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Just a Mutt: A Narrative Ethnography of the Denver Dog Park Master Plan Process

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JUST A MUTT: A NARRATIVE ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE DENVER DOG PARK
MASTER PLAN PROCESS

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Abstract

This ethnographic study explores the phenomenon of citizen participation in the decision-making process of their local government. The researcher explored this topic by observing the Dog Park Master Plan process conducted by the Parks and Recreation Department of the City and County of Denver from June 2009 through April 2011.

The researcher attended and observed seven meetings of a citizens committee convened by the Denver Parks and Recreation Department to act as a mini-public to test the elements of the Dog Park Master Plan before presenting the Plan to the public, and the three public meetings held to allow the public at large to comment on the Plan. The researcher conducted interviews with citizens and city staff involved in the process. The researcher collected and analyzed textual artifacts generated in the process or related to it. Using these data sources the researcher constructed a narrative ethnography describing the Dog Park Master Plan process.

In the chapter on the academic literature, the research explores the literature on democracy, public participation, and having voice in decision making, and uses it to explain what occurred in the process. The researcher concentrates on the practical applications of the ideals of democracy and public participation, and democratic participation as envisioned in the concept of having voice put forth by Cheney et al (1998) and Senecah (2004). The researcher also explores as part of having voice in decision-making the principles of representation arising from culture and communication

(Alcoff, 1991) and political theory (Young, 2000), as well as procedural justice (Tyler & Blader, 2000).

From his observations the researcher has concluded that the Dog Park Master Plan process unfolded as a process in which the Denver Parks and Recreation Department saw themselves as the experts on the matter, and so, conducted the process in such a way that the participation of the citizen committee and the public at large was to a large extent ignored. As would be predicted by the literature on public participation and procedural justice, this led to dissatisfaction with the process by the participants in it. The dissatisfaction with the process led a powerful interest group to intervene in the approval and adoption process on the Plan through opaque methods (Harnik, 2000) to short circuit the process and prevent many of the Plan elements coming out of the process being included in the final Plan.

Acknowledgements

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Chapter One: Introduction

H. L Goodall Jr. (1994) in one of his narratives on an organizational culture says:

You begin to wonder what goes on in a place like that.

Curiosity is like hearing a song on the radio and not being able to figure out the words. It's like constantly hearing that same song and still not being able to figure the words out.

Now if you are an ordinary person the thing to do is go out and buy the record, listen to it, master the words and be done with it. If you are a slightly unordinary person, say an academic, the thing to do is go to the store and read the sheet music and be done with it. But if you are a detective, let's say an organizational detective, and if you are afflicted with curiosity about the words that fit the music, life isn't as easy or as neat.

This is because you see the problem differently. You define it not as an impersonal desire, a simple lust that, for example, can be satisfied either by purchasing the object itself or by studying it in someone else's store. No.

Instead you recognize the problem as something deeper, at once a symbolic convergence of you and it, a process alive with motives, feelings, strategies, meanings. It becomes an interpretive opportunity from which you will learn lessons that you would have perhaps been better off not learning, an experience that will change, possibly forever, your views, your attitudes, your sense of self.

With curiosity comes danger, a little lift out of everyday life. You want to learn the words to a song, that's all? Friend, this isn't even the beginning.

For you have learned how to read. And with knowledge comes obligation (pp. 42-43)

Goodall (1994) describes quite well my journey through the Dog Park Master

Plan process conducted by the Denver Parks and Recreation Department from June 2009

until April 2011. It started so innocently and ended with me engaged in an interpretive opportunity from which I would learn lessons that would have perhaps been better off not learned, but having an experience that changed forever my views, attitudes, and sense of self.

I began my research expecting to observe, understand, and explain a process involving citizens engaged in a local government decision making process. The Dog Park Master Plan process appeared to be a good opportunity to do just that. I needed a site to do ethnographic observation on a decision making process and the Dog Park Master Plan process presented itself at just the right time to fit this need. It involved not only a committee of citizens which it appeared would be an important part of the decision making portion of the process, but it also involved public meetings on the master plan developed in the process. It fit my schedule, had the process elements I was looking for, and though the local community had some interest in it, it was not a process that appeared to be so controversial as to draw extensive political interest. The process was interesting but not flashy.

When I began my research project on the Dog Park Master Plan process I believed the dynamics which would guide and influence the process would all be internal. That is, by observing the meetings of the citizen committee and the public meetings, I would be able to determine what happened in the process and so could describe and explain the process. However, as I observed the Dog Park Master Plan process, it became clear to me there were forces outside the process that affected the process outcomes. As Goodall (1994) says about being an organizational detective, which is

what I see myself to be, what you find in observing a process is it "takes time, and it never quite works out the way you planned" (p. xiv).   Both were true of my research project.

Why Did I Pick the Project

When I began my studies toward the Doctor of Philosophy in Communication Studies I needed to choose a focus for my efforts. I was involved in my local neighborhood organization and had been interested in communication within groups and teams, so I chose to concentrate on neighborhood organizations as a form of group or organization.   Over time, I became more interested in neighborhood organizations and their role in civil society to pressure and control the City government (Rose, 1999) by participating in and influencing the decision making occurring in their local government. My recognition of this role of neighborhood organizations as part of the public sphere came out of my studies in the classroom on public deliberation, discourse, and dialogue in the public sphere. However, what I was observing in the neighborhood organizations was not explained by the literature. Though the normative ideals espoused in the literature were appealing and logical, they were not reflected in the neighborhood organizations meetings. The more I struggled with this disconnect between the literature on public deliberation, dialogue and discourse in the public sphere and what I was observing in the meetings, the more I came to believe there were influences on the meetings that were not documented in the literature.

To attempt to fill the gap in my understanding of my observations and to seek the link between the idealized view in the literature and what was actually happening when

people participate or deliberate in the public sphere at the local level, I started with the literature on the studies of actual participation and deliberation in public meetings, especially at the local level. What I found was a dearth of literature on the phenomenon. In several of the articles and books that did discuss public participation, the authors made note of the lack of research on the subject (McComas, 2001; 2003a; 2003b; Tracy2007a; 2010; Tracy and Dimock, 2004), and of these only Karen Tracy (2007a; 2010) dealt with local government public participation.

The few academic sources I found framed their discussion of public participation around the idea that people, in participating in the decision making in their government, performed and exercised their ideals of democracy (Laurian, 2004; McComas, 2003b; Tracy, 2007a; 2010; Tracy & Dimock, 2004). This framing of public participation as people performing their ideals of democracy provided a commonality between it and public deliberation and the public sphere as described in the literature, which also relied on achieving the ideals of democracy as their basis. However, there were still some rather large disconnects between the ideals and the phenomenon as described in the literature which would need to be closed in order to provide me what I needed to resolve my questions.

The gaps in the knowledge base I had encountered and the disconnection I perceived between the literature on the phenomenon of public participation at the local level and the observed phenomenon led me to a believe the study of local government public participation from a communication focus would be a fertile research area. I had questions I could not answer based on what I knew or what I could find in the literature.

I had now identified that there was a gap in the knowledge base. The gap appeared to be significant, but its true dimensions were unclear to me. With that realization I crossed the boundary from simple interest to a passion to not just accept there was a gap in the knowledge base, but to understand the gap and help to fill it through my research. So, when the opportunity to study the Dog Park Master Plan process presented itself, I took it and embarked on the research project described in this document as a step in increasing the knowledge base on public participation in local government decision making.

Statement of the Problem and the Research Questions

I took as the goal of my research to increase the understanding of public participation at the local government level and so fill some portion of the gap in the knowledge base on public participation in local government decision making processes. In my studies leading up to this research project I have found (1) there is a lack of study of public participation and civic engagement as it actually occurs and especially a lack of study of this at the local government level, and (2) the literature available on public deliberation, public participation and civic engagement does not accurately explain or portray the phenomenon of decision making in local government.

The lack of study of citizen involvement in the decision making processes at the local government level is ignoring a critical area of everyone's lives. As Thornton (2009 October 18) says "local government is literally where the 'rubber meets the road" (P. 4D). The "quality of your life" (Thornton, p. 4D) depends on the decisions made by your local government. I believe to ignore the communication that occurs in such decision

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making in the research conducted in communication studies is ignoring a very important

area of the discipline. Therefore, there is a need for further study of the phenomenon of

public participation at the local government level. My research project takes as its goal

the increasing of the knowledge base on the communication that occurs in citizen

involvement in local government decision making. By meeting this goal the study will

fill some of the gap in the knowledge on the phenomenon. To accomplish this goal it

takes as its problem statement:

> What does the process of citizen involvement in the decision making process of a
> local government look like and how does the current literature serve as a means to
> describe and explain the process?

My research sought to address this problem statement by answering the following

research questions which guided the study:

1. How did the process of engaging the public unfold in Denver's pursuit of a
   master plan for accommodating dogs in the City's parks?

2. What are the dynamics that shaped the process and affected its outcome?

3. How do the theories, philosophies, and principles contained in the scholarly
   literature explain what happened in the Dog Park Master Plan process or other
   such processes?

Method

The method I used in conducting my research was structured around the

principles of ethnography. Ethnography has become over the years a very flexible and

broad method which has become almost synonymous with qualitative research or inquiry

as a whole (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Bochner & Ellis, 1996; Gubrium & Holstein, 2008;

Tedlock, 2003). I chose to base my research method on ethnography to draw on its

flexibility, and to make use of one of its principle that by entering into a relatively

prolonged interaction with people as they go about their day to day lives one can better

understand the behaviors of people and the factors that affect their behavior (Tedlock,

2003). My view was that by being present in the meetings of the citizen's committee and

in the public meetings of the process I would be able to understand the Dog Park Master

Plan process and gain insights that would serve to explain what happened in the process

and why it happened. I was seeking a method that allowed flexibility and the use of

multiple sources of data, and ethnography provided that to me.

Of the various genres of ethnography (Tedlock, 2003) I chose to use narrative

ethnography. This genre allowed for the inclusion of both the experiences and behaviors

of the participants in the process, and my experiences as well (Tedlock, 2003), allowing

as Tedlock (1991) says, a shift from participant observation to observation of

participation. Tedlock (1991) puts it this way:

> The author of a narrative ethnography also deals with experiences, but along with
> these come ethnographic data, epistemological reflections on fieldwork
> participation, and cultural analysis. The world, in a narrative ethnography, is re-
> presented as perceived by a situated narrator, who is also present as a character in
> the story that reveals his own personality. This enables the reader to identify the
> consciousness which has elected and shaped the experiences within the text. In
> contrast to memoirs, narrative ethnographies focus not on the ethnographer
> herself, but rather on the character and process of the ethnographic dialogue or
> encounter (pp. 77-78).

Of the two versions of narrative ethnography described by Gubrium and Hostein

(2008), the one I took to guide my research was the one held by social scientists such as

Barbara Tedlock, Ruth Behar, Ellis and Bochner, and H L. Goodall Jr. (Gubrium &

Holstein, 2008). This version focuses on the ethnographer conveying his or her findings

by the use of a narrative, and as Gubrium and Holstein describe it the findings "are

typically derived from participant observation, but they are distinctive because they take

special notice of the researcher's own participation, perspective, voice, and especially of his or her emotional experience in relation to the experiences of those being studied" (P. 251).

The organizational detective model of narrative ethnography. Of the advocates of the version of narrative ethnography I chose for my research project, the one I identified with and whose work provided the best model for me to follow in the research project was H. L. Goodall Jr. Goodall (1994) uses the metaphors of the researcher as a detective and the write up of his or her findings as a detective story. To Goodall (1994) this metaphoric construction allows one to accomplish the organizational culture study task of "the detection of the gaps in our understanding (mysteries), and our writing about organizational cultures seeks to systematically solve them (to close the case, at least temporarily)" (p. xii). As I had a "mystery," a perceived gap in the knowledge base on local government participation, and a desire to solve the "mystery" by researching and writing about the solution to it, the narrative ethnography model described by Goodall (1994; 2004; 2008) appeared to be the best fit for my project.

