

Mt. Tabor GNA Advisory Group  
Meeting #3 Summary - DRAFT  
Western Seminary - Chapel Basement  
March 9, 2005

Committee Members Present: Chuck Arnst, Ron Bates, Sharie Dietz, Mike Foster, Gay Greger, Cathy Kuehn, Paul Leistner, Teresa Miller, Sharie Moss, Mary Mowrey, Sue Parish, Gina Patriarca, and Michael Schindel  
Committee Staff: Diane Redd, David Yamashita  
Facilitator: Elaine Cogan  
Guest Resource People: Don McTaggart, Bob Downing, Mark Cline, Larry Crabb, Eric Daggart  
Notes: Keely Edmonson

#### Acronyms

PP&R = Portland Parks & Recreation  
OLA = Off-Leash Area  
MCAS = Multnomah County Animal Services

The meeting was called to order by Elaine Cogan. She welcomed the public members in attendance and explained that the committee's charge is to come up with recommendations to the Mt. Tabor Neighborhood Association regarding potential improvements to the Mt. Tabor OLA. Cogan welcomed and introduced several guest resource people in attendance, including:

Mark Cline, Park Ranger Supervisor, Portland Parks & Recreation  
Larry Crabb, Animal Control Officer, Multnomah County Animal

Services

Eric Daggart, Animal Control Officer, Multnomah County Animal

Services

Bob Downing, Parks Districts Supervisor, Portland Parks &  
Recreation

Don McTaggart, East Parks Districts Supervisory, Portland Parks &  
Recreation

Cogan explained that public comment is usually held during the last ten minutes of the meeting, but because the committee will be discussing several important design issues, she will be asking attendees for their thoughts throughout the meeting.

#### OLA Design & Boundaries

To bring members of the public up to date, David Yamashita, landscape architect with Portland Parks & Recreation, summarized the design options that were unveiled at the last meeting. He explained that fencing is included in all four options, and it is assumed that all will include basic amenities such as signage, seating, entrance gates, etc.

Cogan stated that the committee took a straw vote at the last meeting and seemed to favor Option D. At this time Cogan asked for input from the audience on the options.

Public Comment:

Stephen Starr has lived on Harrison St. for 29 years. He has seen a lot of transformation over that period of time. He has owned dogs and understands the wants and needs of dog owners. Starr used the aerial photo to point out the location of his house on Harrison. He knows that dogs need to get exercise and socialize with other animals and agrees that it is the city's responsibility to come up with solutions to these needs. However at Mt. Tabor Park he has seen the area moved from the soap box derby location to it's current location (south-east), and is now hearing discussion of relocating further to the south-west of the park. Starr's primary concerns included:

- no real flat areas at the park for dogs to run
- health issues with run-off
- problems with no lighting in current area
- noise issues
- increased car traffic
- OLA hour issues

Cogan reminded the committee and audience that the hours for the OLA are still on the table and would be discussed. Starr questioned whether an OLA is an appropriate use in a regional park. He also asked about apparent conflicts with the Master Plan. When asked if he had any suggestions, Starr suggested:

- placing the OLA at the top of the park (audience grumbled)
- use of water bureau property
- making the entire park off-leash with enforcement

Starr reiterated that the OLA should not be located on the periphery of the park where it will have an impact on neighbors. Paul Leistner asked Starr if he had noticed any impact related to the existing area thus far. Starr replied that the only thing he has noticed is that there is higher car traffic on Harrison St. He added that he would say most are OLA users or dog owners accessing the park.

Lois Matson - lives on Lincoln St. and sees people driving 70-80 mph. She finally had to place a "no parking" sign in front of her home to keep dog owners from parking and allowing their pets to defecate on her property before/after accessing the park

Jane Hodges - lives on Stephen Street and is a dog owner. She loves the OLA where it is now. She is a responsible pet owner but sees problems with

irresponsible pet owners not following the rules. She is not sure she sees any need for expansion, but would like to see something better than what is being proposed. The proposed expansion will cause too high an impact on neighborhood parking, which can already be difficult on nice days. She doesn't see a problem at all with the present location.

Susan Foust - also lives on Stephens St., which she added is very narrow. There is very little off-street parking available. She added that probably 60 - 70% of people who walk down their street to access the park already have their dogs off-leash. Even when people scoop, they leave behind feces, which is a concern. They are also affected by noise from the park during summer concerts, events, etc.

A member of the audience who did not identify herself lives on Stephens St. Her cat was attacked by an off-leash dog and she no longer allows her kids in the front yard because of the potential conflicts between unleashed dogs and her children. Her street is impacted now by cars parking to access the OLA and her concern is that it will only get worse.

