

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
January 18, 2024

CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Cincinnati Board of Park Commissioners was held on this day at 950 Eden Park Drive. Commissioners present: President Jim Goetz, Vice President Molly North, Commissioner Susan F. Castellini, and Commissioner Kick Lee. President Goetz called the meeting to order at 9:06 A.M. Commissioner Phyllis McCallum was absent from the meeting.

Acknowledgement of Public Comments

President Goetz acknowledged two in-person public comments about the Burnet Woods Dog Park.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS

Approval of the December 14, 2023, Minutes

Commissioner Castellini motioned to approve the meeting minutes. Commissioner Lee seconded. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

INFORMATION/ UPDATES

COPD City Parks Activity: Q4, 2023 Report

Mandy Barker, Crime Analyst with Cincinnati Police, presented an update on Calls for Service (CFS) in Cincinnati Parks during Q4 2023. Overall numbers were down as is typical for Q4, however Citywide CFS and Parks CFS were slightly higher across 2023 relative to 2022.

HR Update

HR Manager Derrick Gentry presented an overview of promotions, current vacancies, and the recruitment process for Parks. Interviewing for the Chief Financial Officer and Grant Writer positions is taking place in the coming weeks, and part-time seasonal hiring is in progress.

Division of Natural Resources Update

Division Manager Crystal Courtney presented an update on the State of the Urban Forest, providing an overview of the function of the Urban Forestry program, staff organization and budgeting, community partnerships, 2023 initiatives, and planning for 2024. President Goetz asked for a synopsis of a day in the life of an Urban Forestry Specialist. Director Barron discussed issues with Parks' former tree contractor and efforts to work with Procurement to improve the bidding process for planting contractors. Vice President North requested details on the planning process for 2024. The Board and Staff discussed tree planting for new developments, invasive plant management, and the status of the Cincinnati Biochar project.

ACTION ITEMS

2025 Urban Forestry Assessment (FY 2026)

Division Manager Crystal Courtney presented the Board with a Recommended 2025 Urban Forestry Assessment Budget (FY26) and 2025 Street Tree Program Recommended Budget Report. Staff requested approval of the FY 26 Urban Forestry front footage assessment at \$0.31 cents per foot.

Commissioner Castellini motioned to approve the assessment. Commissioner Lee seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

Ohio Avenue / Sycamore Street Property Swap

Director Barron provided background on conversations between the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and Parks to negotiate a swap of two Parks-owned parcels on Ohio Avenue and three DCED-owned pocket parks on Sycamore Avenue. The Board discussed the value potential of the Ohio Avenue land versus the Sycamore Avenue land in terms of their usefulness to Parks and the community. DCED Development Officer, Danny Jones, spoke briefly in support of the land swap.

Staff recommended approving the property swap with DCED of the Ohio Avenue property in exchange for the Sycamore Street properties. President Goetz motioned to accept the land swap as approved. Commissioner Lee seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

Ludlow Avenue DNR Headquarters Service Garage

Division Manager Joel Gross gave an overview of the bidding process for a service garage located on the new DNR Headquarters property. Bids came in higher than expected, however Planning & Design reviewed the winning bid with KZF and no major potential areas of cost savings were identified.

Staff recommended proceeding with the responsive bid and using proceeds from the sale of the Reading Road Operations Center to cover the additional cost. Vice-President North motioned to approve the bid and proceed. Commissioner Castellini seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

Mt. Echo Pavilion Roof Repairs

Division Manager Joel Gross gave an update on the assessment and cost estimation for roof and understructure repairs to the Mt. Echo Pavilion.

Staff recommended awarding the work to Megan Construction in the amount of \$207,955. Commissioner Castellini motioned to approve the award of work. Commissioner Lee seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

Alms Sanitary Service Line Repairs

Division Manager Joel Gross gave an update on unanticipated issues with the installation of a sanitary sewer line necessary to restore functionality to the comfort station and caretaker's house

restrooms at Alms Park. These unforeseen issues are significant and necessitate additional funds to complete the restoration work.

Staff recommended approval of a change order in the amount of \$39,560 to complete this work. Commissioner Castellini motioned to approve the change order. Commissioner Lee seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

Smale Geothermal Analysis and Well Cleaning

Division Manager Joel Gross updated the Board on Planning & Design's investigation into best practices for the cleaning and redevelopment of four geothermal wells after several years of not being cleaned.

Staff recommended approval of this work in the amount of \$173,072.50 to Megen Construction. Commissioner Castellini motioned to approve. Vice-President North seconded. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

INFORMATION/ UPDATES

Monthly Update - Planning & Design Division

Division Manager Joel Gross shared his Planning & Design Division Monthly Update and briefly covered updates to the format of the report itself, as well as progress reports on Lytle Park, the Ludlow DNR Headquarters, French House, and Washington Park pavement improvements. Commissioner Castellini inquired about the cost of needed repairs to Everybody's Tree House in Mt. Airy Forest. Staff replied there is no firm cost estimate at this time but one will hopefully be reported at next month's meeting. President Goetz asked if there was an opening date set for Lytle Park. Director Barron responded that there is not, as weather will determine when the fountain can be turned on.