In performing the role of an organizational detective, according to Goodall (1994):

> . . . a scholar enters into the culture of organizations armed with a sense of mystery, an attitude of healthy skepticism toward what is offered or encountered, a respect for the dignity of ordinary people, and a duty to report fully and as completely as possible the details of the case.
>
> This metaphor of the detective has several strategic and tactical advantages. First, it connects the life of the researcher with the subject of the study, thus allowing her or him to deal honestly with the question of interests, attitudes, and motives that surround any scholarly romance. Second, it encourages displays of intrigue and sources of mystery that are natural to any scholar's mission and permits sudden twists in the story as it is told that

correspond to twists in the story as it was experienced. Third, it induces the researcher / writer to show, not tell about, that which she or he must then analyze. This tactic grounds theory in the actual, makes it tentative because it is perceptual, and favors the actors and acts, the antecedent and consequent conditions of the scene, and the various and changing ways in which symbolic traffic in organizational environments over the mere theorizing about them. (p. xiii)

The use of the metaphor of narrative ethnography as detective work is important

to Goodall (1994) because as he says:

In what I consider to be the best eclectic critical stance, the detective is free to use whatever tools are available to make sense of whatever is found. And what is found, at least in my experience, is a product of the detective's own responses to that culture, responses that seek to get as close as possible to actual cultural experience. It takes time and it never quite works out the way you planned it (pp. xiii-xiv).

The idea of using whatever tools are available was critical to me in that I wished to use

ethnographic observation, interviewing and textual analysis in my research, and so,

needed a research method that allowed the flexibility to do so.

Goodall (1994) sees narrative ethnography as a search for truth. Not the one and

only truth, but the truth the researcher has extracted from his or her research at the site.

As he says the method:

. . . invites writers to deal with the various and changing meanings that people associate with situations and makes no claims for generalizability, replicability, or infallibility. It is a situation-specific, author-specific, fallible method. It asks more questions than it pretends to answer, and its chief product is a perspectival understanding of the truth created by and constituted in a transient rhetoric (1994, p. 151)

To Goodall the use of narrative in doing research on organizations and communities is

important because:

. . . our experience of meanings in organizations and communities comes to us only in the stories we tell about them, and so the ways we read ourselves into those stories become the investigative means we need to articulate if our aim is to tell the truth (1994, p. xxv)

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So, as can be seen from the above, Goodall's description of the organizational detective form of narrative ethnography produces findings and a write up of those findings that authentically portray the author's view of the organization or community experienced which while as accurate as possible, will in no case be generalizable or replicatable.

This view of the research product is held by other research methods within the qualitative inquiry category such as portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), and while the research product produced is not in the classic form, it nevertheless is accepted by the academic community (Goodall, 1994). More importantly, the use of the organizational detective model of narrative ethnography was what was needed to accomplish the objectives of my research project.

How the project was carried out. The focus of the study was to understand how a civic engagement process unfolded, what the dynamics were that influenced such a process, and how this understanding of the process was reflected in and explained by the appropriate literature. Out of the understanding derived from the project it was hoped a document could be generated that would help others, both inside and outside the academic disciplines, understand how civic engagement is actually performed in the "real world" and help to improve the practice of engaging the citizens of a city in a decision making process such as was studied in this project. The method I followed in my research project was designed to carry out these objectives.

The process I followed in my research project was designed to do as Goodall (2008) recommends a researcher as detective do. That is, you need to immerse yourself

in the scene being studied, interview the people involved in the scene, reflect on what meanings you can derive from your observations and the knowledge on such phenomenon, and read extensively and deeply on the subject matter (Goodall, 2008). That is what I strived to do in my research project.

I immersed myself in the scene of the Dog Park Master Plan process by attending the meetings involving and open to the public which concerned the Dog Park Master Plan. These consisted of the seven meetings of citizen's advisory committee formed by the Parks and Recreation Department, the two public meetings conducted as open house sessions by the Parks and Recreation Department, and the one public meeting conducted as a question, answer and comment session by the City Park Alliance. I did not attend any of the internal meetings conducted by the Parks and Recreation Department in which the plan elements were developed. In each of the meetings I attended, since no recordings of the proceedings were made and no transcripts of the meetings were prepared, I took extensive notes and collected whatever handouts were available at the meetings as the means of capturing the events which occurred at the meetings. I also obtained copies of the public comment sheets submitted by attendees at the three public meetings. I relied on these data as a whole to provide me the picture of what happened at the meetings.

I conducted interviews with six of the 21 citizen members of the citizen advisory committee and two of the Parks and Recreation Department staff who were involved in the committee meetings. These interviews were recorded and transcripts were made of the recordings. The interviews were conducted after the committee meetings had ended,

the public meetings were concluded, and the Parks and Recreation Department had briefed the committee members of their final recommended plan elements, but before the final plan was completed.

To supplement the data I collected through attendance at the meetings, obtaining the comments sheets submitted by the public, and the interviews I conducted, I collected newspapers clippings and made notes on incidental, unplanned encounters with people that related to the Dog Park Master Plan process. I also took note of media coverage and people's comments that provided insight into the public's view of the public engagement process followed by the Parks and Recreation Department. This type of data was collected during the time the Dog Park Master Plan process was active.

In gathering, organizing and analyzing the data collected in my research project, I have reflected on what meanings I could make from the data and my analysis of it. In analyzing the data in the public comment sheets from the public meetings and the interview transcripts I relied on Owen's (1984) thematic analysis method as a sensitizing influence.

To check the meanings that I arrived at in my analysis and reflection on the information extracted from the data, I have used two of the accepted validation methods. First, I collected data through observation, interview, and textual (both the comment sheets and newspaper clippings). This triangulation method (Miles & Huberman, 1994) provide a means of contrasting the meaning derived from the different data sources to see if there was commonality on the meanings I was deriving. Secondly, I discussed my findings with my advisor and an emeritus faculty member to obtain feedback on the

representativeness (Miles and Huberman) of the meanings I was making from my analysis of the data. Through this reflective process I arrived at the meanings expressed in my narrative of the Dog Park Master Plan process.

In conducting my research on the Dog Park Master Plan process I read extensively on a number of subjects, including the various forms of democracy, urban parks and recreation, public participation, public deliberation, civic engagement, and representation and voice in community. The information gathered by this reading, as well as the information gained in my classroom discussion, readings and research, formed the knowledge base I have used for the comparison between the observed phenomenon of the process and the expectation from the knowledge base. Chapter Seven of this document details this comparison and my analysis of my findings in my research.

The goal of the research project is the production of a document that increases the understanding of public participation at the local government level, and which may be of use to the community and the local government in Denver and other such cities in engaging in decision making processes within the local community. To meet these objectives this dissertation is written to be what Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) describes as texts that are "not static documents and exclusive texts that are directed at a small circle of academic colleagues" (p. 378), but rather as texts that:

> create symbols and images that people can connect with, offer figures with whom readers can identify, and ground complex ideas in the everyday realities of organizational life. The textured form may serve as a catalyst for change within an institution. It may become an organizational text that invites response and criticism from its inhabitants (p. 378)

My access to the process. I was not invited to study the Dog Park Master Plan process. Neither the City nor any of the groups with an interest in the process or its

outcome cared whether I had access to the process or observed the process. I was not a member of any of the groups with an interest in the process nor was I an employee or an official of the City. I was just a communication researcher who had an interest in processes such as the Dog Park Master Plan process and had asked to be allowed to observe the process and write up his findings.

A "gatekeeper" made it difficult to gain access to the External Stakeholder Committee meetings. The meetings were not announced to the public, and so, if you were not a member of the Committee you needed to know someone on the Committee or go through the Parks and Recreation Department process leader, the gatekeeper, to gain access to the Committee meetings. As I was not a member of the Committee and no one would help me gain access to the Committee, so I was forced to deal with the Department gatekeeper. How I presented myself to the gatekeeper and ultimately the building of trust with him was determinative in my gaining access to the Committee meetings and thereby to entire Dog Park Master Plan process. My first way of presenting myself, as a concerned citizen, did not yield results and so I was forced to change my presentation to something that was less threatening and so more acceptable to the gatekeeper – being a researcher.

In allowing me access to the External Stakeholder Committee meetings, the gatekeeper had imposed some restrictions on my participation in the meetings. I was not allowed to speak during the Committee meetings or to provide input to the Committee, and I did not receive copies of information provided to the Committee members at a meeting until after the meeting. Therefore, the perception of the Parks and Recreation

staff involved in the process and the members of the Committee was that I was not an insider, but an observer. I was someone who was allowed to attend the meetings and gather information on the meetings, but was not a part of the group. I was an interested observer, someone who stood somewhere between a totally disinterested observer in the classical researcher mode and an active participant with all the rights and responsibility of a member of the group, an insider. This meant I was not granted full access to all the workings and nuances of the Committee's proceedings. This limited my ability to gain a full meaning from just observing the Committee meetings and required the use of other data collection methods to flesh out my understanding of the meanings coming from the process.

I played a very passive role in my observation of the External Stakeholder Committee meetings and the public meetings that were held. I believed my privilege of attending the meetings could be taken away by the City and I believed I was viewed as an outsider by the Committee members. I wasn't one of them; I was an interloper who did not share their passion on the dogs in parks issues. This uncertainty plus my concern not to exceed the limitations on human research imposed on me by my university led me to be less extroverted than some other researcher may have been in engaging with the members of the External Stakeholder Committee and the participants in the meetings I attended and observed. I did not push myself into conversations, places or events where I felt I was not welcome.

The Research Project

I learned the City and County of Denver was going to conduct the Dog Park Master Plan process by receipt of an email from the Inter Neighborhood Cooperation which forwarded me the press release from the Denver Parks and Recreation Department announcing the process. That was in March 2009. After considering the elements planned for the process I decided it would fit my needs as a site for my research project.

The Dog Park Master Plan process as it was initially envisioned in March 2009 was "to foster healthy relationships between dog owners, non-dog owners, and all park users" and would include "improving Denver's parks and open space to support and accommodate all users in a healthy, sustainable environment" (Press Release from Denver Parks and Recreation contained in March 16, 2009 email from Inter Neighborhood Cooperation). The intent of the Department was to "evaluate and examine Denver's current pilot dog parks, provide design options and recommendations (site specific), as well as provide enforcement recommendations" (Press Release from Denver Parks and Recreation contained in March 16, 2009 email from Inter Neighborhood Cooperation). The process as described in March 2009 was to consist of a public survey available on the Department's web site, both internal and external committees to develop and refine the plan, and public meetings to allow the public to comment on the final draft plan. The entire process was to take from March 2009 until September 2009, when it was anticipated the final recommended plan would be issued (McPhee, 2009 March 22).

The Dog Park Master Plan process as carried out varied from how it was envisioned in some significant ways. Many of the steps in the process took longer than

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envisioned, so the original schedule stretched out beyond the contemplated completion data by a year and half. To more fully describe the steps of the process, as I observed them, I have included a chronology of the steps of the Dog Park Master Plan process as Appendix A. Also, the engagement of the public was not as described in the March 2009 press release. The narrative of my research project contained in the chapters that follow documents and discusses what actually happened and what it meant from my point of view. How I carried out my research to arrive at the narrative is summarized in the following paragraphs.

Though I took some actions prior to my engagement with the Dog Park Master Plan process, my formal entry into the process was my attendance at the first of the citizen advisory group (labeled the External Stakeholder Committee by the City) meetings on June 10, 2009. Though I was not an active member of the External Stakeholder Committee I was allowed to attend the meetings by the City and to observe the Committee process. I attended all seven of the meetings of the Committee which were held over the period June 2009 through November 2009. The narrative of my observations and experiences in the meetings makes up Chapter Three of this dissertation.

The next phase of the Dog Park Master Plan process was holding meetings in which the public could review the proposed plan elements and comment on them. This phase consisted of two meetings held by the Parks and Recreation Department in January 2010 and one meeting held by the City Park Alliance in early February 2010. I attended all three of these meetings and made notes on my observations of what occurred in the

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meetings. I obtained copies of the comment sheets submitted by the public at the three meetings.   The narrative of my observations on and experiences in the meetings and my analysis of the comment sheets is Chapter Four of this dissertation.