Sharie Dietz reiterated concerns of public attendees that both Stephens and Harrison Streets are two blocks in length and dead end. People parking on these streets to access the park often speed, a concern because of the large number of children in the neighborhood.

Kay Hall - asked what the committee has learned from previous experience? In order for this to be successful site, what criteria should be met? She stated that she would like to be reasonable about this. She also said that when she hears the committee discussing management and design issues, she wonders if there is a budget and if so, what that budget might be. During the reservoir project, she learned that although there were design proposals on the table, there was no budget to support making it palatable. She asked that the charge of the committee be clarified.

Elaine Cogan explained that 1) the committee is operating with the understanding that there will be an OLA in Mt. Tabor Park and it remain more or less in this location; 2) the committee's charge is to agree on recommendations - to be submitted to the Mt. Tabor Neighborhood Association - that will form the basis for a Good Neighbor Plan to make the OLA as good as it possibly can be. Cogan asked Gay Greger to share the history of Mt. Tabor Park's OLA with the public and committee for those who are just now coming into the process.

Greger explained that when City Council instructed PP&R in June 2003 to put together an off-leash program throughout the park system, they revisited Mt. Tabor Park because there were more complaints about off-leash related user conflicts by far at Mt. Tabor than anywhere else in the city. She

also said that in addition to signs and boundary markers, there was about \$60,000 for priority site improvements related to the Off Leash Advisory Committee's recommendations. (For more information on Mt. Tabor Off-Leash History, see the outline at the end of this document.)

Leistner, who sat on the Master Planning Committee for Mt. Tabor Park and was President of the Mt. Tabor Neighborhood Association during the Master Planning process, explained that the committee did find that there was no suitable site for a fenced off-leash area in Mt. Tabor Park. However, knowing that no place in the park will meet all the criteria, there have been attempts to try and find something that will work as sort of a political compromise because of the high use and high dog population in the area. He added that it is not the responsible users that pose a problem, but rather the spillover affect of the irresponsible dog owning population. Any off-leash area that is put together needs to come packaged with a management plan to help fix potential issues.

Ron Hall - lives on Harrison St. He suggested pulling the suggested western boundary back to preserve the nursery and peninsula area, buffer the neighbors, and still provide some flatter open area for the dogs.

Ted Amman - lives on Harrison St and owns a dog. When his dogs are on-leash, he doesn't want to deal with off-leash dogs running up and causing problems. Amman doesn't see a need for changes to the current OLA, other than to move it slightly away from immediate neighbors and the playground. The forested aspect of Mt. Tabor's OLA is a unique characteristic that should not be taken away. People can go to Normandale if they want a level area with open space. The trail is what makes the OLA at Mt. Tabor a special place to take your dog.

Susan Carter-Anderson - lives on Harrison St. and owns a very big dog. Her concern with the process is that if the Master Plan states that there is no suitable area in the park for an OLA, why are we trying to come up with something that will work? She feels that Normandale is close enough that people should be able to go there. She added that the OLA should not be pushed into the nursery area at all.

Gretta Grimala - lives on Stephens St. She feels the biggest issue is enforcement. There are 12 little kids who live on her block. Every dog owner walks by saying, "Don't worry, my dog is friendly." She wanted to clarify that she is not anti-dog, but dog owners need to take responsibility by taking their dogs to areas that work for their dogs. Dogs and children do not always mix together. She added that Mt. Tabor Park is now has historical status and should be preserved.

Hal Mowery - lives on Lincoln St. He feels that if the area is not fenced,

it won't work.

Gay Greger told the group that temporary signage has been made for the east-side off-leash entrance and park boundary. The signs were made to help dog owners understand that the off-leash area is west of the meadow - hopefully reducing the problem of dogs in the children's play area.

Shannon Loch - lives on Harrison St. and is a dog owner. She feels that keeping the OLA in the forested area is great for Mt. Tabor Park. However, we need to adhere to the Mt. Tabor Master Plan. She asked who people can contact to find out why the Master Plan has been set aside. Loch supports looking at the historical, long-term vision to keep Mt. Tabor's natural open space feel.

Greger explained that the need to amend the Master Plan has been added to the Issues Chart for further discussion. Cogan then asked for clarification of the Master Plan process, and Yamashita said that PP&R typically uses master plans to guide development or new use decisions. However, because this is a regional park and there is such a high demand for off-leash use here, PP&R felt they had to rethink the issue.

