

REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL



DATE: February 6, 2018

TITLE: Ordinance Regulating the Use and Operation of Public Dog Parks

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RECOMMENDATION

Introduce for First Reading and read by title only, “An Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Desert Hot Springs, California, adding Chapter 12.24 “Dog Park Regulations” to Title 12 “Streets, Sidewalks And Public Places” and amending Section 9.04.040 (“Animals In Public Parks”) of Chapter 9.04 (“General Offenses”) of Title 9 (“Public Peace and Welfare”) of the Desert Hot Springs Municipal Code (“DHSMC”) to regulate the use and operation of public dog parks.

BACKGROUND

Only July 8, 2017, the City of Desert Hot Springs (“City”) opened a new public dog park, the Rotary Park. Members of the City, Greater Coachella Valley Chamber of Commerce, and Rotary Club were present on opening day for the ribbon-cutting. The Rotary Park was named in honor of contributions of long-time rotary member, Jack Webb, who died in 2011.

The Rotary Park, which is located on Don English Way behind the Julius Corsini Elementary School, and Wardman Park located at 8th Street and Cactus Drive, are 2 dog parks that are currently open in the City. These facilities provide fencing, picnic tables, water fountains, and space for dogs to play off-leash. Previously, residents of the City would have to travel to Palm Springs or Rancho Mirage to enjoy dog parks. Now, City residents may use local parks.

DISCUSSION

Following the opening of the Rotary Park and Wardman Park facilities, there is a need for regulations and rules for the use and operation of dog parks. Currently, the DHSMC has no rules regarding dog parks; further, the code currently prohibits unleashing dogs in public parks.

Section 9.04.040 of the DHSMC states in relevant part that “No person shall...let loose any animal...within the limits of any public park or recreation area of the City...” There is a minor exception for dogs led by a cord or chain not more than 6 feet long for Coyote Park, which has since been rechristened to Rotary Park. Although not presently enforced, Section 9.04.040 would prohibit off-leash dogs from playing in the Rotary Park.

The proposed ordinance (Exhibit 1) will amend Section 9.04.040 to exclude off-leash areas of City dog parks from the prohibition against letting loose animals within public parks. This change makes it clear that residents may use dog parks as intended without fear of violating any law.

The proposed ordinance will further add Chapter 12.24 “Dog Park Regulations” to the DHSMC. This chapter is intended to provide all regulations regarding dog parks. Proposed Chapter 12.24 is intended to ensure the orderly use of dog parks and to protect the health and safety of the public. Key features include requiring all dogs to be licensed and vaccinated prior to entry to a dog park. Dogs must be attended at all times, although dogs in off-leash areas may simply be monitored by their owners. No overly aggressive or unruly dogs are permitted.

Officers of the Community Preservation Division, Animal Control, and Police Department are entrusted with enforcing Chapter 12.24. Officers may eject persons and dogs found in violation

of Chapter 12.24, and may issue citations. Persons and dogs who are ejected are not permitted reentry for a certain period of time, depending on the number of violations within a thirty-day period.

Finally, the City Manager will have authority to develop additional rules and regulations for all dog parks. Such rules and regulations may affect the dog park, or any structure, equipment, or improvements within such parks. Copies of these regulations must be posted at the entrance of dog parks. Violations of these regulations are enforced similarly to violations of Chapter 12.24.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

EXHIBIT

1) Ordinance