

Support for Local Law Introductory 31-2017 Amending Town Code Chapter 159
Adopting Uniform Park Standards for Leashed Dogs in Town Parks
Ginny Munger Kahn, President
Long Island Dog Owners Group (LI-DOG)
Tues., July 11, 2017

Good afternoon. I'm Ginny Munger Kahn, a long-time resident of Huntington, the president of the Long Island Dog Owners Group, and a member of the Huntington Greenways Trails Committee. LI-DOG is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing access to public parkland for Long Island dog owners and their dogs. Since our founding in 1998, we have built a successful track record of working with elected officials to create 10 new dog parks, including the Huntington dog run in E. Northport, and almost a dozen new on-leash dog walking trails around Long Island.

Today we're here to support the resolution to amend Chapter 159 of the Town Code by adopting uniform park standards for leashed dogs. We are very excited at the prospect of being able to walk our leashed dogs in almost all Town parks. Walking your dog on-leash in a beautiful park is one of life's great pleasures and we are grateful not only to the Huntington Town Board, but also to our colleagues on the Huntington Greenway Trails Committee for recommending this change that will benefit so many Huntington residents.

Adopting uniform park standards for leashed dogs will help the Town and town residents in many ways:

- It will allow more people to enjoy Huntington's public parks. Not only is this an important quality of life issue, but increasing park use makes our parks safer. The regular presence of dog owners and their dogs is a deterrent to undesirable and even illegal activities in public parks.
- It will support the Town's goal of being more dog-friendly. This is worthwhile as providing more access to parks will incent more people to get out and walk their dogs, which is good not only for dogs' health, but people, too.
- Moreover, it will align Town parks policies with Suffolk County and make enforcement easier. The Town owns almost a dozen parks in partnership with the County and those partnerships will likely continue to grow. County and Town parks policies are currently inconsistent as Suffolk County allows leashed dogs throughout its parks. Aligning Town and County parks policies will make it easier for people to understand the policy and help enforcement.

Of course, we understand that with increased access comes increased responsibility. LI-DOG will make sure all our supporters know how important it is to clean up after their dogs, keep their dogs on-leash, and abide by the restrictions recommended by the Trails Committee—that is, to keep dogs out of playgrounds, off ball fields and out of picnic areas. If there are issues, we will work with the Town and redouble our communications efforts. We are happy to note, however, that Town officials have told the Trails Committee there have been no issues with leashed dogs on the trails designated for such use over the last four years.

One restriction we would recommend lifting in the future is the restriction on leashed dogs in Heckscher Park. Access to Heckscher Park is the most common request we get from Huntington dog owners and we believe Heckscher would benefit greatly from the presence of leashed dogs in terms of deterring the geese that foul the lawns and paths there. We are hopeful that once this new policy is in place and has proved successful, we can revisit this issue with the Town.

In conclusion, we strongly support the Trails Committee's recommendation and the proposed new law to adopt uniform park standards for leashed dogs in Town Parks. The resolution will benefit many, many Town residents and will provide a strong foundation for additional discussions about making Huntington more dog-friendly in the future.

Thank you so much.

More information:

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