



New York Council of Dog Owner Groups

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www.NYCoffleash.com | www.NYCdogg.org

Promoting Responsible Dog Ownership | Representing 35,000 NYC Dog Owners

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NYCdogg CHEERS HEALTH BOARD'S SUPPORT of OFF-LEASH POLICY TODAY'S VOTE STRENGTHENS AND CLARIFIES POLICY

WHAT: Press Conference to Support Off-Leash Policy – Health Board Vote to Follow

WHEN: Tuesday, December 5th, 2:00 pm or at end of BOH hearing

WHERE: Foley Square (Worth & Centre Sts)

TODAY: Today, the Health Board voted in favor of amending Article 161.05 to strengthen the twenty year limited off-leash policy, which is only in designated park locations and only during certain times (9 pm until parks close, and when they re-open until 9 am).

BACKGROUND: A small Queens-based group misguidedly sued NYC about the City's off-leash policy. The Judge in that case recently ruled that the Parks Commissioner clearly has the authority to permit dogs off-leash in City Parks, and that the small Queens group "exhibits a fundamental misunderstanding of the 'laws' at issue." However, as it often does, the City is also moving to clarify its own regulations. Today's vote will prevent further misguided lawsuits and clarifies the off-leash policy.

Matthew Greller, attorney for NYCdogg said, "Today's vote clearly backs the position that the Parks Commissioner has the authority to establish regulations allowing dogs off-leash in City parks. Also, the Health Department changes call for dog-owners to provide proof of their dog's current rabies vaccination on their dog's collar. The vote also calls for the Parks Department to promote awareness of dog licensure requirements, and the specific locations where, and limited times when, dogs may be off-leash."

Robert Marino, President of NYCdogg, stated, "I applaud the Health Department for voting today to strengthen this successful twenty year old off-leash policy. This is a big win for responsible dog owners, and follows on the heels of our big victory in court. Clarifying this entire issue is a victory for everyone - dog owners and non dog owners – who enjoy City parks."

Matthew H. Parker, President of Friends of Hillside Dog Park said, "Today's vote is supported by Health Department statistics that show that this limited off-leash policy is a tremendous success. Prior to the off-leash policy, dog-bites Citywide exceeded 40,000 per year. In 2005, the number of dog-bites dropped to less than 4,000, of which only 86 (2.2%) occurred in City parks. For 2006, bites are down even further. In short, the off-leash policy makes parks safer, and benefits all New Yorkers."

Virginia Hoffmann, CPDT, CDBC, Dog Behavior Consultant, stated "these low dog-bite numbers could drop further, but always leashing dogs could cause more bites, as many peer-reviewed studies confirm that dogs who get off-leash exercise are much less aggressive, and can cope with surroundings. The Board voted properly today, because the City has few dog runs, and off-leash park activity is the best way to tire and socialize dogs."

Terri Sullivan, President of the Juniper Valley Dog Owners Association said, "I know first-hand that NYC dog owners use peer pressure to ensure that people pick up waste, comply with the law, vaccinate, license and train their dogs. They never condone bad behavior. They are also parents, athletes, and bird-watchers, and want to see parks safely and responsibly enjoyed by *everyone*. Today's vote confirms that this twenty year policy is a success."

For more information, please visit: www.nycoffleash.com or www.nycdogg.org