

# Pound Ridge Dog Park

## Acknowledgments

### Town Board

Kevin Hansan, Ali Boak, Carla Brand, Diane Briggs, Dan Paschkes

### Town Clerk

Erin Trostle

### Dog Park Advisory Committee

Committee to be named, for now in care of Friends of Pound Ridge (FoPR)

### Recreation Department Staff

Dave Goldberg (through April 2023), Andrea Russo, Melissa Trail

### Recreation Commission

Rich Wetchler (Chair), Colette Dow, Dawn Davidson, Dan MacDonald, Derek McConnell, Matt Polinsky, Van Muller, Jessica Watts (advisor)

### Special Thanks

Louis Fusco Landscape Architects

## Why a Dog Park?

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic caused a worldwide shift in priorities. It's now more critical than ever to have outdoor areas where people can connect with their community, soak up the sun and breathe fresh air while safely social distancing. Dog parks are an excellent example of this shift in priorities. While they were popular community amenities before the COVID-19 era, demand for them has skyrocketed in many areas of the country. There has been a significant rise in dog ownership in recent years, with almost 9MM dogs being acquired nationally since the start of the pandemic ([The Guardian](#)).

Dog parks are typically fenced-in areas with large open spaces to allow dogs of all shapes and sizes the freedom to play as they naturally would. It's imperative to create space for people just as much as it is for their dogs. After all, pet parents choose where to take their furry loved ones. Creating an appealing dog park — including creating a functional layout and outdoor amenities — is essential for its success.

Many suburban homeowners with spacious, private yards still want opportunities to socialize with others and their pups. Dog parks are vital for dogs who need off-leash chances to play and exercise in a safe environment. The parks allow dogs to embrace their natural instincts, encourage them to become comfortable around other dogs and people, and enjoy the freedom to run and burn off excess energy. Dog parks also allow fellow dog owners to meet, increasing their sense of community.

## **Why Pound Ridge?**

There have been calls for a dog park in our town for many years. In 2022 town wide survey sponsored by the Recreation Department, the request for a “dog park” ranked as a top priority by residents. Our town is full of nature and outdoor beauty, and is also full of residents who enjoy being able to take advantage of it. Having a dog park where residents can enjoy the outdoors and socialize with one another (and their dogs!) fits into what Pound Ridge is all about. Many of the public hiking areas in town do not allow dogs off leash. With its level and ample size open field, along with its natural beauty and “low key location” Sachs Park is the natural destination for the proposed dog park as it’s easily accessible and will not interfere with town activities (Rec sports, clubs, traffic, etc.).

The Town of Pound Ridge reports that as of November 2022, they have issued 660 dog licenses, indicating the growth of dog ownership just this year. The Town estimates the number of licenses reflects a much lower number of dogs than are owned by residents as anecdotal evidence shows that many dog owners who reside in Town are unaware of a dog license requirement. A dog park in Pound Ridge is an opportunity for improved communication between dog owners and the Town, promoting responsible pet ownership by enforcement of dog control laws, licensing, and vaccinations. It would also represent an opportunity for a sustained educational program for dog owners.

## **Design & Location**

The proposed fenced in area will be located on the “lower” field adjacent to the parking area at Sachs Park. The fenced in area will be approximately 151’ at its widest point x 157’ at its longest point. The fence portion located nearest to the existing pond will be at minimum 55’ from the pond per the approval from the Pound Ridge Water Commission. See attached plan/drawing by Louis Fusco as approved by the Water Commission.

There will be appropriate requirement of fencing (minimum of 4’ in height) and access as appropriate for a dog park (double-gated, self-locking, multiple entry points, ADA accessible, etc.). Existing conditions will be leveraged and enhanced (dog waste disposal stations, trees, benches, etc.). There will also be very specific signage outlining rules, hours, etc. in highly visible locations near entrances, parking and the gated park area. Resident only access will be controlled by a formalized registration process and a key code at the park for admittance to provide added security and membership control.

## **Proposed Oversight and Governance**

The Dog Park committee will report directly into the Recreation Department. In addition, a Recreation Commission member (and/or a Town Board member) shall be appointed to sit in on all bi-monthly Dog Park committee meetings. The Dog Park committee will be expected to meet with and report back to the Recreation Commission as necessary.

The committee will consist of 5 community members who have a passion for dogs, experience with neighboring town dog parks, community involvement and familiarity of participating in committees/boards, and a commitment to visit the dog park a minimum of 1x/weekly. The committee will meet at a minimum of one time bi-monthly in a formal setting, with additional adhoc meetings as necessary. The Recreation Commission will be responsible for Dog Park Governance and working with the Dog Park Committee to be active in the community.

### Responsibilities of Recreation Commission

- Development of rules, regulations, proper signage
- Promotion of responsible dog ownership
- Ensuring the condition of the park is maintained to ensure cleanliness, health and safety. Maintenance requests will be reported immediately to Pound Ridge Maintenance.
- Establishment of a registration process for dogs to be permitted to use the park
- Establishment of a dispute resolution process and consequences (e.g.: removal from park)
- Working closely with the Pound Ridge Dog Control Officer
- Procuring a sustained dog ownership educational campaign targeted to resident members of the dog park to promote safety, etiquette, dog health, socialization, overall good dog ownership
- Managing website and social media
- Maintaining a budget for non-routine maintenance items such as fence repair, dog station repairs, etc. Budget will come from Dog Park membership fees
- Being visible and onsite at the park often

### **Community Building and Education**

Recreation and the Dog Park Committee will build quarterly events to bring the community together to socialize with neighbors in an environment where their dogs can play. To encourage safe play and enhance pet owner education, Recreation and the Committee will collaborate with Animal Control to lead education sessions on pet ownership best practices and safety, with a focus on group settings like a dog park. Education sessions will include topics like socializing dogs in various settings, reading your dog's expressions and training methods.

### **Maintenance**

Routine maintenance will be performed by the Town as is being done today, including but not limited to lawn mowing, seasonal maintenance and removal of garbage. Non routine maintenance will be coordinated and funded by the Dog Park committee using the budget from Dog park membership fees.

# Proposed Design