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Director Barron presented the following updates:

- Krohn Conservatory's Spring Show *The Shape of Nature* featuring *Oscillation* will run from January 27, 2024, through April 21, 2024. The Holiday show closed with \$593k in revenue, approximately \$60k more than last year.
- Through a new partnership with the Cincinnati Zoo, Krohn Conservatory is feeding elephants with leftover plant material. This received a great response from social and news media outlets, and we are excited to continue and expand the program.
- Cincinnati Parks Even More Before the Roar program partnered with Bengal Jim's Tailgate at Smale Riverfront Park to generate \$19k in revenue (Rental fees: \$10,325 / Beer: \$8,700) to support Smale Park operations.
- Explore Nature is offering a number of adult and family friendly events and learning opportunities through the winter. Staff is preparing to open summer camp registrations and more details on that will be provided next month.
- Other upcoming events to flag for the Commissioners:
 - Annual Ohio Parks and Recreation Association Conference (OPRA) – Feb. 4-7

- DNR Headquarters Ribbon Cutting – Feb. 16 at 1030 A.M.
- Doris Day Dog Park Engagement – Feb. 21 at 6:30 P.M.

OPEN COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION

Commissioner Lee expressed excitement about the growth and development of Parks in the time he has served on the Board of Park Commissioners. President Goetz provided an update on the Cincinnati Recreation Commission’s new Oakley Recreation Center, which is anticipated to open in August. President Goetz also expressed excitement about the progress of Parks Chief Financial Officer interviews and the candidates he has met with thus far. He also informed the Board that the Investment Committee will be meeting Wednesday, February 6, 2024, with representatives from US Bank attending.

The March Park Board Meeting

The Board agreed to hold the Thursday, March 21, 2024, Board of Park Commissioners meeting at 1:00 P.M. instead of at 9:00 A.M. as previously scheduled.

ADJOURNMENT

The next regular meeting date is Thursday, February 15, 2024, at 9:00 A.M.

President Goetz motioned to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 11:29 A.M.

ATTEST:

PRESIDENT



DIRECTOR



[External Email] Public Comment from Sharon Buckner

Sharon Buckner <ilove.burnet@preserveburnetwoods.org>

Wed 12/13/2023 5:20 PM

To:Aftab, Mayor <mayor.pureval@cincinnati-oh.gov>;Kearney, Jan-Michele <jan-michele.kearney@cincinnati-oh.gov>;Harris, Reggie <reggie.harris@cincinnati-oh.gov>;Parks, Victoria <victoria.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>;Parks, Cincy <cincy.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

External Email Communication

Please enter the below transcript into public record for the next Cincinnati Board of Park Commissioners public meeting and ongoing for public meetings of the Cincinnati City Council Healthy Neighborhoods Committee. This record represents a unique response from Sharon Buckner.

Email address

sharonkb6@gmail.com

In my own words, I feel that my voice has been excluded from organized public discussion designed to provide actionable feedback regarding the proposed dog park in Burnet Woods as a result of the Park Board's violations of best practices in community engagement in the following ways:

The proposed dog park is an extension of P.U.P.P. participants who want a permanent location for the meet-ups. Jim Goetz is a proponent of the intention and collectively they are using taxpayer funds and influence to reach this goal. This is not what the majority wants nor is it a good use for this sizable amount of money.

Best practices in Community Engagement call for centering the voices of individuals who will be most directly impacted by the issue at-hand. The Cincinnati Board of Park Commissioners has remained unengaged and has even ignored residents of multifamily housing directly next to the selected site for a dog park in Burnet Woods. The Park Board's decision to ignore those

I agree that the Park Board has failed to center voices of those most directly impacted by the location chosen for a dog park in Burnet Woods.

who would be most directly impacted by a dog park in Burnet Woods is failure to professionally engage the community on this issue.

The City of Cincinnati has neighborhood councils for the purpose of ensuring a link between citizens and decision makers. From the city's own website: "These organizations [i.e., community councils] ensure that neighborhood development responds to the needs and goals of its citizens." Despite the two community councils whose boundaries include Burnet Woods having passed resolutions against the dog park, the Park Board is choosing to use a heavy-handed approach to the development in violation of the entire premise behind our city having community councils. Similarly, Cincinnati Parks has Park Advisory Councils (CPACs), to, according to the Cincinnati Parks Board website, "build and maintain public support for Cincinnati Parks by providing feedback to the Cincinnati Park Board and exchanging and sharing information and providing mutual support between CPACs."

I agree that the Park Board has violated the covenant of community representation by ignoring the opposition of the CUF Neighborhood Association and Corryville Community Council regarding the dog park.

I agree that the Park Board has violated the covenant of trust with its own volunteer Park Advisory Council for Burnet Woods by ignoring their resolution against the dog park.

Park CPACs often donate hundreds of volunteer hours to maintain park spaces and host community events. In violation of its own stated purpose for CPACs, the Cincinnati Park Board has ignored multiple resolutions passed by the Burnet Woods Park Advisory Council (BPAC) in opposition to the proposed dog park in Burnet Woods.