The final phase of the Dog Park Master Plan process as conducted by the Denver Parks and Recreation Department was the drafting of the final Dog Park Master Plan, briefing it to the various parties with an interest in the process, and the issuance of the final plan. As I was looking at the public's participation in the process, I did not gather any observations or inquire as to the process followed in drafting the final plan. I did attend the joint meeting of the External Stakeholder Committee members and the internal working group members where the final recommendations on the elements of the plan were presented to the attendees from these two groups. I also attended the meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, a board required by the Denver Charter and charged with advising the Manger of Parks and Recreation on matters involving the City and County of Denver parks and recreation centers, where the board was briefed on the elements of the final plan. I obtained and reviewed the final plan when it was issued. Chapter Five of this dissertation discusses my observations and reflections on the meetings and the plan.

In addition to my observation of meetings and review of the final plan my research project included the interview of some of the members of the External Stakeholder Committee and Parks and Recreation Department staff involved in the Committee's meetings, collection of local media articles, and informal, unplanned contacts with people outside the Dog Park Master Plan process.   The information gained

from these sources clarified my reflections on my observations and helped me to validated my findings as accurately reflecting the process. My reflections on these interviews, local media articles and incidental contacts are discussed in Chapter Six of this dissertation.

Bookending my narrative on the process are Chapter Two, Chapter Seven, and Chapter Eight. Chapter Two provides a contextual frame which situates the Dog Park Master Plan process in the bigger environment in which the process and the Parks and Recreation Department operated. Chapter Seven reviews the literature on the subject and uses the information gained from the literature to analyze the process. Chapter Eight provides my conclusions on my research by providing my description and explanation of the Dog Park Master Plan process, the limitations on my research, and a call for future research on public participation in local government decision-making.

Chapter Two: Context of Study

The Dog Park Master Plan process did not exist in a vacuum. It existed in the context of park management. It was part of an ongoing flow of interactions between the City and County of Denver and the people who reside there. The culture of the City and the values and beliefs of the people who were involved in or concerned with the process had a great impact on the process and how it ultimately played out. I, too, existed in a context, and my context influenced how I saw the process and the events and happenings that occurred in it and around it, as well as how I pursued my study of the process. The context of my study of the Dog Park Master Plan process is grounded in these multi-level, multi-dimensional contextual elements. It is important therefore that the reader understand these elements to be able to make sense of the narrative presented herein.

City Parks: Places of Many Uses and Purposes

There are probably as many views of what a park is as there are people. This certainly is true of Denver parks. The various views people held as they engaged in the Dog Park Master Plan process had an effect on how they perceived the process and its outcome. But, before we can delve into the predominate views held by the participants in the Dog Park Master Plan process, we must first gain a more thorough understanding of the purpose and use of urban parks and what the issues and factors are in the management of city parks. Therefore, we must review the literature on urban parks and their management.

In their relatively short existence, city or urban parks have taken on many uses and purposes and these uses and purposes have evolved as the communities they serve have changed and the thoughts and philosophy on parks have changed. The large number of uses, the wide variety of purposes that parks in urban areas are put to, and the diversity of populations that parks must serve complicates the design and management of parks.

Park uses. When the first city parks were created in the mid nineteenth century the ideal of parks was based on the Romantic Movement's belief that nature was good and that the problems of society could be solved by providing the masses access to natural areas (Young, 1995). The original park planners implemented this ideal by designing parks that were limited to only trees and grassy areas arranged to mimic a natural area resulting in a generic undifferentiated style to the parks (Crompton, 2007; Young). There were no playgrounds, athletic fields, or ornamental plantings as we see in today's parks (Young). This was the view held by Frederick Olmstead, the developer of New York's Central Park, and his associates (Crompton; Young). As the planners of the Denver city parks at their inception in the late nineteenth century were adherents to Olmstead's principles, the Denver parks in their early years conformed to this vision of parks also (Etter & Etter, 2006; Leonard & Noel, 1990).

The idea on which the original parks were designed was to provide a space where the city residents could get out into nature and away from the deleterious urban environment, and experience nature and so recharge and restore themselves. This was believed by the social scientists and park planners to be a way of preventing the masses

from becoming unruly and unproductive (Crompton, 2007; Byrne & Wolch, 2009;

Williams, 2006; Young, 1995).   As Byrne and Wolch, quoting others, put it:

> Exposure to the right kind of nature would "uplift" individuals, making them
> healthy, morally proper, socially responsible, economically prudent, and
> intelligent (Cranz, 1978; 1982; Rosenzweig and Blackmar, 1992; Baldwin, 1999;
> Gagen, 2004). . . Park reformers thus imbued parks with the power to overcome
> anarchy, immorality, crime and indolence (Boyer, 1978; Schuyler, 1986; Young,
> 1996; Baldwin, 1999). . . (p. 746)

The early park planners believed that city parks open to all residents of the city

would encourage the four social virtues -- social equality, social coherence, public health,

and prosperity (Crompton, 2007; Young, 1995).   Parks were looked to as a means of

improving the masses by connecting them to nature and allowing them to mingle with

people of a better class (Williams, 2006). Parks were also seen as a place where urban

residents could get out of their crowded living conditions and enjoy time in a green

peaceful area and so experience some of the space and openness that was present before

big urban areas came into being (Crompton).

Beginning in the late nineteenth century the view of the design and use of parks

based on the romantic movements principles began to be replaced by the rationalistic

view of parks (Young, 1995). This view came about in conjunction with the Progressive

Movement in the country and held that parks areas should serve a purpose and not just be

picturesque. This movement continued to connect to the four virtues mentioned above,

but did so in a much more pragmatic manner. This change in viewpoint on the purposes

and uses of parks resulted in the addition of athletic areas, playgrounds and ornamental

plantings in parks (Young). Instead of looking to a park as a generic whole that was

pleasing to the eye and a replication of nature, the rationalistic viewpoint now required

parks to meet a practical purpose and provide space for recreation and play (Young).

Instead of existing as a detached island of nature within the urban landscape that afforded

a respite from urban life, parks became more connected with the urban environment and a

part of the city infrastructure and lifestyle (Young). This necessitated the connection of

the park to the urban grid, and dedication of specific areas in parks for play and sports,

while facilitating or enabling the enjoyment of the park as a green open space (Young).

This movement in park design and management continued through the twentieth century

and into today. Like the rest of the Nation, Denver has gone along with this movement

and the parks within the city contain ornamental plantings, playgrounds and athletic

fields as well as expanses of green open space.

Another movement that came along in the late nineteenth century and the early

twentieth century that influenced and facilitated the development of parks in cities was

the city beautiful movement (Harnik, 2000; Leonard & Noel, 1990; Young, 1995).

Within the city beautiful movement parks were seen as one of the important factors that

made a city a beautiful and thus a great city (Harnik; Leonard & Noel). This ideal has

survived into today and is reflected in the view of park planners that "there isn't a great

city that doesn't boast at least one great park" (Vaira, 2009, p. 19).

The city beautiful movement was adopted by the City of Denver in the early

1900s and became the driving force in making significant additions to the Denver Park

system (Etter & Etter, 2006; Leonard & Noel, 1990). The development of these new

parks emphasized green open space and not recreation areas, and so adhered more to

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views of Olmstead based on the romantic movement than to the new and evolving views of the rationalistic movement that were taking hold in parks elsewhere in the nation. The objective was to beautify and soften the city image by providing green open space where people could mingle, and not to provide an attractive common space for the residents to exercise and play.

The speculation of parks space as envisioned in the rationalistic movement has resulted in the modern city park being a place of many uses. Besides playground, athletic fields, and the green space in parks, parks of today have recreation centers, museums, space for musical performances, arboretums and botanic gardens, places for tennis and archery, as well as many other uses (Vaira, 2009; Young, 1995). As Byrne and Wolch (2009, p. 748) say:

> People visit parks for a wide variety of reasons, including tourism, recreation, exercise, relaxation, education, encountering nature, spirituality, self-expression, socializing, being with companion animals, escaping the city, and for solitude, personal development, and to earn a living (Hayward, 1989; McIntyre et al., 1991; Loukaitou-Siders, 1995; Manning and More, 2002). . . Park activities are diverse, spanning both active recreation – e.g. walking (with companion animals), hiking, swimming, riding bicycles, running, jogging, and playing sports; and passive recreation – e.g. sunbathing, picnicking, painting, fishing, photography, reading, dancing, playing with children or animals, playing musical instruments, studying nature, and people watching (Hayward, 1989).

Parks are also sites for rites of passage such as weddings, birthdays, funerals (Byrne and Wolch), and family reunions (Williams, 2006), as well as sites of protest (Williams). The diversity and number of uses and purposes served by parks have grown to such an extent that it is now common that parks have become specialized themselves and so are dedicated to providing one or maybe a few of the many uses that a park could possibly provide (Young). This specialization and the dynamics and socio-economic conditions

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present in cities leads many parks to be considered desirable and a destination both on a local as well as a regional basis (Gobster, 2002).

Parks in today's world are truly consistent with the rationalistic movement's view that parks should be connected to their surrounding community and become a part of the community (Young, 1995). According to McKenzie (1996) urban residents are demanding that parks reflect their community and its values. She sees parks as the "common ground of the community" (p. 30). Her view that city parks represent the soul of the city is generally recognized and accepted in the literature on urban and city parks today (see Bunnell, 2008; McKenzie; Vaira, 2009; Williams, 2006; Young). Williams (p. 142) claims "we connect our identities and communities to urban parks." In discussing a survey conducted on the predominant reasons citizens are attached to their cities Neal Pierce (2010) notes "aesthetics – parks and attractive watersides, tree lined streets, playgrounds and trails – contribute to feelings of attachment" (p. 5D). Parks play an important role in how we see ourselves, our communities and our values.

Besides the direct connections between parks and their communities, there are a number of important indirect connections. From the beginning of the establishment of city parks in the nation's cities there has been a belief that parks add value to the city and the surrounding property (Crompton, 2007). This belief became one of the foundations for seeing parks as part of the city beautiful. This belief continues today and has been supported by studies on the impact parks have on property values in a city (Crompton; Nicholls, 2004). Parks are looked at as a buffer and a means of moderating the environmental effect of a city (Brown, 2008; Williams, 2006). Consistent with this view,

parks are now being considered as sources of wildlife habitat and ecological education

places (Brown; Gobster, 2007). In fact parks are being developed in cities with the

primary purpose of being a natural area to serve these two purposes as well as being a

natural area within a city (Gobster, 2007). Parks also provide an intrinsic value to people

by serving symbolic uses, allowing for vicarious enjoyment by people, or by being seen

as a place that will have value in the future (Brown). These indirect uses or purposes for

parks as seen by people make parks a more valuable asset for the city, make the city more

desirable to its residents and visitors, and increase the connection between people and

parks.

Parks have evolved from their origination in the mid nineteenth century to today,

but they have retained their connection and value to the residents of the city. This

connection to the green, open space of a park that also provides the opportunity and

facilities for recreation, reflection, entertainment, socialization (both with other people

and their companion animals), increased satisfaction with their community and living

environment, and intrinsic values to the residents of an urban area is important to the

residents of the area and results in their connecting with the space and taking an

ownership in the park space in their community.

I would argue that people consider and treat their local park space as an extension

of their home and consider parks to be their backyard. This view of parks as their

backyard varies in strength depending on the amount of backyard they have in their

actual home property and the life narratives that make up their beliefs and values. People

consider the parks in their community to be their property, even though held in common

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with others, and react in the same way they would if their home were threatened when they believe that their parks are threatened in some way.

Park design and management. Meeting the needs of the users of parks and deciding which of the many uses and purposes that the park will be put to is a complicated process. According to Gobster (2002)

> Two important goals of park managers are to provide physical and social settings and to manage facilities and programs that help park clientele have satisfying experiences (Hoots & Buist, 1982). Meeting these goals is not easy, especially in urban areas where park space is limited, use is high, and demand for activities is diverse (p. 143).

Though Gobster doesn't specifically mention it, another factor that complicates park management is the emotional attachment that the residents have to the parks. To address this complicated, highly emotional process Harnik (2010) advocates a planning process that involves all parties with an interest in the parks and tailored to the situation present in the community. It is neither advisable or productive to use a cookie-cutter approach to design and management of parks, nor is it productive to compare one community's parks to another community's parks to determine what should be done in a park or park system (Harnik, 2010). Every situation is unique and needs to be treated as such (Harnik, 2010). Harnik recommends that the planning of and for parks take into account the unique interplay of all the factors that affect and define the community in which the parks will reside, and states "the results will come out differently from one city to the next; the critical factor, however, is that the process itself is inclusive, transparent, and fair" (p. 45).

