

SUN CITY WEST



Sun City West residents enjoy the shade while their dogs get some exercise at the dog park at R.H. Johnson Recreation Center Wednesday afternoon. [Jarod Opperman/Daily News-Sun]

Dog groups spar over park change

By Tina Gamez
DAILY NEWS-SUN

As the swan program swims along nicely in Sun City West, it looks like the latest controversy has now gone to the dogs.

The Recreation Centers of Sun City West staff is planning on fencing off a grassy area next to the small doggie park near the tennis courts at R.H. Johnson Recreation Center, and members of Canine Companions Club are opposed to the move while the Sunshine Animal Club members like the idea.

Recreation Activity Man-

ager Cindy Knowlton said the grass in the small dog park is degenerating so in order to let it rest, officials want to open a park next to it so the current one can be closed. Then the two small dogs parks would alternate being open every six months so the ground could replenish itself. During the general manager operations meeting on Monday, RCSCW President Patricia Tomlin said what was a staff decision has now become a board issue due to community concern over the plan.

Diane Sullivan, president of the Canine Companions Club,

said the grassy area RCSCW is planning to fence off is the last open grassy area residents in that location have to use. She added that it is also a safety hazard because the grass is on a slope running down toward the parking lot. "I just imagine a granny out there with her little dog on the wet grass at 6 o'clock in morning taking a header down the hill."

The existing small dog park is flat.

Sullivan said she believes the Sunshine Animal Club wants to expand its territory. She said the only time

there are 20 small dogs in the park is at 4 p.m. January through March; otherwise, it's three the rest of the year. The reason the grass is deteriorating, she said, is because residents don't pick up after their dogs.

Sunshine Animal Club president Robert Stebbins doesn't think the sloped grassy area will be a problem for users.

He said the current small dog park has been in existence for 30 years, and there are 2,400 registered dogs with the majority being small. Plus, he said, winter residents don't

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register their dogs, and "the grass has just way too many dogs putting their waste on it."

Stebbins said there are some leaks in the watering system with areas that are always wet and soggy and a danger to the people who always use the park. "The park needs an overhaul and this will give them a chance to do that."

Other improvements would include a walking path from the main entrance to the ramada made from decomposed granite and stabilizer; removal of the larger decomposed granite, replacing it with a smaller type making it better for the dogs in the large dog park; planting two trees and installing a new park bench. There will also be another walking path from the west end of the tennis courts to the large dog park for those who don't want to walk by the small dog park.

The estimated cost for all the improvements is under \$3,000, officials said.

The issue will be discussed during the 9 a.m. Friday RC-SCW board workshop in the Lecture Hall at R.H. Johnson Recreation Center. Members of the Canine Companions Club are organizing a protest and plan to show up at the workshop, and members of the Sunshine Animal Club are also planning to attend.

Other agenda items at the workshop include:

- An update from the Automotive Restoration Club.
- The PORA CC&R agreement.
- A budget presentation.
- Policy C3 "Committee Open Meeting Requirements."
- An update from SCW Broadcast Club with news that the FCC has approved the license.
- Facility enhancement master plan/budget.
- An update on 53-acre parcel going out to bid by Maricopa County.

SUN CITY WEST

RCSCW slates May closure of dog park

By Denelle Dunn
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sun City West's dog park renovation project will begin in May and include new

sod, specially selected rock and increased access for the handicapped.

Two weeks ago, proposed changes at the park con-

cerned some dog owners, but at Thursday's Recreation Centers of Sun City West meeting, the plan seemed satisfactory to the

large crowd that attended the session.

"I think it's a good plan, and we're willing to work with the staff," said Sun-

shine Animal Club President Bob Stebbins.

The renovation project will be led by Todd Patty,

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who is the RCSCW environmental services manager.

According to the plan, the dog park would be extended on the west end by an additional 1,100 feet. Turf would be replaced with 419 Bermuda sod. The area that is going to be added to the dog park currently has rock, and the plan will be to replace any areas that have rock with new material, which will be selected by a committee formed by the Sunshine Animal Club.

A second gate on the west end will be added.

Also in the plan is replacement of the irrigation system with a dual water system with new heads, valves and piping. The dual water system will help maintain the area by splitting it up when overseeding takes place, leaving half of the dog park area open.

The renovation will start in mid-May, and the park will be closed until late June.

"It increases our area by another 1,100 square feet," Stebbins said. "We're going to get a completely new

surface for the dogs to be on. We're going to get another handicap-accessible

gate. We're getting a pretty new park. That grass has been over 30 years old, and it's just worn out."

Some Sun City West dog owners said they use the park two or three times a week.

"I think it's a very creative solution," Shari Jones

said of the plan. "I like the idea of having a grassy area. My dog plays Frisbee, and he can't play on the rocks because it shreds his feet."

"We're getting a pretty new park. That grass has been over 30 years old, and it's just worn out."

Bob Stebbins
President
Sunshine Animal Club