Shannon Loch - emphasized that because erosion will be an issue, she hopes that PP&R is looking into ways to solve this problem without causing an impact of run-off to the neighbors. She would like the committee to talk about some kind of shared hours for the entire park to be off-leash at certain times. Shannon asked whether environmental regulations require the Parks Bureau to test run-off for contamination. Yamashita said that there are no specific regulations and testing is very difficult because there is no water body associated with the site. Much of Mt. Tabor Park is in the E-Zone, including a portion of the off-leash area. This designation places stipulations on allowable development. The Master Plan found that the habitat values in the present off-leash area were significantly lower than in other areas of the park.

Leistner added that these kind of high impact areas within the park should go through some sort of formal review - something the neighborhood wanted in relation to the first off-leash areas. The Master Plan was intended to provide for this. He noted that the Master Plan for Mt. Tabor Park was never adopted by Council. He believes that a conditional use review should be required for off-leash areas.

Cogan then introduced Bob Downing, to talk about maintenance.

#### Surfacing & Maintenance

Downing introduced himself as the Parks Maintenance Superintendent. Parks staff who care for Mt. Tabor Park are responsible for about 25 other parks

as well. They have been making an effort to improve the trail and overall environment in the off-leash area. Thinking about a possible expanded area, he said that PP&R has tested several different surfaces and found cedar chips to be the most successful and favored by users. However, they are difficult to keep in place on a sloping surface, so using them in an expanded area at Mt. Tabor would require a constant effort to push them back up the hill. The material generally costs \$10/yard or ten cents per square foot. He said that turf is next to impossible to keep in an OLA with heavy usage.

Michael Schindel asked if it is possible to rotate an area if using turf. Downing said it may work, but is an expensive proposition. As an example, he told the committee that it costs roughly \$30,000/year to maintain the turf in the Gabriel Park OLA, which can be rested over the winter because there is an alternate site.

Cogan asked about the biggest management issues for this site. Downing replied that Poison Oak and turf maintenance were two of the biggest issues. Don McTaggart, District Supervisor for Mt. Tabor, added that erosion can be a problem too. Downing agreed, but added that areas can be protected if there are problems and most people are respectful of restoration efforts. During dry weather, erosion of sloping areas is not as great a concern. A member of the public, Sandra Lucas, spoke up to say that last winter, erosion in the meadow area exacerbated the run-off problem into her yard.

In response to a question from Diane Redd, Downing said that since the OLA has been in the area, staff have seen fewer transients in this part of the park

Cogan asked about parking. McTaggart said that parking is an issue no matter what activity is going on in the park. Downing added that the portion of Harrison/Lincoln that runs through Mt. Tabor Park owned by PP&R and can be closed for certain hours of the day. There has already been some discussion about this with the Water Bureau to provide more nighttime security for the reservoirs and alleviate problems with late night noise and safety in the park. This may help control use of the off-leash area after hours and could dictate evening hours. Sue Parish said she sometime sees around 22 cars parked along the road at once.

#### Hours

Cogan asked what OLA hours should be. Downing replied that currently when the park is open (5AM - midnight) the OLA is open. He added that this issue is on the table to be changed to work better for everyone. Sharie Dietz suggested using the same hours as those in the noise variance - 7AM - 10PM.

## Enforcement

The topic of discussion moved to enforcement. Mult. Co. Animal Control Officer Larry Crabb introduced himself and explained that he is in charge of park issues related to dogs. His biggest concern with limited staff and resources is getting around to all the parks and responding to calls. He spent today dealing with one dog that killed another dog in one of the parks. Currently, Multnomah County has two Officers to deal with issues in all 200 parks.

Mark Cline, Supervisor of the PP&R's Park Rangers introduced himself and explained staffing for Park Rangers:

Winter - 1 person - (him)

Spring - 3 pairs working with him - (7 people total)

Summer - 9 teams working with him - (19 people total)

Fall - 3 pairs working with him (7 people total)

In the summer, when park use is at it's highest, there are teams of rangers working from 7AM till dark. Sandra Lucas asked Cline who she should call during the weekend when Animal Control can't make it out and the Portland Police Bureau won't respond. Cline told Lucas that the response rate will depend heavily on the time of the year and day of the week. He then shared to numbers:

Non-Emergency # for problems in parks: (503) 823-1637

Pager # for Emergencies: (503) 942-3047

Hal Mowery asked about Notice of Infraction fines and whether or not Animal Control Officers will really issue the full \$150 fine. Crabb answered that it depends on the violation (ex: If the dog does not have a license; if the owner is violating the leash law, etc.), and if the person has already been warned.