Harnik's (2010) point about having an open, inclusive, transparent and fair process has been and continues to be a problem area in parks' management. "Powerful

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players, whether elected, appointed, or self-appointed, can opaquely insert themselves in the process, skewing or short circuiting it entirely" (Harnik, 2010, p. 46).   The dominant group may exercise its greater power and so have a greater influence in the design and planning of parks (Byrne and Wolch, 2009), as well as drowning out the voice of the less powerful or less vocal parties in the planning process (McKenzie, 1996). These all affect the inclusiveness and transparency of the process, and may impact the fairness of the decisions reached in the process.   This may also be a way for the dominant group or groups in the community to maintain their dominance (Byrne and Wolch).

Besides being excluded from the planning and design processes for parks, people are exclude from using the parks by a variety of actions of the dominant group or groups in the community and by the managers of the parks. The facilities present in a park and the design of the park discourage the people and uses that are considered undesirable (Byrne & Wolch, 2009; Williams, 2006), and encourage the uses and people that are desirable (Byrne and Wolch).   By the facilities present in a park and the design of the park the park managers are sending a message as to who is welcome in the park.

> Homeless, the poor, and other groups (such as skateboarding youth) are often systematically excluded from urban parks while others are deterred due to lack of easy access or negative perceptions linked to park history, associations, and attributes (Byrne and Wolch, p. 754)

Managers need to keep in mind that different groups use parks in different ways and the facilities they demand in their parks to allow for these uses varies by group (Gobster, 2002). It is important to consider the perception of park users as to safety and sensory desirability, which may vary by group (Gobster, 2002). Planning only for the majority and ignoring the various minority interest groups in park planning and design

should be avoided (Gobster, 2002). Too many times in the past history of park management these principles have been forgotten or ignored and this has resulted in exclusion of groups from the parks either explicitly or by discouraging their visiting a park, as well as increased conflicts among the users of parks (Byrne and Wolch, 2009; Gobster, 2002; McKenzie, 1996; Williams, 2006).

The magnitude of possible uses in urban parks and the varied demands by users of the parks, coupled with the limitations placed on management options for the parks present in today's city government and urban setting, make the job of managing parks an almost insurmountable task. This is further complicated by the fact that the parks are held in common by all the city's residents and that these residents in most if not all cases hold a very strong emotional bond with their community's parks. In the midst of this struggle, park managers have failed to ensure that the process of planning and managing parks was transparent and inclusive, but instead have given into the dominant group or groups in their city which has resulted in the less powerful or undesirable groups in the city being excluded from the use and enjoyment of the parks in the community and having their say in the planning of parks to meet their needs and desires diminished. Park managers must be better in the future at ensuring the process for planning and management of parks is transparent, inclusive and fair to all the residents of the city and not to just the dominant group or groups.

Dog parks. Of the many uses and management issues that can occur in parks, the one that is involved in this research project is dog parks. Lee, Shepley and Huang (2009) define a dog park as "a designated off-leash area, which offers a safe, controlled

environment for dogs to play, socialize, and exercise with other dogs, and provides

people an opportunity to interact with neighbors having similar interests" (p. 314). It

should be noted that this definition does not restrict the concept of dog parks to fenced

areas, but only to an area which offers dogs a safe, controlled environment. This

distinction is important to the research project, as the process studied involved

consideration of both fenced and unfenced areas for dogs to be off-leash.

Dog parks are a recent addition to the list of uses in city parks (Hawn, 2009), but

are not a well studied use of parks (Lee, Shepley& Huang, 2009). Dog people [1] are

becoming more active in demanding more areas where they can have their dog off leash

(Hawn; Lee, Shepley & Huang). Though establishment of more dog parks may help to

mitigate some of the conflicts with other park users and uses, they will create others

(Harnik, 2010; Hawn). Like any other use, the planning and management of off leash

areas for dogs in city parks needs to take into account the special problems that come

with such areas, the community's views on dogs in parks and dedicating space in a park

for such a use, and what the community wishes such an area to contain (Hawn). As with

any other use, off leash areas requires extensive public input and recognition that every

situation is different and so must be planned on a standalone basis.

Though the primary purpose of dog parks is to be a place where dogs can be off

leash and socialize with the other dogs and their humans, dog parks serve a number of

other uses (Lee, Shepley & Huang, 2009). The human users of dog parks look to them,

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[1] As Lee, Shepley and Huang (2009) note there is controversy as to how to refer to people who have dogs as part of their family. They refer to them as "dog owners," others refer to them as "dog guardians." I have chosen to refer to them as "dog people," as I believe this to be reflective of the relationship between the person and the dog or dogs that are part of their family.

in addition to being places to take their dogs, as places where they can socialize with

other dog people and their neighbors, and build community (Lee, Shepley & Huang).

This is supported by the finding of a survey conducted for the John S. and James L

Knight Foundation which suggests

> it's social offerings – places where people can meet and mix, ranging from social community events [such as planned gatherings at a dog park] to vibrant night life, all contributing to a sense that people of a community care about each other (Pierce, 2010, p. 5D)

Dog people desire dog parks close to their homes to allow for quick, frequent, and

prolonged use of the park (Lee, Shepley & Huang). These people desire dog parks to be

part of their neighborhood park and look to them, the dog park or the park in which the

dog park is placed, to provide the same opportunities for socialization, communing with

nature, recreation, and interaction with their neighbors as any other type of park (Lee,

Shepley and Huang). Having close proximity to a dog park, or to people who either have

a dog as part of their family or enjoying being around dogs, is considered to be an

amenity that increase the desirability and value of a home (Lee, Shepley & Huang).   Dog

parks are a park use that is valued by a significant portion of the population and have a

value and purpose that goes beyond just being a place to take your dog.

Urban parks have many uses in today's world, and their management is complex

and subject to controversy. The recent addition to parks of areas for dogs only

complicates even more the management of the various possible uses for a park, and

increases the likelihood of conflict between users. The neighborhood activists involved

in this study held very strong views about what a park should be, and these views were

contradictory to the multi use, rationalistic view which holds sway in park management at

this time. With such a view it was inevitable that the neighborhood activists would be in

conflict with groups such as the Parks and Recreation Department or other park users

who held the multi use, rationalistic view concerning management of Denver's Parks.

The Parks and Recreation Department

The Dog Park Master Plan process, as with any similar process conducted by a

city government, does not stand by itself. It is part of an ongoing flow of issues and

processes that are present in the public sphere of the City and County of Denver and is

imbedded in the interaction the City and its residents. The culture and policies of the

City influence and guide the Parks and Recreation Department and their interaction with

the public in managing the parks owned and controlled by the City.

The Denver Parks and Recreation Department adheres to the principles of multi-

use and ongoing change in managing its parks and well as seeing its parks through the

lens of the rationalistic movement in park management as described above. This is

reflected in the way it communicates about the park system in Denver. The Department's

web site lists the many uses that the City's parks can be and are put to on a daily basis. In

discussing City Park, one of the first parks in Denver and one of the gems of the Denver

park system, Brita Herwig, one of the park planners in the Department, acknowledges

that the current day City Park has evolved to be a place of many uses to meet the needs of

the people using the park (Cote, 2011 August 5).

> The Denver Parks and Recreation (DPR) mission states, 'Denver Parks and
> Recreation is dedicated to customer satisfaction and enhancing lives by providing
> innovative programs and safe, beautiful, sustainable places.' To fulfill this
> mission, DPR must respond to the changing needs of all its citizens and what they
> request of their park system (Patterson, 2009 December, p. 5).

The Department's Responsibilities. In carrying out its mission the Denver

Parks and Recreation Department has a huge job to accomplish. It is one of the larger

departments in the City government. The Department at the time of the Dog Park Master

Plan process was responsible for the management of 250 parks within the boundaries of

the City and County of Denver encompassing 4,300 acres, 14,000 acres of mountain

parks outside the boundaries of the City, 1,700 acres of natural areas, seven golf course

located within the City, and 30 recreation centers (Denver Parks and Recreation, 2010

December 27). Included in the facilities for which the Parks and Recreation Department

was responsible within the City were six dog parks – Berkeley, Barnum, Kennedy, Fuller,

Green Valley Ranch, and Stapleton (Denver Parks and Recreation, 2010 December 27).

In the intervening time between the end of the process and the preparation of this

document four more dog parks have been added – Railyard, Josephine, Parkfield, and

Lowry. In addition, the Parks and Recreation Department is charged with the oversight

and protection of the designated parkways throughout the City and the City's forestry

program which enforces the City's street tree ordinance and assists homeowners with

care of the trees within their property.

As part of carrying out its responsibility for the management of the parks and

facilities entrusted to it, the Parks and Recreation Department during the time I was

observing the Dog Park Master Plan process had a number of planning efforts in process.

Some of the planning efforts not involving dogs that I was aware of were:

- A number of planning and construction projects for updating or building new facilities and infrastructure in parks authorized and funded by a bond election a few years before the time of the study.

- The development of a policy and procedure for admission based events in parks in the City.

- Related to the admission based events policy but coming out of the mayor's office was a proposal from a outside organization to hold first run movies in Civic Center Park in the 2010 summer and City Park in the 2011 and 2012 summers, and the holding of a snow board and ski jump exhibition competition in Civic Center Park in the winter of 2011.

- An ongoing effort to deal with the death and sickness of ducks and other water fowl in and around the lakes in a number of City parks.

These issues were of such a magnitude to be controversial or of some interest to a significant and vocal portion of the City's residents.

Besides the above non-dog issues and the Dog Park Master Plan process, the Parks and Recreation Department dealt with two issues involving dogs during the time I observed the process. One of the issues was a proposal from a local firm to provide dog waste bag dispensers and dog waste bags in parks at no charge to the City. This became a controversial issue that attracted significant public attention because to pay for the dispensers and bags the firm proposed to sell advertising on the dispensers and the bags. This inflamed public outrage because citizens believed this was in effect a selling of the parks and so a violation of the intent of the governing language in the City Charter and ordinance (email traffic and overheard conversations by researcher from April 2009 through August 2009). After many months of discussion on the issue the City decided not to move forward with finalizing the agreement with the firm to provide the dispensers and bags in the parks.

The second issue involving dogs was the finding by the water quality regulators that animal waste runoff from the City parks was contaminating of the Platte River and its tributary streams that flowed through the City. The Parks and Recreation Department

was involved in addressing this issue, and hoped to mitigate it in part through the Dog

Park Master Plan. In response to this issue the Department engaged with its sister

departments of Public Works and Environmental Health to work on the issue of dogs in

parks (Denver Parks and Recreation Press Release received from Inter Neighborhood

Cooperation on March 16, 2009).

As can be seen from the above the Parks and Recreation Department was

involved in many planning efforts that were attracting a great deal of interest and

attention from the public during the time the Dog Park Master Plan process was going on.

They all required public outreach efforts by the Department and challenged the cultural

values and beliefs of the Department as part of the City government.

The culture of the "expert" in government. The City and County of Denver like

other similar cities in the United States operates under the principles of the representative

democracy form of democracy, and so has these principles embodied in its culture and

practices. In such an entity the representatives elected by the citizens of the City and not

the citizens themselves make the decisions and enact the ordinances to carry out the

functions of the City (Pitkin, 1967), such as the management of the City's park system.

The elected representatives of the citizens, the mayor and the city council, can if they

wish, and in most cases do, delegate some of the authority granted to them by the citizens

to make decisions and set rules and policies for the operation of the City and its

infrastructure. Such delegations normally go to what is classified as administrators or

managers, or they may go to a committee or commission created by the elected officials

for such a purpose (Williams & Matheny, 1995). In either case the people who serve in

these positions are normally individuals who possess the technical skills and knowledge recognized as being needed to deal with the complexities of running a city (Williams &Matheny).