As it relates to community engagement on the proposed dog park in Burnet Woods, and in addition to the points above, the Park Board of Commissioners has further violated the public trust in numerous ways, including:

- masquerading an old survey about a proposed dog park in a different Cincinnati park as community engagement on a dog park in Burnet Woods**
- using accessibility as a red herring to advance the dog park in Burnet Woods before determining if the amenity is desired by the community in the first place**
- ignoring other, decades old infrastructure and accessibility needs in Burnet Woods in order to prioritize the pet project of a dog park in Burnet Woods**

I agree that the Board of Park Commissioners has damaged the public trust in its failures to develop and execute a professional, equitable and unbiased community engagement process applied consistently to projects in Burnet Woods and the Cincinnati Parks system.

- **excluding various groups and stakeholders, including the most vulnerable, from engagement and decision making**
- **mocking the community engagement process itself and those who are demanding best practices in community engagement**
- **boasting that as Commissioners they will use their power to make amenity-siting decisions for the community because they don't believe in the community**
- **greenwashing the clear, evidence-based ecological destruction the dog park will cause**
- **undermining the legitimacy of process by ignoring the fact that two sitting Park Board Commissioners have a conflict of interest by residing near enough to the proposed dog park that their private property values could materially benefit from the development**

I acknowledge that upon completion of this form, an email containing responses will be sent for public record entry to the Cincinnati Board of Park Commissioners, Cincinnati Mayor Aftab Pureval, and the current members of Cincinnati City Council Healthy Neighborhoods Committee: Jan-Michele

I acknowledge the above emails will be sent upon clicking 'Submit'. I acknowledge that a summary of responses may be submitted to members of Cincinnati City Council.

**Kearney, Reggie Harris,
Scotty Johnson, and
Victoria Parks. A
Summary of responses
may be compiled and
provided to City Council
also. A copy will also be
sent to Preserve Burnet
Woods.**

Your Full Name	Sharon Buckner
Your Email Address	sharonkb6@gmail.com
Your Zip Code	45219

Respectfully,

Sharon Buckner

Sent: 2023 12 13

Response ID: 2_ABaOnucFyaf0THTE5RtWX0DdKy7-k9PxtXhH8VH8djpt_6h_ePipPf3eNNrVnd6V3XCeyc

Response Number: 71

[External Email] Public Comment

Stich Bear <stichbear@gmail.com>

Tue 1/2/2024 5:11 AM

To: Parks, Cincy <cincy.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

You don't often get email from stichbear@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

External Email Communication

Dear Cincinnati Parks Commissioners, Director, and Staff,

Attached you'll find a helpful link to scientific research about the dangers of forever chemicals for all living things.

Please rethink the proposal for an off leash area for dogs that includes plastic carpet in Burnet Woods. I know that reading scientific research can feel boring, but our community needs leadership who will do their due diligence before risking public health.

Sincerely,
Shari Frost

Please include link to research provided by EWG in public comments.

<<https://ewgorg.app.box.com/s/6b8774ag6wnhehmo2cmschqhbqwgwfb3k?>>>

[External Email] Public Comment for Jan 18, 2024 Meeting

Dan Rapp <danrapp@me.com>

Sun 1/14/2024 7:04 PM

To:Parks, Cincy <cincy.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

Cc:#COUNCIL <CityCouncil@cincinnati-oh.gov>

You don't often get email from danrapp@me.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

External Email Communication

Dear Parks Board Commissioners,

Thank you for offering an official feedback mechanism for community input regarding the proposed dog park in Burnet Woods. I hope you take the time read through the feedback and give weight to the results.

The responses were overwhelming — I'm guessing 10:1 were **against** the proposed plan. The reasons were wide-ranging, from not wanting plastic turf, to preserving wildlife, to simply wanting to preserve Burnet Woods for ALL the community.

I understand Parks projects rarely have full community support. But in this case, the opposition is so overwhelming. I hope you'll do the right thing and find a new solution. There's still time for a win-win. The community can have a dog park AND preserve the nature in our urban core.

You did the right thing by inviting community input. The community did its part by responding. Please listen to our voices and take action accordingly.

For your convenience, here's a link to the results:

<https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/cincyparks/get-involved/surveys-and-feedback/burnet-woods-dog-park-summary/?fbclid=IwAR2CsUKyTWKfw24ej7gXVAbp2KGJ8HKNgomq0gir4VfksJJ7bYgXlj9pmF0>

Thank you for your time.

Dan Rapp,
Clifton Resident

[External Email] Public Comment: January 18, 2024

T <teohio358@gmail.com>

Mon 1/15/2024 8:57 PM

To: Parks, Cincy <cincy.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

You don't often get email from teohio358@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

External Email Communication

Hello Board of Park Commissioners,

I am writing about the proposed Burnet Woods Dog Park and my frustrations surrounding Cincinnati Parks' process of design and community engagement. Following the most recent survey about this project, the survey results were released to the public but failed to include any amount of data analysis or any conclusions drawn from this survey. Considering there is overwhelming community pushback on this project, I found this not only frustrating but deeply concerning.

As such, I went ahead and did some volunteer data coding and analysis on the over 960 survey responses. I have linked to the PDF here for your perusal. I hope this easily digestible format will help you to consider the survey respondents' concerns and to engage with the data you collected to inform the decision-making process. Better yet, I hope it inspires you to write and analyze surveys better in the future to better involve the community. Data is powerful.