Schindel asked if MCAS is willing to train a team of volunteers to help enforce the leash laws. Crabb said that people have to be sworn deputies to issue tickets. Leistner suggested community a policing approach. He said the police cannot be there all the time, but park users are always in the park. He said that volunteers should not be able to give tickets, but they could take down information on chronic violators. Crabb cautioned that some people can get overly enthusiastic in their role as "enforcers" - causing problems for themselves as well as others. For example, he has one person in North Portland that now has several complaints filed against him, has had his car stolen and has been accused of being a stalker - all because he is so intent on off-leash violators being caught.

Crabb went on to say that Park Rangers report chronic violators on a form that is submitted to MCAS. MCAS then issues a NOI (Notice of Infraction) - which is delivered to the address personally. Gay Greger asked whether a

group of volunteers could provide the same type information to MCAS.

While this is theoretically possible, Crabb said he has received 18 of these forms from PP&R. For every one form that is completed, he has to spend the time to personally issue the ticket. This means driving to the person's home and knocking on the door. That takes significant time that could have been spent out in the parks. Also, Crabb has to take time out to investigate every reported dog bite, or aggressive dog complaint. Leistner said that there used to be a system where if three neighbors would sign something on any one violator, then the county would send a ticket in the mail. He asked if there was still a possibility to implement something like this again. Gay said she would look into it. Sharie Moss wondered whether a stewardship group could team up with MCAS to issue tickets to violators.

Crabb explained that he is expected to visit 9 parks (most heavily used or highest complaints) on a daily basis, 14 other parks once per week, and 20 other parks once per month. On top of this number, there are still about 140 other parks to deal with.

Mary Mowery asked why dog owners don't just self police, and wondered whether people are as rude to other dog owners as they are to non-dog owners. Gina Patriarca said that she does share with people information about the program. Sometimes they are rude to her, but other times they are thankful for the information.

Mike Foster said that for this to be a successful program, we need to come up with a plan to deal with these violators. In response to this Cline said that in the beginning of the program, they used to focus daily on Mt. Tabor and it made a huge difference. Schindel recommended that enforcement staff continue to implement that plan regularly.

Downing said that he believes this is going to be a slow social shift in behavior. He said that five years ago, most people would walk their dogs off leash in Gabriel Park, and now there is about a 95% compliance with the rules. It will never be perfect and there will not be an overnight change, but having a designated OLA can gradually help the overall problem.

Leistner suggested also initiating some sort of partnership with the Neighborhood Emergency Response Teams (NERTS). Cline said that PP&R has and will continue to ask for their help - but the off-leash issue is not a high priority for them.

Greger said she felt it was important for people to also know that Park Ranger could issue park exclusions. Cline explained that the process is to inform and educate first, but when there are chronic violators Park Rangers

can issue a park exclusion. If these people are found in the park in violation of their exclusion, it is considered criminal trespass. These exclusions can be from 30 to 180 days. There were 12 exclusions issued for off-leash violations last summer. Crabb added that MCAS has the ability to issue one-year park exclusions as well.

Greger asked the enforcement guests if they felt they needed signs in order to enforce. Crabb said that clear boundaries and correct orientation of maps on the signs were be most helpful for enforcement.

Downing asked that people say "thank you" when they see people picking up after their pets. Positive reinforcement goes a long way.

Sandra Lucas asked if a trash receptacle could be placed at the entrance and exit points. Downing replied that as soon as design and boundary issues are decided, trash cans can be sited where it makes the most sense for users and for maintenance.

Dietz said that the next few meetings should be focused mainly on the OLA site - whether we should move it, change it, or eliminate it. She also suggested that we add another couple members to the committee to represent the neighbors to the west. Dietz lives on the west side (Stephens St.) of the park and will take the lead in choosing representatives.

Cathy Kuehnl asked that someone come to talk about stewardship groups at the next meeting. Patriarca reminded everyone that the stewardship groups do not have to be only dog owners. Neighbors and other park users can participate too - and it would be a good way to get to know each other and resolve problems before they escalate.

#### Next Meeting:

The next meeting will be held Wednesday, March 16, 2005 at the same time (7pm - 9pm) and location. Cogan told everyone that everything from tonight's meeting would be summarized in the minutes.

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#### Brief History of Off-Leash Issue in Mt. Tabor Park February 2005

\* July 1995: A trial off-leash area was established at Mt. Tabor Park as part of a city-wide trial at three locations which also included Gabriel and Chimney. The Mt. Tabor site was located above Reservoir 5 and was unfenced. The committee evaluating the program at the end of the trial period was very much divided on the success of the area. While all felt that definite physical boundaries were needed, some believed this use could

be accommodated in Mt. Tabor while others felt it could not. Non-compliance with existing rules (off-leash outside the off-leash area) was a key concern. In October, the boundary was marked with pink paint. When that didn't work, a partial fence was installed.