Individuals who serve in these administrative positions and bodies are usually labeled as experts. In playing the role of the expert such people in representative democracy serve two purposes. They represent the people by doing for them what they cannot do for themselves (Pitkin, 1967). They also serve as a means of removing the decision making on complex issues from the influence of politics (Newman, 2009; Williams & Matheny, 1995).

Both of the purposes of using experts in governance were at the foundation of the move in the early 1900s to increase the administrative staff of governments (Williams &Matheny, 1995). At this time the Progressive Movement was dominant in the designing of governance in the United States, and the advocates of the movement saw an advantage to utilizing disinterested, technically trained individuals and groups in the decision making in government to eliminate the problems they saw coming from having what were perceived as corrupt elected officials and special interests make the decisions (Williams & Matheny). The elimination of bias that came with involving people who had a vested interest in the decision was not the only perceived advantaged. It was also deemed good to have the decisions made by the experts who had the expertise and training to make the decision in an objective and scientifically based manner (Williams & Matheny). The structure of the government of cities which, like Denver, were influenced

by the Progressive Movement reflects this movement to use experts to make decisions and policies and to be responsible for their implementation.

The acceptance of the concept of experts has been manifested in a number of ways in the culture of today's local governments. Relying on the experts has resulted in the role of the public in the government being largely limited to voting for their elected officials and there being scant opportunity for any meaningful opportunities to be involved in decision making in their government (Hartz-Karp & Briand, 2009). This comes from a view in representative democracy that the decision making should be left to experts, organized interest and elected officials because the members of the public do not have sufficient knowledge to participate in the decision making (Hartz-Karp & Briand). This leads to a view by elected officials and the city staff that the people authorized them to make decisions and manage the city, and so, the public should leave them to make the decisions (Leignninger, 2005).

The principle of removing political influence from the decision making process (Williams & Matheny, 1995) tends to lead to attempts to depoliticize the decision-making process (Newman, 2009). Proponents believe this can be accomplished by leaving the decision making to the experts, and will result in a faster and less messy decision-making process (Newman). Unfortunately, this means excluding the public from the decision making process (Newman; Williams & Matheny).

Beginning in the late twentieth century and continuing into today, there has been a movement to resist reliance on the experts within government to make the decisions without public input (Leighnninger, 2005; Rayner, 2003; Williams and Matheny, 1995).

Williams and Matheny refer to the type of language used in this movement as pluralist language. To Williams and Matheny the view of the advocates of pluralist language or discourse is that "good regulatory policy emerges not from the delegation of authority to neutral experts, but rather from policy-making procedures that allow open access to all affected interests" (p. 20). Out of this movement came the requirements for public hearings, public engagement and citizen committees (Leighnninger; McCoy & Scully, 2002; Rayner). City government has pursued this approach by building into the decision making process a requirement that all interested parties be afforded the opportunity to give their input and influence the decisions made, which is implemented by holding public meetings, by granting access to the decision making process to the public, and by seeking the input of the people on issues affecting them.

Though there has been movement to adopt the pluralist approach in decision making in government there continues into today a struggle between the two approaches to decision making in government (Williams & Matheny, 1995). The experts have hidden their efforts to retain control of the decision making process by co-opting the pluralist approach to decision making. They hold public meetings in which the public is invited to provide testimony, but they do not consider the input from the public in making their decision (McComas, 2001, 2003a; Innes & Booher, 2004). They establish citizen committees which are portrayed as affording the citizens through their representatives on the committee the opportunity to consider, comment on and affect the decision on the issues and decisions proposed by the government, but which in reality have no effect on the decision made (Rayner, 2003). The entities conducting public meetings or meetings

of citizen committees frame the agenda for the meetings to guide the participants to the decision they wish to be made (Rayner). These all make it look like the public had its say when in reality they had little or none.

The decision making culture of the City. Denver like cities of similar size, location and history on the surface promotes the pluralist approach to decision making. It has adopted policies and ordinances that require access and input by the public in the meetings of its decision making bodies and processes. The Open Meetings (2011) article of the Revised Municipal Code of the City and County of Denver says:

> It is hereby declared to be the policy of the city that the formation of public policy is public business and should be conducted in public, and that the public shall be entitled to the fullest access to the deliberations and proceedings of *public bodies* (emphasis added),

and "All meetings of a quorum of a *public body* shall be open to the public" (Open Meetings, emphasis added). By these provisions of the City's ordinances one would think the City would allow its residents to attend and provide input in the spirit of the pluralist approach to decision making. One would be mistaken.

Denver takes a strict interpretation of its ordinance on open meetings. Denver does not consider all of its decision making bodies to be "public bodies" covered by the ordinance (Meyer, 2011 February 18). The portion of the Revised Municipal Code of the City and County of Denver on open meetings (Open Meetings, 2011), defines public bodies by listing the public bodies constituted in Denver. It is understood and is the practice that bodies not on the list are not "public bodies."

The City believes it is justified in excluding the public from access to meetings of bodies it does not consider covered by the open meeting ordinance (Meyer, 2011

February 18). It appears that as forums of decision making not on the list are not

considered to be "public bodies" by the City, the City does not consider they are subject

to the "Open Meetings" ordinance, and so, the City does not believe it is required to give

notice including the date, time and location of the Committee meetings as required by the

Revised Denver Municipal Code (Open Meetings, 2011). Without such notice of the

meetings of such forums it would not be possible for anyone who did not know someone

involved in them to easily find out about the meetings, and so the City could keep the

meetings quiet and below the radar, which seemed to be their plan.

        Where I encountered this cultural view by the City was in trying to gain access to

the Dog Park Master Plan process by attending the External Stakeholder Committee

meetings. The Parks and Recreation Department didn't prohibit me from attending the

meetings when I inquired about doing so, but it was more the Department was trying to

dissuade me from attending by putting as many roadblocks in my way as they could.

They did not post the meetings to the Parks and Recreation web site or announce them in

some other way that was readily available to the public. It was only when I disclosed I

was a researcher, which was less threatening to them, that I gained access to the

meetings. I got the impression the City was trying to keep the Committee meetings low-

key and out of the public view.

        Why did the City wish to keep the External Stakeholder Committee meetings out

of the public view? The words of the Parks and Recreation staff for the Dog Park Master

Plan process, though vague and politically correct in tone, conveyed the message they did

not wish the process to become political and so were trying to prevent outside influence

on the Committee and the Dog Park Master Plan process. This is in line with the policy

expressed in other cases that the City wished to allow such committees to "meet and

come up with recommendations and speak freely as possible and not be subject to public

scrutiny" (Meyer, 2011 February 18, p. 1B). That is the City wishes to depoliticize such

decision making processes.

This depoliticization of decision making came about in the movement in the

Progressive Age to have "experts" make the decisions in government (Williams &

Matheny, 1995). "An independent commission of 'leading experts' in a 'clear framework

of policy set by Government' removes controversial decisions on projects from formal

politics" (Newman, 2009, p. 160). It is looked at by government that having the experts,

without public input, make the decisions on a controversial issue would be better because

the process removes political subjectivity (Metzler, 1997; Williams & Matheny), it is

more based on facts (Metzler; Williams & Matheny), and is quicker (Newman). That is,

the decisions reached in a process, such as the Dog Park Master Plan process as originally

conceived, where the internal experts of the government along with a carefully chosen

group of advisors--the External Stakeholder Committee--deliberate and make decisions

on the best solution to the problem under study are more stable and controllable and less

subject to the volatility which would be present if the public was involved (Metzler).

If one excludes the public from the deliberations and decision making process it is

believed that it will be a more efficient and quicker process (Metzler, 1997; Newman,

2009). In addition, it is believed not having to comply with the requirements of having

meetings open to the public results in more free and open discussion by the "experts" and

allows more flexibility in the scheduling and conducting of meetings (Innes & Booher, 2004). This was one of the reasons given by the City for closing meetings to the public.

However, this exclusion of the people from the decision making of their government limits their voice in the decision making process. The government's answer to this objection is that the people will have a chance to voice their views on the matter at public hearings. This is contradicted by the views expressed by neighborhood activists in Denver and researchers (such as Innes & Booher, 2004; McComas, 2003b; Rayner, 2003) that such public hearings are perceived as a waste of time and have no effect on the ultimate policy or plan adopted. Though justified to some extent, the actions by the City in keeping the Dog Park Master Plan process out of the public view served to silence the public's voice and create more bad feelings between the City and the neighborhood activists in the City.

The Protectors and Defenders of the Parks

In attending meetings of neighborhood organization before and during my study of the Dog Park Master Plan process, I became aware of a grouping of people who took a special interest in the parks within the City and County of Denver. This was a loose grouping of people whose membership changed over time and as different issues and concerns arose about the parks within Denver. Some of the people who identified with this grouping were members of organizations which focused on a specific park, such as the Friends and Neighbors (FANS) of Washington Park and the City Park Alliance, as well as a similar group that focused on Cheesman Park. Other people identified with the grouping were just interested in parks in general or had an interest in a park but were not

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members of an organization that focused on a specific park or parks. As time went on in my study of the Dog Park Master Plan process I became aware this grouping was taking an interest in the Dog Park Master Plan process. Therefore, I began to track this grouping of people more closely. In order to have an identifier I could use in making notes on their activities, I labeled them the "Protectors and Defenders of the Parks."

The Protectors and Defenders of the Parks grouping of people loosely associated itself with the Inter Neighborhood Cooperation (INC), which was the recognized umbrella organization for neighborhood organizations by the City and was looked to by the City to represent the views and opinions of the neighborhood organizations within the City. Members of the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks formed the core membership of and were the driving force behind the formation of the INC Parks and Recreation Committee about the same time as the Dog Park Master Plan process began, though the Dog Park Master Plan process was not the reason the committee was formed. It was through the INC Parks and Recreation Committee activities that I gained most of my insight into the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks.

How did they see parks? The Protectors and Defenders of the Parks had a different view of parks from the Parks and Recreation Department. While the Parks and Recreation Department viewed parks through the lens of the rationalistic view (Young, 1995) and the dominant view in the park management community that parks were multipurpose, ever changing places that should reflect the views and needs of the people, the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks held to the romantic view (Crompton, 2007; Young) of parks and saw the use of them through that lens.

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The Protectors and Defenders of the Parks had a well defined picture of what

parks should be. They saw the historical purpose grounding the creation of parks in

Denver as being

> to provide beauty, to promote mingling of people from all socio-economic
> backgrounds, and to endorse the principle of equality by allowing all citizens
> access to free open space (INC Platform for Denver's Urban Parks, 2011, January
> 8, p. 1).

They saw the protection of this historic purpose as critical (INC Platform for Denver's

Urban Parks). The idea that parks should have as their primary purpose providing

"access to open green space" (INC Platform for Denver's Urban Parks), "access to the

experience of nature" (INC Platform for Denver's Urban Parks), and to serve as "a place

for people to relax that comes as close to a tranquil setting in a city" (Plaven, 2009, May

7, p. 3B) was found throughout the members of the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks

groupings conversations, letters, and emails concerning the proper use of parks. It was

the foundation on which they built their discourse on parks in Denver.

What were their issues? In general the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks

were frustrated with the way in which the Parks and Recreation Department managed the

parks within Denver. Their sentiment is reflected in the statement included in the

"Platform for Denver's Urban Parks[2]" proposed by the INC Parks and Recreation

Committee and adopted by Inter Neighborhood Cooperation on January 8, 2011 where it

says:

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[2] Denver has urban parks, parks within the City limits; mountain parks, parks in the mountains to the west
of the City and not within the City limits; and the Redrocks Amphitheater and Park, a performing arts site
to the west of the city and not in the City limits. The platform by INC and the focus of my dissertation
research only involved the urban parks.

Despite the demonstrated economic value of the park system to the community, Denver's urban parks have become a source of contention over the past several years. Denver's Mayor and his appointee, the Department of Parks and Recreation Manager, have been in conflict with segments of the public over the primary experiences that should be available in parks and how multiple uses of parks should be managed (p. 2).

