

# DOGPAW BARK NEWS

ISSUE NO 1 | FEBRUARY 2019 | VOLUME 1



## Scores Turn Out to Share Views

More than 40 DOGPAW members and other dog park users braved chilly temperatures and icy streets on Feb. 5th to hear the organization's board review its current status and future plans. Plans focus on financial stability, improved park operations, safety concerns, open communications, and volunteer support.

No park closures are in the works at this time, according to board President Eileen Cervantes, but DOGPAW faces stiff ongoing costs to keep Ike dog park open

Clark County Parks has agreed to take over mowing, waste removal, and other major maintenance at Dakota, Kane, and Lucky dog parks, Cervantes said, securing the future of those three facilities. She added, however, because Ike park is located on federal Bonneville Power Administration land and within City of Vancouver jurisdiction instead of the county's, DOGPAW will continue to be responsible for mowing, fence repairs, and other maintenance costs.



That news set the stage for a spirited and fruitful discussion among DOGPAW members, park users, and the organization's board. Here's a summary of the meeting's major points:

## **BUDGET AND FINANCE**

"DOGPAW's been spending more than it's brought in for many years," declared Lenice Shaw, DOGPAW secretary and treasurer. Fundraising efforts were insufficient to cover expenses. The only reason DOGPAW could operate in the red was due to a sizable bequest received several years ago. Efforts to raise more money failed due to the cost of hiring non-volunteer contractors to do what we did not have enough volunteer leaders to do.

The board will take a new tactic this year, Cervantes said, with an aggressive push for volunteers to help boost dues-paying memberships and otherwise support the organization while slashing expenses.

"We'll be talking about volunteers a lot because we desperately need them," she said. "We are cutting costs wherever we can to get the most bang for the buck."

Increased county support at Dakota, Kane, and Lucky parks will go far toward reducing the organization's budget deficit, she added.





## PARK OPERATIONS

Jim Harmon has stepped in as DOGPAW's volunteer operations manager for all four parks. He'll work with volunteers from each park to monitor poop-bag supplies, watch for fence repair and trail maintenance needs, fill holes left by digging dogs, and handle other tasks. Harmon and John Hircock, a DOGPAW member and retired builder, have started constructing a wooden shed to replace the rented cargo container used for storage at Dakota.

Volunteer maintenance monitors and on-site managers are needed at all four parks.

## SAFETY

Since the dog parks are public facilities on public land, Cervantes explained, DOGPAW has no authority to expel aggressive dogs and their owners. The organization is working to help Clark County Animal Protection and Control keep a closer eye on the parks, in part by boosting dog licensing in the county.

The board is also considering educational campaigns ranging from posted rules for use at the parks to on-site workshops with veterinarians and animal-behavior experts to help users control aggressive and overactive dogs.

## COMMUNICATIONS

John Vanvig, a new DOGPAW board member responsible for improving member and public communications efforts, said the group plans to try any and all channels--from better use of bulletin boards to social networks on the internet--to keep DOGPAW members and park users informed about the parks' status and future.

Two-way communication is essential, Vanvig added. "We need to hear from you. And when we do, we will respond."

## VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

Alicia Stevens, another new board member, is DOGPAW's volunteer coordinator. As the previous speakers had made clear, she said, the organization needs volunteer help from members and others who make use of the parks.

That help can take many forms, Stevens said, ranging from short, one-time cleanup and hole-filling events to assist with preparing the organization's tax filings or joining the board as a fund-raiser or business-sponsor coordinator.

And because, as Cervantes said earlier, the organization "desperately needs that volunteer support", Stevens pledged to respond when interested park users get in touch.



"Contact me," she said. "And I will get back to you."

## AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

DOGPAW members and park users raised many questions throughout the gathering, triggering thoughtful and productive discussions with the organization's board members.

One audience member, noting the long list of challenges facing the organization, asked if the board planned more, and more frequent, public meetings like this one. Cervantes's answer--an emphatic "YES!!"--brought a resounding round of applause.



## REMEMBERING ARLENE CHESTER

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DOGPAW members took a moment before getting down to business at the Feb. 5th public meeting to remember and pay tribute to one of the organization's founding board members and most dedicated supporters.

Arlene Chester, who passed away in October at age 57, worked tirelessly to get DOGPAW up and running, according to Lenice Shaw, secretary and treasurer. Chester was a calming presence who kept the board and members united and focused on the group's mission of providing a place for dogs to play and exercise with their owners.

"She was the kind of human glue who brings people together," Shaw said. "We will miss her deeply."

