



MEMORANDUM

TO: Select Board and Park & Recreation Commission
CC: Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager; David Davison, Deputy Town Manager/Director of Finance; Stacey Mulroy, Director of Park & Recreation; Louise Miller, Town Clerk; John Schlittler, Police Chief; Lt. John McGrath, Needham Police Department; Carys Lustig, Director of Public Works; Shane Mark, Assistant Director of Public Works; Ed Olsen, Superintendent of Parks & Forestry
FROM: Katie King, Deputy Town Manager
SUBJECT: Off Leash Dog Area Pilot Proposal – Rosemary Trail
DATE: April 25, 2025

Background: In October 2022, the Select Board established the [Active Recreation Assets Working Group](#) to guide the Town in space planning for future active recreational opportunities in Needham. The working group evaluated expansion of off-leash dog areas and made these recommendations:

- Consider establishing a pilot program for off-leash dog areas at (1) Hillside Field as the primary large field option with Mills Field as an alternate site, (2) Rosemary Trail and O Harris Avenue as primary trails/wooded areas, and (3) to further explore offering a pocket park option.
- Prior to starting any pilot, undertake broad community engagement of dog owners, non-dog owners, and abutters around the details of the pilot (including location, hours, fencing, etc.).
- Evaluate the operational impacts on relevant Town departments including the Town Clerk's Office, Conservation Department, Department of Public Works (DPW) Parks & Forestry Division, Park & Recreation Department, and the Police Department.

Following these recommendations, DPW evaluated the feasibility of the pilot locations identified above. O Harris Avenue was deemed infeasible due to the topography of the site. Hillside Field, Mills Field, and Rosemary Trail were determined to be feasible. The Select Board expressed interest in advancing Mills Field and Rosemary Trail as potential pilot sites. The Park & Recreation Commission did not advance Mills Field, given the number of other activities there, but agreed to a joint community engagement session with the Select Board to gauge feedback on an off-leash pilot at Rosemary Trail.

Abutter Meeting & Public Hearing: June 23 at 7 pm

A joint meeting of the Park & Recreation Commission and Select Board is scheduled for Monday, June 23 at 7:00 pm at the Rosemary Recreation Complex, 178 Rosemary Street and via Zoom.¹ The goal for this meeting is for staff to present the pilot proposal, as detailed on the next page, and allow Board/Commission members to solicit feedback from abutters and the community on the proposal. The Town will notify all abutters within 300 feet of the trail and property owners on Garden Street (to May St), Tamarack Lane, Lake Drive, Pennsylvania Avenue, Armen Way, and the north side of Nehoiden Street between May Street and Armen Way. The Town will also advertise the community meeting through its standard outreach channels to the general public.

¹ Zoom link for June 23:

<https://needham-k12-ma-us.zoom.us/j/83404301905?pwd=YsbP3XKuLnvQYkaGnawWWwrXooOV1h.1>

Rosemary Trail Off Leash Dog Pilot Proposal

Purpose: (1) to provide community members with an additional off-leash dog area at Rosemary Trail and (2) to collect community feedback and operational data on the pilot to inform decisions regarding its continuation, whether to expand off-leash dog areas to other locations, and potential bylaw changes.

Timeline: August 1 – December 31, 2025; dawn to dusk

Guidelines:

- Open to residents and non-residents. 3 dogs per person maximum.
- Dogs must always be within sight and under voice control.
- All dogs must be wearing a collar with identification and proof of being licensed in MA.
- All dogs must be spayed/neutered and have a current rabies vaccine.
- Carry in/carry out policy for waste. Handlers are responsible for bringing waste bags, picking up dog waste, and properly disposing of it.
- Keep your dog leashed prior to entering and upon exiting. There will be signage on the trail indicating where the off-leash areas begin and end.
- Recognize that others might not be comfortable around dogs; share the trail and ask first before letting your dog approach others.

Parking: All existing parking rules will remain. Rosemary Recreation Complex parking lot is first-come, first-serve and is not monitored for use. On-street parking is allowed on Lake Drive and Garden Street, with no all-day parking at Garden Street and May Street. On-street parking is not allowed on Nehoiden Street, Armen Way, and Pennsylvania Avenue.

Operations:

- Waste: The pilot includes a carry-in/carry-out policy, so the Town will not be providing waste bags, additional trash barrels or collections.
- Signage: The Town will put signage at each trailhead, with guidelines of the pilot program. Signage will also be installed along the trail to mark where the off-leash areas begin and end.

Monitoring & Enforcement:

- The Needham Police Department (NPD) Animal Control Officer enforces the Town of Needham's General Bylaw Section 3.7 Dog Regulations. Concerns about aggressive dogs, dogs on private property, or parking violations should be reported to NPD at 781-455-7570 prompt #3.
- Concerns about waste should be reported through SeeClickFix <https://seeclickfix.com/needham>.
- Staff will walk the trail twice per month during the pilot period to document any trash impacts.
- If any urgent issues arise or excessive waste is left on the trail during the pilot period, the Office of the Town Manager will notify the Park & Recreation Commission and the Select Board with recommended changes to the pilot.
- NPD, Park & Recreation, and DPW will track any concerns or issues during the pilot period and will provide a report to the Select Board and Park & Recreation Commission summarizing the information collected with recommendations for future action.