Survey Response Analysis: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CR3Tu_pBD9x70yCUXi7f-SU3OwaxvM23/view?usp=sharing

Burnet Woods Dog Park Survey Results

After widespread public outcry against the planned addition of a dog park to Burnet Woods, Cincinnati Parks released a survey requesting “feedback” from the local community on design plans for the dog park. According to Cincinnati Parks, the survey received “the highest response we [Cincinnati Parks]’ve received to a single park improvement survey”¹ with 962 submitted answers. For comparison, other recent Parks surveys have received fewer than 200 responses (and some fewer than 50), emphasizing just how much community engagement this particular survey evoked.

Ordinarily, Cincinnati Parks releases two documents after the closure of their community feedback surveys: a raw data set and a summary that relays the department’s key takeaways after coding the data. After the Burnet Woods Dog Park Survey was closed on December 15th, 2023, **Cincinnati Parks posted the results online, but they provided no summary of the data, simply [posting the same set of 962 responses](#) for the summary as is included in the raw data.** This is a notable deviation from other recent surveys, for which Cincinnati Parks has provided comprehensive analyses of the data collected, including “Overarching Themes,” as well as tables and figures. Given the amount of public interest in this project, the lack of any substantial summary of the data from Cincinnati Parks is concerning and notable.

One reason for the lack of a substantive summary might be the design of the survey itself. The Burnet Woods Dog Park survey differs markedly from other recent Cincinnati Parks surveys in that it included just one question with a free response text box. Without any quantitative component to the survey (such as Likert scale questions or other numeric or multiple choice prompts), the resulting data set is difficult to automatically generate any meaningful results from, requiring time-consuming manual coding of the collected data. It may be that Cincinnati Parks did not anticipate the strong response this survey would receive and was unprepared to do this work, but given the amount of public discussion about it over the past year, this seems unlikely, and it still would not explain why this survey’s design differs so noticeably from other recent Parks surveys. Therefore, we are forced to assume that this choice of survey design was an intentional choice, and that the lack of a clear summary is also reflective of Cincinnati Parks’ demonstrated lack of interest in addressing public concern expressed toward this project.

While qualitative survey responses are more time-consuming to analyze, it is not impossible to generate conclusions from them, as is demonstrated by the summaries Cincinnati Parks have provided based on previous surveys’ qualitative sections. As Cincinnati Parks seems to be unwilling to take on this work themselves, despite their duty to the local community to do so, **community members themselves have been forced to take on this work. What follows is a comprehensive analysis of this survey data.** While Parks messaging around this issue has been ambiguous about the results of the survey, stating that “it is clear people care about Burnet Woods” and “this feedback is continuing to ensure this new dog park is the best possible project,” the data tells a different story, **showing that public support for this project is shockingly low and that Cincinnati Parks have done a poor job of legitimately addressing any of the community’s clearly expressed concerns throughout the design process.**

¹ *Surveys and feedback*. (n.d.). Cincinnati Parks. <https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/cincyparks/get-involved/surveys-and-feedback/>

Stance on the Dog Park Project

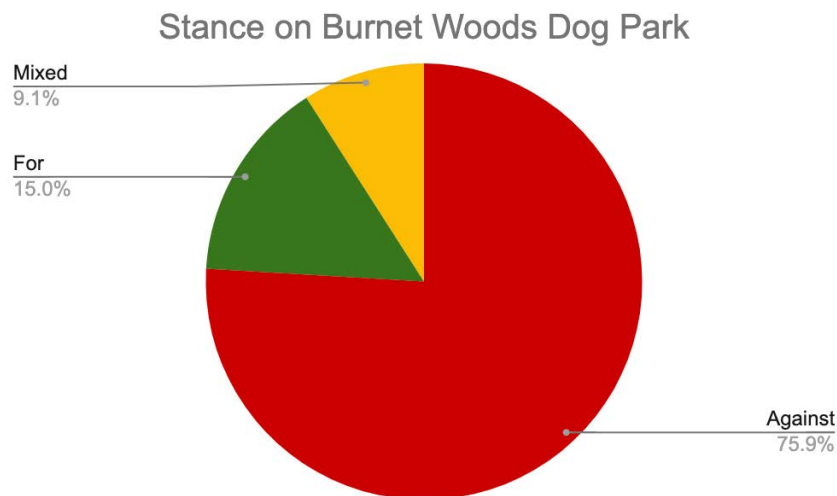
The survey for the design of the Burnet Woods Dog Park Project, hereby referred to as the dog park project, brought in a large number of responses, particularly due to the contentious nature of this project which has divided the community into those “for” the project and those “against.” When coding the responses by stance on the dog park project, the following criteria was used:

Against: Responses that expressed a clear viewpoint against a dog park being created in Burnet Woods. Some of these responses were okay with the placement of a dog park of this design in a different park or property (not Burnet Woods) while others were against any dog park addition following this design no matter the location.

Mixed: Respondents that had serious concerns about the park but were not necessarily against the introduction of a dog park to Burnet Woods or whose responses made it unclear if they would support a dog park under a different design. Most of these comments expressed concerns about the use of turf and reduction of green space.