The frustration and conflict on the part of the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks was caused by a number of issues. Some specific issues that were high on the list of frustrations on their part were many of the issues mentioned above with which the Parks and Recreation Department was dealing with during the Dog Park Master Plan process. The Protectors and Defenders were actively opposed to five of them. They did not agree with and were actively opposing the admission based event, the movies in the park, the snow board and ski event, and the dog waste bag receptacle proposals by the Parks and Recreation Department. They were also actively advocating for more attention to the dead and sick waterfowl in some of the parks' lakes and were convinced the cause of the problem was the source of water for the lakes (emails and personal conversations, March through June 2009; Davis, 2009 April 14; Plaven, 2009, May 7). They believed the proposed decisions on each issue was contrary to the City Charter and the City's adopted policies, they believed the proposed actions on each issue would degrade the quality of the City's parks and their use of the parks (personal conversations and emails; Davis; Plaven), and in their view the proposals were contrary to what a park should be (personal conversations and emails).

Underlying and increasing the frustration of the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks was their feeling they were not being given voice in the process. As used here the concept of "voice" takes the meaning expressed by Cheney et al (1998) that voice in

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decision making is a member of an organization having the privilege of expressing an opinion that is acknowledged by the organization, and has the potential of making a difference in the organization's conduct. Voice is based in a dialogic model of communication where organization members have the privilege of expressing their perspectives and have an equal chance of influencing the decision making in the organization (Cheney et al). This concept of voice is also present in the public participation literature as evidenced in the writings by Senecah (2004) who sees voice in public participation as a person having access to the decision making forum, having the standing to be accepted as a valued and respected presenter at the forum, and having the ability to influence the decision reached in the forum.

The Protectors and Defenders of the Parks in their call for a voice in the decision making concerning parks in Denver were embodying what Williams and Matheny (1995) would label as communitarian language. Groups who follow the principles of communitarian dialogue call for participatory democracy and inclusion of the people into the decision making process (Williams & Matheny). Such groups distrust representative institutions and delegation of authority to experts (Williams &Matheny). The Protectors and Defenders of the Parks and neighborhood activists in general in Denver were consistent in their call on the City government to include them in the decision making groups formed by the City and give them a say in the decisions made by the groups. They also called on the City to abide by the requirements of the City's Open Meeting ordinance and provide them notice and access to meetings of public bodies. In the case of parks the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks were especially upset they were not

given adequate notice and allowed to speak at the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB)--one of the public bodies listed in the Open Meeting ordinance--meetings when the issues were being considered (emails and personal conversations).

Into the environment of distrust and antagonism created by what the neighborhood activist saw as the bad faith dealings by the Parks and Recreation Department staff, the Dog Park Master Plan process was launched. As the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks did not trust the Department to do the right thing, and believed the Department was giving the parks away to the special interests favored by the City administration, when the Dog Park Master Plan process was announced they decided they had to track and influence the process to ensure their desired views and positions on dogs in parks were reflected in the Dog Park Master Plan (personal conversations, 2009 May) They saw the Dog Park Master Plan as potentially another attempt by the Parks and Recreation Department to give their parks away and violate the principles on which the parks were founded and should be operated.

What influence did they have? In a decision-making process in local government there will be the groups that have influence in the process and those that are marginalized or excluded from the process (Trounstine, 2010). Rakow et al. (2003) labels these two groups as the "movers" and the "shakers." To Rakow et al. "movers" are the community decision makers consisting of the city staff, the business and industry owners, the privileged, and the educated of a community that make the decisions and move the process along. The "shakers" are the outside group in a community who do their "best to rattle the positions of those in power and to disrupt their framing of events

and consequences," who because of their marginal position in the community have less influence in the community by virtue of having less access to the means of public communication" (Rakow et al., p. 42). By virtue of their privileged position the "movers" are the ones the city government is responsive to and the ones city government attempts to ensure are satisfied (Trounstine, 2010).

The membership of the two groups, the "movers" and the "shakers," is fluid and dependent on the situation and the benefit or cost of satisfying the desires and needs of s given member to the city in the situation (Trounstine). In general the "movers" are granted access to a city's decision making to express their views and concerns and their views and concerns are given standing in the decision making process, while the "shakers" are marginalized or excluded from the decision making process (Rakow et al.).

In Denver city government by my observation this division between those who would be considered "movers" and those who would be considered "shakers" was present. Some interest groups in Denver were either considered to be "movers" and so privileged and allowed access in all situations, and other groups were considered to be "shakers" and so they had little or no influence in the decision making processes in all situations. Then there were other groups, such as the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks, who in some situations were considered the privileged "movers" for the process and in other situations were considered the disadvantaged "shakers."

In some situations, such as the decision to not proceed with the permit to allow the commercial firm to place dog waste bag receptacles in parks, the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks' concerns were taken into consideration and the proposed action

was stopped. In others, such as the admission based events and the proposal to allow a commercial activity to use park space for movies, they did not have enough influence to stop the two actions from proceeding. As to what influence they had, it depended on the situation, and in my opinion was dependent to some extent on who the other players in the process were and how much power or prestige the other interest groups brought to bear in the decision making process as compared to what the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks could bring to bear.

My Perspective in Doing the Project

In narrative ethnography the experience and the viewpoint of the researcher are an integral part of the story told. This makes the personal context (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) – the perch or perspective of the researcher – an important factor to the reader in understanding and making sense of the narrative told in the story. The personal context that I brought to the research project involved a number of components.

I entered my research project on the Dog Park Master Plan process with a simple goal. I was looking for a decision-making process to study that involved both a local government and a group of citizens. The Dog Park Master Plan process fit the criteria and so I chose it. I was interested in the process because it was a decision-making process and not because I had any interest in dogs, dogs in parks, or management of parks. If it had not been the Dog Park Master Plan process, it could have been another process. I was and I continue to be fascinated by watching and analyzing how citizens interact with their local government and how citizens work together to influence and monitor the decision making that goes on in their local government. That is my interest

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as a communication scholar, and the mysteries associated with that interest are what I have a passion to explore, understand, and hopefully solve.

I was not asked to study the Dog Park Master Plan process. I do not own a dog, and so, had no interest in dog parks in a City parks or elsewhere. The issue of dogs in parks is not an issue that I have any passion for and have only a passing interest in it. Though I value having access to parks within the City and draw a certain intrinsic pleasure from knowing there are parks within the City and they are available for me to use, I am not a frequent user of the City parks and do not have any interest in influencing the management of the City's parks. I chose the Dog Park Master Plan process because it was decision-making process and as a process it interested me.

Within these contextual elements the Dog Park Master Plan process and my observation and experience with it unfolded. Each of these elements had an influence on the process and how I perceived it. The reader should keep the elements in mind as he or she reads through the forthcoming chapters and the narrative they contain. They will help the reader in making sense of what happened in the Dog Park Master Plan process and my study of it.

Chapter Three: External Stakeholder Committee Meetings

Though the Dog Park Master Plan process had begun in early 2009 when the Parks and Recreation Department started their internal process, I engaged with the process in June 2009 when the External Stakeholder Committee meetings were started. Though there had been a survey instrument issued in March 2009, the External Stakeholder Committee to me was the start of the formal public engagement process for the Dog Park Master Plan. So, it was the beginning of the External Stakeholder Committee meetings where I began my research.

The narrative of my observations and experiences in the External Stakeholder Committee meetings that follows is a compilation of my notes and remembrances from the meetings. It is the way I remember the meetings and not necessarily the way another attendee at the meetings remembers them. There were no recordings or transcripts made of the meetings, so I did not have them to refer to and use to validate my remembrances. I have tried to capture the meetings and the events and discussions that went on in the meetings as accurately as I could. In the narrative I provide as much detail as possible so as to show the meetings and not tell about the meetings (Goodall, 1994). The "truth" the narrative tells about the meetings is my version of the truth and is certainly not the only truth that can be derived from observation of the meetings, so I leave it to the reader to draw his or her own conclusions.

The First Committee Meeting

I stepped off the bus at the stop on Federal Boulevard across from the City's Department of Human Services' main office, crossed the street, and walked towards the Rude Recreation Center where the first meeting of the External Stakeholder Committee would be held. It was about 6:15 in the morning on June 10, 2009, and as I had planned, I was well ahead of the start time for the meeting.

The External Stakeholder Committee meetings were the first phase of the public engagement portion of the Dog Park Master Plan process, and the meeting I was headed towards was the first meeting of the Committee. It was to be the introduction for the Committee members, and me, to the actual purpose and process for the External Stakeholder Committee. It was like the first day of a new class; you know what you expect the class and your fellow students will be like, but until you go to the first class meeting and hear the instructor's introduction to the class and meet your fellow students you really don't know what the class will actually be like. That was the feeling I had as I arrived at the recreation center and entered to search for the room where the meeting would be held.

Upon entering the recreation center no one was at the reception / sign-in desk of the center to ask for directions to the room where the meeting was going to be held. I picked what I thought was the most likely hallway where the room for the meeting would be located and walked down it. About half way down the hallway I found the room but it was empty, so I went back out to the lobby and then outside where I found a place to sit down and wait until closer to the meeting start time. I had my notebook, my pen and

pencil, and a folder for handouts in my book pack; I had found the room; and I was ready to start the observation of the process.

As I sat there outside the recreation center collecting my thoughts and enjoying a nice, quiet early summer morning, I pondered why the Parks and Recreation Department staff organizing the Committee meetings chose this location for the meetings. To me it was about as out of the way as you could get. Though the Rude Recreation Center was close to the core of the City it certainly wasn't in the core or in a part of Denver that would be called mainstream. The park surrounding the recreation center was a small neighborhood park which didn't have a dog park in it or any other connection to the dog park issue. There wasn't anything significant about the park, the recreation center or the surrounding neighborhood. In fact the ordinariness of the site fit rather well with the feeling I had developed in the struggle to gain access to the External Stakeholder Committee meetings, namely that the Parks and Recreation Department wished to keep the Committee meetings and so the Dog Park Master Plan process as quiet and circumspect as possible. If this was their objective, they had picked a good site for the first meeting

About 15 minutes before the start of the meeting I went back inside the recreation center and down the hallway to the room where the meeting would be held. There were a few people in the room, including the senior planner from the Parks and Recreation Department who was leading the Dog Park Master Plan process and would be leading the External Stakeholder Committee meetings. His assistant was also present. Within the 20

minutes between my arrival back at the room and the beginning of the meeting at 7:10 the rest of the committee members arrived along with a few city staff.

The room was one of the meeting rooms at the recreation center. It was off of one of the hallways in the recreation center and away from the active exercise and locker room areas. The room was set up with tables arranged in a U shape with the open end of the U against the wall where a projection screen had been pulled down to allow for projection of video presentations. There were chairs placed at the tables, but there were insufficient chairs to allow all of the Committee members, observers, and other non-committee member participants to sit at the table. In fact there were only a few chairs other than the ones at the tables in the room. The Parks and Recreation Department obviously did not expect anyone other than those they had invited to attend the meeting. The senior planner from the Parks and Recreation Department, who was to lead the meetings, sat in the middle of the base of the U of tables where a computer and projector for presentation were set up.

By the time everyone arrived for the meeting, those of us not on the External Stakeholder Committee ended up sitting along the walls away from the tables. This group of people was made up of me--the sole non-City staff observer--, three or four City staff who were not members of the Committee, and one or two Committee members who couldn't find chairs at the table. Those of us along the wall had been courteous and had taken chairs along the wall to allow the Committee members to have the chairs at the table. With all the chairs at the tables occupied and the five to seven of us seated along the walls of the room it made for a crowded meeting room.

By the time the meeting got rolling shortly after its beginning at 7:10 A. M. there was approximately 27 people present at the meeting. The people seated at the tables consisted of 20 of the 21 Committee members expected by the organizers, an extra Committee member from Inter Neighborhood Cooperation, the senior planner from Parks and Recreation who was leading the meeting, and his assistant. The remaining attendees at the meeting consisted of the City staff not on the Committee but attending the meeting to observe and participate, and me. There were no non-Committee members of the public present at the meeting, except me.

The first action by the senior planner leading the meeting once it began was to ask everyone to introduce themselves. As this was the first time the members of the Committee had gathered together and the first time they had met the Parks and Recreation Department staff involved in the process in person, it was in my opinion a very appropriate and necessary start to the meeting. Starting with the people seated at the table and then the people against the wall, each person at the meeting introduced themselves by giving their name, the area of the City they lived in, and the reason they were participating in the Dog Park Master Plan process and the External Stakeholder Committee. In the course of the introductions it came to light there were four Inter Neighborhood Cooperation (INC) (a consortium of registered neighborhood organization in Denver) representatives present at the meeting instead of the three representatives the Parks and Recreation Department had requested INC send.