\* April '97 - Water Bureau officially asked that the site be moved due to potential water contamination concerns.

\* May '97 - Commissioner Francesconi announced that the current site would be closed later in May. Public outcry convinced him to keep the site open until a suitable alternative was found.

\* June '97 - September '97: Several sites were evaluated for an all-hours fenced site, including Harrison Street. Concerns related to noise, feces, traffic, parking, proximity to playground and residences. Harrison Street was rejected during this process.

\* October '97 - Alternate site was selected along Tabor Summit Drive and the off-leash area was moved. The new site, which was sloping and had dense tree canopy, was fenced and the trial period was extended for one year. The site proved to be muddy, difficult to maintain, and windy.

\* October '98 - The trial period for the off-leash area ended on Oct. 30th, and the Parks Director decided to allow the Master Plan process to determine disposition of the Off-leash site.

\* January '99 - The off-leash subcommittee of the Master Plan CAC responded by letter, stating their findings - that no appropriate site for a permanent off-leash area exists in Mt. Tabor Park - and recommended that the interim area be closed and the fence removed by spring 1999. The final Master Plan document includes similar language.

\* February 2000 - A City-wide Off-Leash Task Force recommended a five year pilot project to expand off-leash opportunities. Critical elements of the recommended program included significantly enhanced enforcement and education as well as a concept for specific hours shared sites. PP&R began working on ways to increase enforcement capability.

\* June 2003 - After extensive work with Mult. Co. Animal Services, PP&R brought to City Council a proposal for enhancing enforcement of dog rules in parks. Council approved the new program, but stipulated that PP&R also provide significantly increased off-leash opportunities geographically distributed throughout the city. Parks was directed to come back with a plan for implementation in August.

\* July 2003 - PP&R had a little over one month to put together a program. Using criteria and recommendations based on Neighborhood Coalition reports, and the 1999 Off-Leash Task Force, as well as maintenance information about site conditions and current levels of off-leash use, PP&R conducted a site analysis. Recognizing that the Master Plan found no suitable sites in Mt. Tabor, there was still concern about the high level of off-leash use and related conflicts in the park. (There were more complaints about off-leash dogs at Mt. Tabor than in any other park.) Staff reconsidered the trail area behind Warner Pacific College and decided to include it in the trial program as an hours-only, unfenced site. In all they identified 26 unfenced

SHARED (hours) sites - of which Mt. Tabor's was one - and 7 fenced sites.

\* August 2003 - The recommended program was adopted by City Council, with the expectation that implementation would begin immediately and most sites would be open by the end of September.

\* September 2003 - A meeting with representatives of the Mt. Tabor Neighborhood Association and immediate neighbors was held at the off-leash site. Issues discussed included potential fencing, signage, garbage cans and dog waste bags. It was agreed that fencing could be considered, but there were concerns about it being appropriate to the character of the park. There were also concerns about people keeping their dogs on-leash until they reached the off-leash area. A trail approach was necessary to get from the street area to the off-leash area and all agreed that the area should not open until the trail was constructed.

\* December 2003 - The trail was completed and the off-leash area opened. It was designated an hours-only site: 5-9 AM and 8PM - closing from April 1 - November 1. However, at that time, the rules were that the entire park (except playgrounds, pathways, and natural areas) was approved for off-leash during designated hours - 5-9 and 4-closing - during the winter months: November 2 - March 31. This led to a great deal of confusion.

\* December 2003 - November 2004 - Evaluation period. Over 400 contacts re. Mt. Tabor were documented. Primary concerns had to do with inappropriateness of allowing dogs throughout the park in winter months, inadequate hours in the summer months, and undesirable location of the off-leash site from point of view of dog owners.

\* Summer 2004 - Results of the Mt. Tabor Neighborhood Survey reflected strongly divided opinions about dogs in the park and the off-leash area. The highest-ranking dog-related issue called for increased enforcement and education.

\* November 2004 - Off-Leash Advisory Committee recommended confining off-leash use to designated areas year around. Also recommended moving Mt. Tabor to an all hours site and possibly expanding the area to the east after a neighborhood planning process and development of a good neighbor agreement.

\* January 2005 - PP&R maintenance staff measured and marked 100' east of the current off-leash boundary line for reference during the neighborhood planning process.

\* February 2005 - Neighborhood planning process begins