For: Responses that clearly indicated a positive response to the introduction of a dog park to Burnet Woods, sometimes accompanied with suggestions for changes to the design, size, or location within the park.

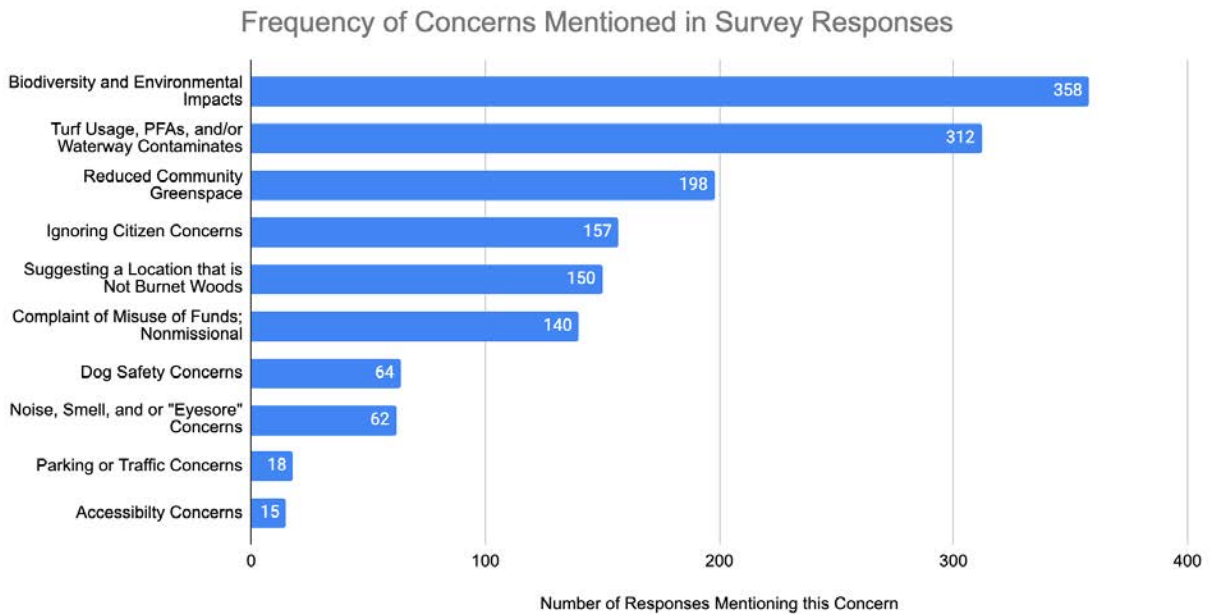
Of the 962 total responses, two were marked as having come from the same device as another response and were removed from the coding process. Out of the remaining 960 coded responses, 729 respondents were coded as “Against”, 144 respondents were coded as “For”, and 87 respondents were coded as “Mixed”.



Specific Concerns of Respondents

Out of 960 coded responses to the public survey, many respondents shared similar concerns. These responses were coded based on which common concerns each respondent directly shared in their response. This coded data was counted and the chart below shows the most common concerns that respondents had about the Burnet Woods dog park project.

It should be noted that these concerns did not just come from respondents who were “Against” the project, but also from respondents who had a “Mixed” viewpoint (see above for the definition used) or who were actively in favor of the dog park (“For”).



A Look Into the Top Six Concerns

Biodiversity and Environmental Impacts

358 responses (37.3% of total respondents) expressed significant and often highly specific concerns about the impact of this project on the native biodiversity of the park and the overall environmental impacts. Many comments specifically referenced how [Burnet Woods has been deemed an IBA \(important bird area\)](#) by the Audubon Society and outlined specific concerns about the use of turf, noise from dogs, and reduction of natural space will directly impact birds and other native species that use the park as habitat. With the current biodiversity crisis, habitat preservation is more important than ever to create climate resilient ecosystems and fight climate change.

“Burnett woods had the unique distinction of being a place for migrating birds to stop on their long journeys. It is also an island of biodiversity in an urban environment. Adding artificial turf, flexing and other non native elements is disruptive to the nature environment that birds call home. Please don’t let this happen” (Respondent #783)

“This area encompasses an area of old growth Beech forest. Once the area is removed or the delicate balance of the environment is disturbed it is lost forever. Surely there are other areas that could be reclaimed in the urban environment that would appeal to the crowd who are looking for the experience of a dog park. Instead of tearing down valuable ecosystems why not reclaim an area (say abandoned lots, buildings, vacant areas of any type)” (Respondent #580)

Turf Usage, PFAs, and Other Waterway Contaminates

312 responses (32.5% of total respondents) expressed concerns about the use of synthetic turf, PFAs, or other waterway contaminants that related to the implementation of this dog park. While Cincinnati Parks has stated that the turf used will be “[PFAs free](#)”, many respondents addressed concerns about the research that was cited in this statement, claiming that the data provided was not sufficient to ease any concerns. Other respondents pointed to other issues with synthetic turf usage including the smothering of the soil microbiome and plants beneath the turf, the heat of the turf in the sun, the increased potential for dog fecal matter to runoff into the waterways.

