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To: City Council <citycouncil@hermosabeach.gov>; Suja Lowenthal <suja@hermosabeach.gov>; Ann Yang <anny@hermosabch.org>; Barbara Ellman <BEllman@hermosabeach.gov>; Mayor Justin Massey <jmassey@hermosabeach.gov>; Mayor Pro Tem Michael Detoy <mdetoy@hermosabeach.gov>; Councilmember Mary Campbell <mcampbell@hermosabeach.gov>; Councilmember Ray Jackson <rjackson@hermosabeach.gov>

Subject: City Council - Question/Comment

I'm concerned about the proposed agenda on dogs. My concern is primarily with Valley Park, where I walk my dog regularly and responsibly.

Dogs are important partners of their owners, and the chance to run a little freely under supervision keeps the dog mentally and physically a better partner, not to mention improving mental and physical health of the human owner. Therefore, the idea of letting dogs run freely under supervision is a better solution to any leashing problem than simply closing the option. Unfortunately, dog parks usually are failures as they are so oversubscribed that they turn unpleasant — witness Redondo Beach.

Is there someone or a group complaining that causes this agenda item? You should explain more about how many and what kind of complaints are causing this concern. If you simply crack down on all the dog owners, you may be annoying and punishing more people than are causing your concerns. As stewards of the city, you should weigh disturbing reasonable dog owners against mollifying complainers.

If protecting the turf is one of your concerns, soccer players do a lot more damage, as do, on occasion, maintenance trucks.

Making sure dogs are on six foot leashes at all times does not solve the problem of dog poop — dogs poop on and off leash. Irresponsible owners with leashed or unleashed dogs are the problem, and you are trying to solve it by restricting all dog owners. Given that a minority of dog owners are irresponsible, punishing all with fines is attacking the wrong end of the problem.

Solutions: Please explore more options than fines and punishment. Perhaps some reasonable hours could be set aside for dog owners to let their dogs run freely, hours when the park is rarely used, with perhaps a section of the park set aside. Outside that area and times, any dog must be leashed, but for a short space, dogs have freedom under supervision. Perhaps some citizens would be willing to take training and watch the areas at the appropriate times, like citizen police. Perhaps something like a Neighborhood Watch or Volunteers in Policing could spend a specific time each week in a specific place. You have resources in citizens eager to solve the problem and a supply of good will that you are not using effectively and will squander if you just close the doors to better options than high fines and punishment.