The glitch on Inter Neighborhood Cooperation Members. The original plan by the Parks and Recreation Department for the composition of the Committee had

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included only three members from Inter Neighborhood Cooperation (INC). However, at the beginning of this first Committee meeting there were four Inter Neighborhood representatives present. This presented a problem for the Parks and Recreation Department because they now had 22 Committee members instead of the 21 they had planned for and the ratio of members in each representation category were now not what they had planned it to be.

In response to the overage of INC representatives, the senior planner, who was leading the Committee meetings, early in the meeting, went to one of the INC representatives, who was one of the Co-chairpersons of the INC Parks and Recreation Committee, and asked him to leave the meeting and not attend any further meetings. According to the INC Parks and Recreation Committee Co-Chairman the senior planner from the Parks and Recreation Department told him they only wanted three members from INC and as he was not on the list of three people received from INC he was extra and so not welcome (personal discussions with INC Parks and Recreation Committee Co-chairperson on June 16, 2009). In addition, he was told they already knew his positions and so the Department did not see a need to have it represented in the Committee (personal discussions with INC Parks and Recreation Committee Co-chairperson on June 16, 2009).   He declined to leave the meeting and stayed throughout the meeting and did participate. [3]

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[3] Subsequent to the meeting INC asked to have all four people accepted as members of the Committee, but the Parks and Recreation Department turned down their request and held its original position of having only three representatives from INC on the Committee. INC responded to this by removing one of their other representatives from the Committee and leaving their Parks and Recreation Committee Co-chairperson as one of their three members of the Committee. By this action INC asserted its authority to decide who would represent them on the Committee and not the Parks and Recreation Department.

Make-up of the committee. Who were the 21 members of the External Stakeholder Committee and why were they chosen were two questions that came to my mind at this point in the process? Though the first question was answered by the introductions, the second question was left open until later in the process, when I had an opportunity to sit down with two of the Parks and Recreation Department staff who had been involved with the process and asked them how the Department had gone about selecting the Committee members.

The selection of the Committee members involved two different issues. The first issue the Parks and Recreation Department dealt with in selecting the members of the External Stakeholder Committee members was ensuring that all the entities that they believed had an interest in the outcome of the process were represented on the Committee. Besides representatives of the community at large, the Department identified three entities they believed needed to be represented on the Committee. They were the Denver City Council, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB), and Inter Neighborhood Cooperation (INC). The Department allocated one slot on the Committee to the City Council, two slots to the PRAB, and three slots to INC. The Department contacted the three entities, and requested they select people to fill their allocated slots on the Committee and inform the Department who they had selected. From the viewpoint of the Parks and Recreation Department this aspect of the selection of Committee members was simple and straightforward, but it was outside the control of the Department. It also opened the process up to being politicized, which was contrary to one of the goals of the City in its decision-making processes

Once the members of the External Stakeholder Committee from the three specific entities had been taken care of, the Parks and Recreation Department turned to the second issue which was the selection of the 15 at large members of the Committee. The Department did not select the at large members based on a random selection of people from the whole City population or even a random selection from the 926 people who had indicated a willingness to be on the Committee in the dog park survey (Dog Parks and Dog Off-Leash Master Plan Survey results, External Stakeholder Committee handout, June 2009). Instead they selected the at large members from the 926 interested and willing people based on their meeting certain characteristics. The Parks and Recreation Department staff was looking for what could be termed descriptive representation (Pitkin, 1967) of the public. That is they wished to have people on the Committee who represented the views, feelings and opinions of the public (Pitkin). They were trying to replicate the population they were interested in at a smaller scale. To achieve this the Department tried to ensure diversity in the Committee make-up by having people from all parts of the City, who had different views on dog parks and dogs in parks, and who represented a mix of socio-economic backgrounds. The goal of the Department was to achieve a diversity of insights, positions and views on the Committee that resembled the insights, positions and views of the population as a whole (Pitkin).

Though the Department said their goal was to have diversity and so representation of the population of the City in the membership of the Committee, by my observation of the Committee meetings they failed to meet their goal. In my opinion, the Committee was predisposed to be in favor of dogs in parks and to favor improving and adding to the

City's inventory of dog parks and off leash areas, because the group it had chosen from was predisposed this way. The Department had selected the 15 at large Committee members, who made up more than 70 percent of the Committee membership, from the dog park survey which was overwhelmingly weighted towards pro dog people, and had selected these members in a very deliberate manner that favored pro dog people.

It appeared the Parks and Recreation Department structured the Committee to favor dogs in parks and so make it more likely the Committee would agree with a Dog Park Master Plan that would call for more dog areas in parks and improvement of the existing dog parks. In addition, the intentional inclusion of representatives from the three entities who were the most powerful, interested entities concerned with the Plan could be seen as either an attempt to make sure the powerful interest in the City on the issue were represented in the process or it could have been a way of trying to co-opt these entities.

Description of the process to the committee. Once the introductions were concluded, the senior planner leading the meeting moved on to describe the process to the attendees at the meeting. Using a PowerPoint slide presentation he went over the goals of the process, the various groups and events that made up the process, and the chronology of events in the process. He divided the events into those that had already occurred and those that were still to occur.

The schedule for the Dog Park Master Plan process presented at the meeting was for a nine month process lasting from March through November 2009. The first three months of the process encompassing the survey, the selection of the various committees and work groups, and the start of the internal work group's work on the draft Plan had

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already been completed. The future schedule called for the internal work group to continue working on the Plan until August, and the External Stakeholder Committee to meet to review and comment on the Plan elements commencing with their second meeting in July and ending in September. The process was to be wrapped up with the public hearings on the Plan in September, October and November. The preparation and approval of the final Plan was scheduled for November 2009. This schedule didn't even hold for a full day, as later on that day of the meeting the senior planner sent out an email informing the Committee and interested parties on his mail list that the schedule would be extended and further details would be forthcoming (email from Parks and Recreation senior planner, June 11, 2010).

As part of the presentation on the process, the Parks and Recreation Department senior planner described the Department's view on the role of the External Stakeholder Committee in the process. He described the role of the Committee as being to review and comment on the Plan elements developed by the internal work group and point out missing actions or elements.

After covering the schedule and the roles of the various groups involved in the process, the senior planner mentioned the Department's wish to get one or more outside groups involved in the dog parks in the future by having them assist in the management and promotion of the dog parks. He said the Department saw this as an important component in making the dog parks viable in the City. He also mentioned the survey conducted in March and April, and emphasized the finding on people having their dogs

off leash in parks where it was not allowed to do so. It appeared to be significant to him that, by his measure, a large percentage of the population did this.

The discussion of the survey in the first meeting was very superficial and the actual survey results were not provided to the attendees until after the meeting in the form of a PDF attachment to an email sent later the day of the meeting to most of the attendees at the meetings. I was not on the original email and I had to ask for the email later on. This reinforced to me I was not recognized as an accepted attendee, but more of a tolerated interloper, in the meetings. It looked like I would be provided the information provided during the Dog Park Master Plan process on a need to know basis and after the fact.

With the process introduction completed, the senior planner opened the floor to question for the last half hour of the meeting. The Committee members asked questions and made comments about the process as they understood it, and the City staff responded to the questions and comments. The session appeared to be more of a way of continuing to get acquainted then to try and get any substantive answers to questions or resolve any issues. The meeting ended after an hour and a half with the announcement that the next meeting would be scheduled in about a month on or about July 13th.

The Role of the External Stakeholder Committee in the Process

In the first meeting of the External Stakeholder Committee the senior planner had made mention of the role the Committee would play in the Dog Park Master Plan process. In his introduction of the process the senior planner had characterized the role of the Committee as a sounding board which was there to provide feedback on the internally

developed elements of the Dog Park Master Plan. In discussions after the Committee meetings had ended the Parks and Recreation Department expanded on this characterization of the Committee's role by describing the Committee's role as:

> The external stakeholders committee was essentially developed to act as a sounding board to our planning process . . . as a way to sort of reach out to the public without holding public meetings, two or three public meetings throughout the process continually. It was an opportunity for us to sort of reach out and get that initial feedback before we actually went out to the bigger, the larger public body, to solicit some input on some of the recommendations that were being developed" (Interview of Parks and Recreation staff, May 2010).

The city did not look to the external stakeholders committee to develop any alternatives or to provide any input into what should be in the Plan. They looked to them solely as a body that was to help them refine the elements of the plan that the City's internal work group developed.

Though the view held by the Parks and Recreation Department on the role of the External Stakeholder Committee was conveyed reasonably well by the Department's senior planner at the first meeting, it did differ from the impression given in the announcements issued at the beginning of the process in March 2009. The March 2009 press release from the Department used words such as "Internal and *external* committees will provide *recommendations and help guide* the public process" (Denver Parks and Recreation Department Press Release forwarded by the Inter neighborhood Cooperation on March 16, 2009, emphasis added). Question 39 of the dog park survey used the words "advisory committee" in soliciting participants for the committee (Denver Parks and Recreation Dog Park Survey downloaded on March 19, 2009). The words used in the press release and the survey could be interpreted as conveying a more robust and active

role for the Committee in the process than just being a reviewer and provider of comments on the internally developed Dog Park Master Plan.

The language in the press release and the survey may have caused confusion on the part of the Committee members as to the role they would play in the Dog Park Master Plan process, or maybe they just had a different view of their role. In any case they had a different view of their role of the Committee members in the Dog Park Master Plan process, as was evidenced by the comments from the Committee members I interviewed. The members as residents of the City and dog people had a stake in the issue of dogs in parks. As such, they wished to have a say in the process and they saw it as their civic duty to participate in the process.

The way these sentiments were expressed in talking about the process varied, but the message and focus were clear. For example, in the introductions at the first meeting, one of the committee members gave as the reason she was involved was "she wanted to become more civically involved." Buffy[4], one of the committee members interviewed, said "I would just say just as a general citizen, having your, your two cents put in, you know."   Mark in describing why it was important for him to be on the committee, said "I was hoping to be an active voice of reason that would credibly address [the controversial issues present in the discourse on dog parks] and explore the merits of these issues." Alex said she was involved in the process because "I had something to say about how the dog parks, you know, were working and there were a lot of issues that I thought could be addressed, you know."

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[4] To protect the confidentiality of the participants in the interviews I conducted as part of the study, I have used pseudonyms for them when they are quoted in this document. This is in accordance with the IRB protocol approved for the study.

Bobbie captured both facets of the theme in saying ". . . feel like then you get a say in something . . ." and:

> I feel it is important to contribute to your community in some way and . . . I thought, you know, I've seen dog parks, I've participated in dog parks as a dog owner. I felt like, you know, it was good thing to do as a community member that has some level of education.

Jane in expressed her reasons for why she became involved as follows:

> I think having people who live in the different communities be able to provide feedback on what they think works and doesn't, um, is valuable and that was apparent during the [committee] process.

Jennifer touched on the civic engagement facet in her comment that she "just wanted to know more about the community and what was going on." Alex also expressed a view on being civically engaged when she said: "It was an opportunity to actually see how, you know, the process works, because I've never actually done anything like [be on a citizen committee] before."

Though the members of the Committee were certainly willing and interested in providing feedback on the City's plan elements, they saw their role as being more. From my observation of their words and actions in the Committee meetings, as well as the interviews I conducted with them as discussed in Chapter Six, I believe they saw their role as performing their right and duty to be involved in their community as "good" community citizens and to have their say on what they considered to be an important and, to some extent, controversial issue. They wanted to do more than just comment on the City's internally developed plan elements. The wanted to provide input in what should be included in the Dog Park Master Plan, to help develop the Plan elements, and to bring up issues that they believed needed to be addressed in the Plan.

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The disconnect in how the Committee's role was perceived was foretold by a comment from one of the Committee members at the first Committee meeting when he commented "he may be in the wrong place if the discussion of issues on dogs in parks dealt with by the Committee was going to be limited to the concept of dog parks put forth by the City." The mismatch in roles as seen by the City and the members of the External Stakeholder Committee present played into the dynamics of the Committee's meetings and so the Dog Park Master Plan process as the meetings went forward.