“Independent testing has proven that turf manufacturers are relying on an EPA test that only reveals a narrow subset of PFAS. Municipalities that contracted for ‘PFAS free’ artificial turf were unable to sue the manufacturers after independent testing proved the turf they spent millions on was not in fact PFAS free.

*<https://www.eenews.net/articles/our-community-has-been-deceived-turf-wars-mount-over-pfas/>
The turf manufacturers are engaging in “greenwashing” when they claim they have a product that is ‘PFAS-free’. <https://theintercept.com/2019/10/08/pfas-chemicals-artificial-turf-soccer/>
Environmental groups have taken issue with the health risks of turf.” (Respondent #439)*

“No consideration for the damage done by artificial turf or the amounts of dog waste flowing into pond. How will our budget strapped park workers now also maintain the constant cleaning it will need?” (Respondent #4)

Community Green Space Concerns

198 responses (20.7% of total respondents) expressed specific concerns about the reduction of public green space for the community to enjoy. It is particularly interesting that these concerns are not publicly valued and addressed by Cincinnati Parks given that their mission includes “enhanc[ing]...public greenspace for the enjoyment, enlightenment and enrichment of the Cincinnati community.”² It is also

² About. (n.d.). Cincinnati Parks. <https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/cincyparks/about/>

important to note that some comments even specifically stated how community members actively enjoyed using this particular grassy space that is being targeted for the development.

“When the weather is nicer, I use this area often for picnics and I know I'm far from alone. I see other picnickers, people playing catch (even badminton) and hosting other events here - I don't think we should sacrifice this multi-use space and turn it into something that's only useful for a slim minority of people.” (Survey respondent #351)

This is particularly interesting when many comments from people that are in favor of the dog park project stated that this grassy portion of the park is not utilized or is even used by people that they wish to exclude from their community public spaces: *“I have also noticed that this area is more or less unused whenever I walk by except for homeless people sleeping on the picnic tables or on the hill.” (Survey respondent #195)* This response coupled with the planned use of hostile architecture including the [“bench with center arm”](#) should be of particular note when considering how this park chooses to treat unhoused people who have an equal right to enjoy this public green space.

Ignoring Citizen Concerns

157 responses (16.4% of total respondents) stated that, in their view, the project and its design process have ignored direct feedback and concerns from the local community in Clifton. Some even pointed out the lackluster design of this survey itself and its avoidance of best practices for survey design.

“As a graduate of urban planning from uc this is exactly the type of behavior, performative listening, that disregards community input into planning the shared spaces around us. The community surrounding Burnet has been vocal that they do not want this project.” (Respondent #637)

“If I've learned anything from Cincinnati Parks community engagement surveys, it's that the results are either ignored or manipulated, so I no longer have faith that Parks is listening. This survey is probably just a box that needs to be checked.” (Respondent #734)

Out of the 816 responses coded as “Against” or “Mixed,” 157 respondents (19.2%) directly expressed that they felt community concerns and feedback were not being addressed by Cincinnati Parks. Notably, a statistically significant number (7 responses, 5%) of the 144 responses coded as “For” actively encouraged park leadership to ignore these concerns, and others beyond this number expressed joy that Cincinnati Parks was continuing with this project despite the strong public outcry against it. These respondents described the groups against the dog park as *“few people”* and a *“minority of voices”*—two categorizations proven entirely untrue by the results of this survey. *(Respondent #861)* This, when combined with the park system’s lack of public discourse on the negative feedback this project has received, leaves little to the imagination when it comes to why protestors of this project feel their concerns are going actively ignored.

“Please dont listen to the few grouchy people who don't like change.” (Respondent #121)

“Please ignore the small but loud group of individuals who have been complaining and spreading lies about the park since the beginning.” (Respondent #311)

“Please don't listen to the "haters" of this dog park idea. Those people have nothing else better to do than to complain about anything they can possibly complain about. They likely complain about what they have to look at in the mirror every day.” (Respondent #236)

Suggesting a Non-Burnet Woods Location

While some respondents seemed against the dog park project in its entirety, 150 respondents (15.7% of total respondents) made it clear that they felt that Burnet Woods was not the right location for this project and other sites should be considered. Some respondents made mention of other parks as possible sites, while others expressed a desire to see land that is already developed (like a parking lot) be utilized for this purpose rather than the natural space of the park.

“It is not too late to cancel this project or move it to another location, which is what Cincinnati Parks should do. This park violates the standards previously outlined for a dog park and goes against the criteria Clifton Town Meeting adopted years ago. Parks has ignored the Corryville and CUF community councils as well. It has treated the residents of multi-family buildings surrounding Burnet Woods as second-class citizens compared with how it sought and listened to feedback from the residents near Dunore Park. It's time for the department to listen to what Burnet Woods neighbors and stakeholders have been telling it for years: This is not an appropriate location for a dog park.” (Respondent #8)

“This design should be applied to an existing surface parking lot, such as those at Cincinnati State University, to transform a gray space into something better. Teardown of a high value greenspace is an affront to the mission of Cincinnati Parks and indicative of the mission corruption that an unqualified, politicized, Park Board has wrought through abuse of their power positions.” (Respondent #33)

Funding and Mission Drift Concerns

140 responses (14.6% of total respondents) cited this project as being a misuse of funds or otherwise non-missional for the parks system. Many even expressed a growing distrust in Cincinnati Parks leadership and concerns about corruption within the board and leadership staff. Many of these comments made specific mention about how they would prefer park funds and donations be allocated toward maintaining the park, removing invasive species, and/or making the existing structures more accessible. While certain funds are restricted and can only be used for certain projects, as is the case with many grants, this project has been actively raising funds from donors. The same time and resources

devoted by the parks department to raise funds for this project could instead be directed to raise capital or operational funds which could better support parks maintenance.

