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Resident wants to establish dog park in Belmont

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BELMONT — Through the work of two determined residents, the “dog moms and dads” out there may soon have a place where their pets can run off-leash and socialize with others of the same species.

Lisa Clutters, a resident and owner of a yellow lab named Collyn, is working with local teenager William Stanley to establish a fenced-in dog park in Belmont.

“There is a clear need and want, we believe, from dog moms and dads, for an off-leash dog park and dog run, if you will,” Clutters told the Board of Selectmen last Monday at their regular meeting, which she and Stanley attended.

Clutters told the Echo that she came to the idea through conversations she had with other dog owners while out walking Collyn.

“Walking the dog every day, you meet other dog moms and dads, and strike up friendships,” she said, adding that she and the other dog walkers frequently expressed concerns about socializing their animals.

Clutters brought the idea to Belmont Parks and Recreation Coordinator Janet Breton, who put her in touch

with Stanley. He had previously approached Breton about a dog park, where he could train his charges on agility equipment—hoops, ramps, hurdles, beams, and other apparatus designed to challenge a canine mentally and physically.

“I can’t say enough about him,” said Clutters of Stanley. “He’s fantastic; he’s the best young man I’ve ever met.”

Clutters added that part of her motivation for establishing a dog park is to show Stanley that hard work can make an idea a reality.

“I know it sounds cheesy,” she said, “but as an adult and resident in Belmont, I believe it’s my duty to set a good example for Will.”

The selectmen were receptive to the dog park idea, but they emphasized that getting it off the ground would largely be up to Clutters, Stanley, and whoever else gets involved.

Selectmen Chair Ron Cormier said that the dog park advocates could create their own entity, raise the necessary capital for start-up and operations, and the town could donate the necessary land, keeping the project a largely private endeavor for now.

Clutters said that she was willing to take the responsibility.

“We are willing to pursue this to any length,” she said, adding that she and Stanley and whoever else gets involved would go to the state for grant money, or secure their own funding in other ways.

“What we’re looking for is land, and we’ll do the rest,” Clutters told the selectmen.

The board also said that the issue of liability, i.e. if a dog bites someone other than its owner, would have to be analyzed and addressed. Clutters suggested that dog park users be required to sign a waiver, but Selectmen Reggie Caldwell informed her that “they don’t work.”

“We would do everything possible to make this the safest, most secure place for both people using it and other people around,” Clutters said.

Town Administrator Jeanne Beaudin told Clutters that the Belmont Department of Public Works would probably not want the additional responsibility of maintaining the dog park. Clutters replied that she and her group would keep it clean.

As for a location, Beaudin

said that Rick Ball, the town’s land-use technician, was working with Clutters to find one. Several possible sites have been identified on Dutille Road, to which most residents would have to drive.

“There aren’t too many options in the village,”

Beaudin said.

Clutters said that she was looking for a site with “at least half an acre,” enough room for the dogs to run.

Beaudin said that she and Ball would refine the list of possible sites.

Cormier asked Clutters

for a comprehensive plan of the proposed park, including information on whether the park would support itself financially.

“Whatever you need, just give me a list and I’ll provide it,” Clutter said.

