

**HARLEY-DAVIDSON ROAD TOUR IS HERE! JUNE 17-21.
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Belmont selectmen would consider providing land (only) for a dog park

By **RAY CARBONE**
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BELMONT — Residents Lisa Clutters and Will Stanley approached the Board of Selectmen last night to ask if the town fathers would be open to the idea of establishing a “dog park” in town. The park, which would be maintained by a group of “dog parent” volunteers, Clutters said, would give pets a chance to run free in a large enclosed area with other animals but

without imposing any problem on other residents.

The three-man board said it would consider donating a one-acre piece of land to a private nonprofit organization that could use the land for a dog park but it did not want the town to take any official role in the operation.

Town Administrator Jeanne Beaudin said Clutters has been talking with Land Use Technician Rick Ball recently and one option raised was

making use of a small piece of town-owned land off Dutile Road.

Chairman Ron Cormier said his only problem with the suggestion was that the land is outside the village area and could be too far from many residents.

Clutters said Belmont issued over 1,000 dog licenses last year, which showed “a clear need and a want for dog moms and dog dads for an off-leash dog park or run.”

“We’d be appreciative of it if it would be considered and approved,” she said. “And we’d also ask for town resources, for the help of staff or whatever” to get the operation going.

The board was not opposed to the dog park idea but was hesitant to offer any town help. Cormier said if that happened, the town would have another piece of land to maintain with no guarantee that it would generate reliable income.

Stanley, who is a teenager and wants to open his own local dog kennel someday, said parks in other parts of the country charge “membership” fees that pay for their maintenance.

Clutters said she and other “dog parents” are more than willing to go with whatever approach the town would support. “We’re willing to pursue this anyway we can — creating a state park, asking for grants or funding, or forming a 501(c)3 (non-profit corporation)... We’re just asking for the land and we’ll take it from there.”

Cormier said the non-profit organization might be the best option with the idea of the town donating the land when all the plans were in place. He told Clutters she would have to bring her idea before the Planning Board for approval before the park could be opened.

Selectman Jon Pike pointed out that besides the obvious sanitary issues that needed to be considered when dealing with dog droppings, the facility operators had to look at parking issues and perhaps bathroom facilities for pet owners at the park.

Cormier said it was impossible to move ahead with the idea until a piece of property was deemed suitable. He encouraged Clutters to continue talking with Ball and Beaudin to identify a piece of town-owned property that might work.

(The idea of using a portion of Sargent Park was rejected as inappropriate at the meeting but the possibility of using a section of the Jeff Marden Memorial Town Forest was left open.)