“Between invasive species removal, sewage issues, dangerous stone steps and other beautification projects that would require money, wasting money on this project is an insult to those of us who actually use, cherish and love this park. Stick to your mission and preserve Cincinnati's green spaces! If our own park board is dead set on destroying our parks, then there's no hope and I don't want to believe that that is the case” (Respondent #599)

“As someone who grew up in Clifton, and who has resided in Clifton 2018-2023, I have a sentimental attachment to Burnet Woods. I am also concerned that the dog park appears to be the pet project of one of the Park Board Commission, who appears to have a private interest in the dog park, even when it uses money which could be used to catch up with \$70 million of deferred maintenance in the park system.” (Respondent #9)

Limitations and Data Concerns

As is likely obvious from the above sections, there are significant limitations of both this survey and the coding done by community members.

The design of this survey has already been called into question earlier in this analysis for its single method of data collection and focus on difficult to code qualitative responses rather than numeric data. Many best practices exist for survey design that were clearly ignored by Cincinnati Parks, which is curious given the public interest this project has received and their previous survey designs that include multiple questions and both qualitative and quantitative data collection mechanisms. In addition, two of the 962 responses were intentionally flagged as coming from the same IP address as previous submissions. As noted earlier, these two responses were excluded from the coding, but their presence in the dataset suggests the possibility that other respondents may have completed the survey multiple times, potentially skewing the data.

We also must acknowledge that 17 extremely positive survey responses were submitted between 2:02pm and 3:24pm on December 1st, before the survey was posted publicly online. The timing and content of these responses suggests that they may have come not from community members but instead from individuals within or close to the parks organization, again calling into question the veracity of this dataset.

Despite these limitations, this remains the largest dataset collected by Cincinnati Parks in response to a community feedback survey, and as such, it is an extremely valuable—if flawed—view into the community's sentiments towards this controversial project.

In addition to flaws of the survey design created by Cincinnati Parks, we must also acknowledge the limitations and bias of the data coding and analysis done here by the community members. For example,

one area that was not as deeply explored in this analysis was the responses that were in favor of the dog park but that suggested changes to the design to improve its community use. Given that the goal of this survey was to collect that exact variety of feedback, why, then, does this analysis set it aside entirely? Because it is clear that these respondents represented the minority (15%) of the highest response rate seen on a single survey for Cincinnati Parks. Before the parks leadership can address the design of the park and this feedback, they should clearly prioritize addressing the overwhelming community opposition to this project and its location, even going so far as to ask the question of whether this project should continue.

Additionally, the community members coding this data are vocal opponents to the continuation of this project. While this analysis aims to be data-led, all data-coding inherently reflects some level of biases of the individuals carrying out that work. Ideally, Cincinnati Parks would have provided a comprehensive analysis of this data themselves as the organization has a vested interest in understanding the community response to this project, but without any official analysis, it falls to community volunteers to carry out this work, despite the limitations.

Conclusion

For any community member who has been following the debate about the Burnet Woods dog park over the past year, the concerns brought up by citizens in these survey responses are probably familiar. While Cincinnati Parks has made some attempts to address community concerns surrounding this project, the responses here indicate that these efforts have been wholly insufficient as many of the same concerns remain about the impact of this project on the park and the surrounding community. Perhaps even more disturbingly, the poor survey design and lack of analysis provided by Cincinnati Parks suggests that their invitations for community feedback are little more than a performance to placate the many groups organizing around this issue. However, despite what supporters of the park have suggested, **this survey indicates that the vast majority of community members have significant concerns about the continuation of this project**, and that majority is unlikely to be comforted by Cincinnati Parks' empty rhetoric about community engagement. In carrying out this analysis, we hope that it can inform and equip community members to hold Cincinnati Parks accountable to the communities it serves.

[External Email] Burnet Woods Public Comment

Stich Bear <stichbear@gmail.com>

Tue 1/16/2024 6:32 PM

To: Parks, Cincy <cincy.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

[You don't often get email from stichbear@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

External Email Communication

Dear Commissioners,

I oppose the proposed fenced area for off leash dogs in Burnet Woods.

Please move the design to another location.

Sincerely,

Shari Frost

[External Email] Public Comment

Marijo Fraley <marijo.fraley@gmail.com>

Wed 1/17/2024 4:55 PM

To:Parks, Cincy <cincy.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>

You don't often get email from marijo.fraley@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

External Email Communication

Dear Park Board Commissioners,

I think it is obvious that the community does not support the dog park for a variety of reasons, which you have heard.

I hope you have the integrity to admit you made a mistake pushing the dog park in Burnet Woods and stop the project.

Thanks for your service.

