeting.

#### Next Meeting:

Elaine announced that the next meeting will be held Wednesday, February 23rd at the same time (7pm - 9pm) and location. At that meeting, the committee will review and discuss design options. She encouraged the committee to read the summary from this meeting when it is emailed out and to suggest anything they would like to add.

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#### Public Comment:

Nancy Norby - Nancy introduced herself as a member of the OLAC. She told the committee that the reason the dogs need a flat area is because it is easier on their joints when they play. There was talk at one time about condensing the play equipment in one area to separate the kids and dogs. Dog owners do not like the isolation of the park. They think the area is very scary after dark. The hours, which are currently recommended to go from 5am - midnight should perhaps be rethought to go along with the noise variance (7am - 10pm). The new trail developed this past weekend as an Eagle Scouts project is a welcome improvement - making it possible for her to park near Reservoir 1 and walk down to the off-leash area. She knows that park rangers are in Mt. Tabor and in the off-leash area at least once a week. One now has the ability to write tickets. Maintenance vehicles driving through to empty the trash receptacles are probably ruining the trail. Nancy said she feels that this project will be a success if the committee can come up with a fence line.

Lanie Mower - Lanie moved here in October from California. She can't believe dogs can run everywhere without fences. Fencing is the only option

that will work. Dog owners throw poop up the hill instead of properly disposing of it. Her grandson has been knocked over by three separate dogs in the play area. The meadow area under discussion is no flatter than the current off-leash location so she does not see how it will help.

Jim Ferrier- Jim talked with the Park District Supervisor. Their maintenance vehicles are driving into the OLA and causing major erosion. This needs to be addressed. There are currently not enough trash receptacles and scoop bags. Jim asked about next steps, once the committee makes the decisions.

In answer to Jim's question - the recommendations made by this committee will be reviewed by the Mt. Tabor Neighborhood and then will be presented to PP&R. Gay is here from Parks to be sure that the recommendations are realistic - from a policy and financial point of view - and will also be acceptable to Parks. Ultimately the decision rests with PP&R.

Sandra Lucas - Her daughter has been knocked over three times by dogs and her cat has been attacked. People throw waste and trash into her yard and garbage. Barking dog wakes her and her family up early in the morning and at night. Her dogs won't use their own yard because it is constantly covered in other dog feces. This off-leash area has affected her daycare business, her family and her dogs. Why do we have a right to give parks to dogs? We are letting dogs overtake our lives and making ourselves prisoners. She already had to get rid of her Australian shepherd because of conflicts with other dogs. We need to treat people with respect. She has a daycare business and lost six interviews this week for her daycare because of all the dogs. She has owned this daycare since 1990 and is being attacked verbally on a daily basis. She has been asked to muzzle her child. She asked that the committee put a fence up at the very least. Putting gates at the dead-end street entrances also would help.

Hal Mowrey - Hal recruited Mike Foster on the committee and wanted to ask Mike his opinion on what he feels about dogs in the area.

Mike responded that some dogs are more aggressive and that causes a problem. Another problem is the sloping area. Mike feels the park belongs to the people. It is our privilege and responsibility to use it correctly. Mike believes we need to keep the play areas for the kids.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