Sincerely,

Marijo O'Connell

[External Email] Public Comment - January 18, 2024

Rachel Wells <rachelgailwells@gmail.com>

Wed 1/17/2024 4:59 PM

To: Parks, Cincy <cincy.parks@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Barron, Jason <jason.barron@cincinnati-oh.gov>

Cc: #COUNCIL <CityCouncil@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Aftab, Mayor <mayor.aftab@cincinnati-oh.gov>

 3 attachments (720 KB)

image_123650291 (2).JPG; image_123650291 (1).JPG; image_123650291.JPG;

Some people who received this message don't often get email from rachelgailwells@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

External Email Communication

Dear Cincinnati Parks Commissioners,

On March 2, 2022, my building neighbors and I shared with Cincinnati Parks our first collective letter opposing the proposed Burnet Woods dog park, which is adjacent to our homes, and highlighted our concerns about lack of engagement to date. In response, we were told by then-interim director Neyer that more engagement opportunities would be presented in the future: "As the concept of a dog park in Burnett Woods (or anywhere in the parks) is developed, there will be multiple additional opportunities for the public to share concerns, excitement or any other feedback about the project."

Two years later, we're still waiting for those opportunities. The engagement on this project has been so poor that Parks' ONLY effort to even INFORM Burnet Woods neighbors or the vast majority of the park's stakeholders about the proposal occurred via signs in the park placed on Dec. 1, 2023 and related social media posts. These signs and posts directed park users to a "survey" that failed to ask the most important question: Do stakeholders want a dog park in Burnet Woods?

Even so, the opposition to this project is so strong that, according to Enquirer reporter Patti Gallagher Newberry (see attached), 85% of responses to the "survey" criticized the project. The Burnet Woods survey yielded only 140 positive responses.

This is a marked decline in support for the idea of a dog park serving Clifton since the Dunore Park proposal. The Dunore Park survey conducted in early 2021 yielded 440 responses that somewhat or strongly supported a dog park in Dunore Park. The majority of respondents favored the Dunore Park project, but the proposal failed and many cited the immediate neighbors' opposition.

So, why now, is the Burnet Woods proposal charging forward when even more immediate neighbors have expressed concern? When multiple community councils and six environmental groups have shared their opposition? When survey results show overwhelming opposition? When there are TWO petitions against this project, each with more than 1,500 signatures? When immediate neighbors who, living in multi-family housing, rely entirely on parks for their greenspace have organized and submitted at least three group letters, and numerous personal appeals, against this project?

The contrast of engagement efforts and disparate treatment between the failed Dunore Park proposal and this Burnet Woods proposal is stark and problematic. Please, correct course, and stop this largely unwanted project from taking any further steps forward.

Thank you,
Rachel Wells
3315 Jefferson Avenue

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Rachel G. Wells
rachelgailwells@gmail.com
217.853.9500 (cell)



Patricia Gallagher Newberry @pa... · 2d ...

In releasing results of the Dec. 1-15 survey, Parks officials said the poll attracted the highest number of responses ever for a single park improvement. The survey asked for feedback, ideas and thoughts about "how we can make (the design) better." 3/8 cincinnati-oh.gov/cincyparks/new...



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36



Patricia Gallagher Newberry @pa... · 2d ...

Some opponents employed that language in their replies, with some version of "How to make it better? Don't build it!" Many said artificial turf and dog waste will harm the soil and groundwater, as well as dogs. 4/8



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38



Patricia Gallagher Newberry @pa... · 2d ...

Other opponents lambasted the five-member board that governs Parks' decisions. One poster said the proposed design was like "putting lipstick on a pig," adding "Shame on Park Board's current leadership for dogged insistence on ignoring the voice of citizens and park users." 5/8

Post your reply





Post



Patricia Gallagher Newberry @pa... · 2d ...

One critic wrote a single sentence, in all capital letters, 186 times: NO DOG PARK IN BURNET WOODS. 6/8

1

 49



Patricia Gallagher Newberry @pa... · 2d ...

Supporters called the proposed design beautiful and said the park would be good for their dogs, for increasing use of Burnet Woods and for building neighbor-to-neighbor connections. 7/8

1

 1
 54



Patricia Gallagher Newberry @pa... · 2d ...

Results are posted in this link on the Cincinnati Parks' site. Parks plans to seek contractor bids after it finishes raising \$150K in private funds for the \$450K project. It is aiming to complete the dog park by the middle of next year. 8/8

cincinnati-oh.gov/cincyparks/get...

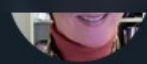
53

Post your reply





Post



@pattinewberry

A new survey about a dog park planned for Clifton's Burnet Woods Park drew mostly critics – by an 85% margin. About 140 of 962 survey respondents offered support of [@CincyParks](#) plans for an 8,800-square-foot dog park in the 90-acre park and 20 others posted general comments. 1/8

2:19 PM · 12/28/23 from Earth · **223** Views

1 Like



Patricia Gallagher Newberry @pa... · 2d ...

The balance of respondents registered opposition – some of it harsh and personal – to the long-planned and often-controversial dog park plan. Here's earlier [@Enquirer](#) coverage of what's envisioned. 2/8



Post your reply