The Denver Parks and Recreation Dog Park Survey

In addition to the role of the Committee, the Parks and Recreation Department senior planner leading the Committee meetings had made reference to the Denver Parks and Recreation Dog Park Survey in the first Committee meeting. He did not go into any detail on the survey or its results, but he did introduce it and its results to the Committee. The survey had been the first step by the Parks and Recreation Department to gather input from the public and its purpose was, according to the March 2009 press release from the Parks and Recreation Department, to "allow citizens to provide insight and input on current and future off leash dog areas and dog parks in Denver."

The Denver Parks and Recreation dog park survey was available through a link on the Parks and Recreation Department web site in March and April 2009. Advertisement of the survey was done by the issuance of the March 2009 press release by the Parks and Recreation Department which was sent to the media and to interested groups in the City, as well as being announced on the Parks and Recreation Department web site. Media coverage of the survey and the Denver Dog Park Master Plan process at the time the

survey was available consisted of one short article (McPhee, 2009 March 22) on the third

page of the Denver and the West (Section B) section of *The Denver* Post, the general

circulation paper for Denver. There was no other media coverage of the survey during

the period it was available through the link on the Department's web site.

The survey collected input from the public by asking 44 questions which were a

mix of multiple-choice questions and questions which allowed for comments or

additional information related to one of the multiple-choice questions. The questions

covered a variety of topics and areas of interest to the Parks and Recreation Department

team for the Dog Park Master Plan process. There were four questions – questions 1

through 3 and question 44 – which asked demographic information. Questions 4 through

8 asked about peoples experience with dog parks both in Denver and outside the city.

Questions 9 through 15 asked about the experience of people with conflicts between dogs

and people in parks. Questions 16 through 21 and question 38 were about what people

wished for or were willing to accept in new dog parks and off-leash areas. Questions 22

and 23 asked about the perception of how well people controlled their dogs in parks.

Questions 24 through 37 asked about the usage patterns of people using parks with their

dogs. Questions 39 through 43 asked for information on the desire of people to

participate in various citizens' committees to be created as part of the Dog Park Master

Plan process. A copy of the survey showing all 44 actual questions is included as

Appendix B.

Over the course of the time period the survey was available through the Parks and

Recreation Department web site 3,742 responses were received (Dog Parks and Dog Off-

Leash Master Plan Survey results, External Stakeholder Committee handout, June 2009).

This according to the Department was a large number of responses for such a survey and

was a surprise to them (notes on External Stakeholder Committee meetings, June 2009).

Of the 3,742 response 926 (24.7 %) people indicated they would be interested in being on

the citizen advisory committee to be involved in the Dog Park Master Plan process.

Slightly more than 90 percent (3,395) of the respondents were in the 25 to 64 age group,

and only 560 had children under the age of 12 living in their household. Of the

respondents to the survey, 2, 983 or 79.9% of them identified as Caucasian , with 430

(11.4%) of the respondents not answering the question.

Of the people who responded to the survey there was a high percentage of people

who were aware of Denver's dog parks and who owned dogs. Of the 3,742 respondents

3,271 (87.4%) owned a dog, 3,200 (85.5%) were aware that Denver Parks had designated

fenced and unfenced dog parks, and 3,020 (80.7%) visited the Denver Parks with their

dogs. It was also noted by Denver Parks and Recreation in their discussion on the survey

during the course of the Dog Park Master Plan process that a significant number of

people (38.1%) of the respondents admitted to running their dogs off leash in an area of

the Denver Parks where this was illegal. It was obvious from the survey results the

responses to the survey were strongly weighted towards representing the views and

opinions of people who had a dog as part of their family and were users of Denver Parks

with their dogs.

The Parks and Recreation Department used the survey in two ways. The first was

to gather the names and contact information of people interested in participating in the

Dog Park Master Plan process through participation on the External Stakeholder

Committee and other committees the Department planned on forming as part of the

process. The Department did utilize the names collected in the survey for these purposes.

The second use of the survey data was to gather information on the views and

opinions of the citizens of Denver on dog parks and dogs in parks. The Department made

only limited use of this information in the process. It did provide the External

Stakeholder Committee members with the survey results after the first meeting of the

Committee. The Department did mention select results in the first meeting and a couple

of other meetings of the Committee, but did not in any meaningful way discuss the results

with the Committee or ask for the Committee's opinion or view of the results. The Parks

and Recreation Department included select results from the survey in its presentation at

the three public meetings and again in the final Dog Park Master Plan, but did not link the

results to what was contained in the Plan or discuss the results in a meaningful manner.

By my observations the Parks and Recreation Department to a large extent ignored the

results of the survey in the Dog Park Master Plan process. The survey was a non-event in

the Dog Park Master Plan process.

The Second Committee Meeting

On June 25th, ten days after the first meeting, the Parks and Recreation

Department senior planner who was charged with leading the Committee meetings sent

out an announcement that the second of the External Stakeholder Committee meetings

would be at 7:30 A. M. on July 15th in one of the small meeting rooms at the City's

Wellington Webb Building in downtown Denver. As I did throughout the process I

arrived early, found the room, and staked out a chair in the back corner of the room from which I could observe the meeting without being obvious. (In my observation of the Committee meetings, I always tried to stay in the background and to be circumspect so as to not cause friction with the City staff leading the meetings.)

The meeting began at 7:40 A. M. with most of the participants there. As became the routine in all of the Committee's meetings, people straggled in over the next thirty minutes. It was never clear whether the people who were late, and it wasn't consistent who was late, had encountered a problem getting to the meeting or if they just didn't care they came late to the meeting. In either case, it didn't seem to cause any problem in the meetings and appeared to be of no concern to the senior planner leading the meetings, as he never mentioned anything about it in the meetings.

The meeting room set up. The first meeting had been held at a recreation center, and this meeting was held at the Wellington Webb Building, one of the main City office buildings located in the civic center area of downtown Denver. The room where the meeting was held was on the south side of the building on the fourth floor among a series of meeting rooms located in the section of the building south across the building atrium from the large meeting rooms where public hearings were normally held on administrative rulemaking and board and commission matters. The room was in a section of the building that was out of the main traffic flow and somewhat secluded. If you didn't know where you were going you would have trouble finding the room.

The layout of the room was a typical layout for a meeting room. The tables were arranged in a square with chairs around the outside of the square.   There were also a few

chairs, no more than three or four, along the wall of the room away from the tables. The senior planner leading the meetings had put out name cards for the Committee members on three sides of the square, and he and his assistant, as well as the other two or three City staff active in the meetings, took chairs along the fourth side of the square of tables closest to the entrance to the room.

I noted that though the senior planner had not said anything previous to the meeting or at this meeting about people having to sit where their name card was placed, people as they came into the room sat where their name card was instead of picking up the card and moving to a different place. I took this as an example of how we have been trained to follow the directions of people we perceive as authority figures.

The meeting itself. Though this was the second meeting of the Committee, it was the start of actual work of the Committee. , namely to review and comment on the elements which would make up the Dog Park Master Plan. In this meeting the Parks and Recreation Department senior planner introduced the first two elements of the Plan – fenced dog parks and the policies and fees for dog parks and off leash areas in the Denver park system.

As he had done in the first meeting, the senior planner began the meeting by having everyone in attendance introduce themselves. He then reviewed the process to be followed in the Committee's portion of the Dog Park Master Plan process again. This was the last time this occurred in a Committee meeting

Once the introductions and review of the process was completed, the senior planner set the tone for the discussion to come both for that day's meeting, and the

meetings to come, by emphasizing the Parks and Recreation Department was looking for a balance in the elements of the Dog Park Master Plan that would emerge from the development process for the Plan. The senior planner emphasized that the City wanted to see a product that balanced changes in policy on dog parks, with better enforcement methods, with involvement by non-City organizations in partnership with the City to improve and expand the dog park system. The senior planner closed his discussion on this subject by again emphasizing the goal was to have balance in the process and the Plan, as well as mentioning a number of cities he believed were good examples to be emulated in developing the Plan.

With the introduction of the attendees, review of the process, and the call for balance in the process out of the way, the senior planner introduced the first of the specific issues to be discussed by the Committee–adding additional off-leash areas to the system.   The senior planner listed the three alternatives for obtaining addition off-leash areas which the internal work group considered viable. They were:

- The City adding additional fenced dog parks[5]

- Developers or non-City groups building dog parks and then donating them to the City

- Designate off leash areas within parks which could be used during designated time periods

The senior planner then opened the floor to comments and feedback on the three alternatives by the Committee members and the City staff present.

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[5] In the Dog Park Master Plan process there was differentiation made between "dog parks" and "off leash areas." Dog parks were fenced areas set aside for the exclusive use of people and their dogs at any time. Off leash areas were designated, unfenced areas within a park which could be used by people to play with or exercise with their dogs off leash during certain times but were used by other park users for other acceptable parks uses during other times.

Instead of limiting their discussion to comments and feedback on the three alternatives presented, the Committee members focused their discussion on the idea embedded in the second alternative of organizations other than the City developing or sponsoring new dog parks. In particular the members focused on the option included in the alternative of allowing the organizations to advertise in or name the dog parks. This idea was discouraged by the City staff present due to the sensitivity of the issue of advertising in parks at the time. The senior planner said the idea was not something that could be pursued at the time and so the Committee needed to drop the idea and move on to other items which needed to be discussed.

Though most of the Committee members didn't know it, their discussion on advertising at dog parks had intersected with the ongoing controversy surrounding the question on allowing advertising in parks, which was currently focused around the placement of dog waste bag receptacles in parks by a commercial entity (Davis, April 2009; Denver Post Editorial, August 2009; Plaven, May 2009; INC Parks and Recreation Committee Emails, 2009). The Parks and Recreation Department staff present didn't want to pursue the issue of sponsorship and advertising for new dog parks and so add further to the controversy.

With the issue of sponsorship of dog parks taken off the table for discussion by the Committee, the senior planner moved the discussion on to input from the Committee on where dog parks should be located in the City. Instead of limiting themselves to where they would like to see new dog parks established, the Committee members began to discuss what size dog parks should be, what facilities were needed in a dog parks,

locations of dog parks, and the materials to be used in dog parks. The senior planner

acknowledged the issues, but said they were issues the internal work group would address

and the Committee needed to limit its discussion to possible locations for new dog parks

by providing input on the criteria that should be considered in choosing the locations.

Though the senior planner tried to refocus the Committee members to the

discussion of criteria and ideals for the number and location of dog parks in the City, the

Committee instead began a discussion of maintaining the dog parks that currently existed

and would be constructed in the future. This discussion led to discussing the idea of

partnerships and education, and ended with one of the Committee members bringing up

the issue of the hazards of dog waste and the conflicts that were occurring between dog

people and non-dog people in parks over this issue and other issues. This led the

Committee into a discussion about the role of the issue of conflicts between dogs and

people in considering where off-leash areas should be located in parks. As with the

discussion about specifics on dog park form and function the senior planner deferred this

issue to another forum and time.

Finally the senior planner got the Committee focused on the types of locations

that might be considered for dog parks, but this discussion was short lived. After a short

time the senior planner ended the discussion on locations for dog parks and moved the

meeting discussion on to funding of maintenance of the dog parks and improving the

level of responsibility shown by park users for maintaining dog parks.

The discussion on maintenance funding and responsibility of users took the form

of a discussion on the consideration of dog licensing and user fees as sources of funding,

and the issue of the effectiveness of peer pressure and education on gaining compliance by dog park users with the recognized standards of behavior required of them. This led into a discussion on enforcement of the rules and ordinances on dogs and specifically dogs in the City parks, and how this fit in with the issue of maintaining and paying for dog parks. Though the discussion went on for a significant time period, it was broad in nature and no consensus on specific ideas or actions was reached. At the end of the discussion on the issues, the senior planner as he wrapped up at the end of the meeting again emphasized the Committee was not responsible for coming up with specific proposals, but was just being asked to provide input on what the Department or the internal work group should consider in developing the elements of the Dog Park Master Plan dealing with the issues.

The second meeting of the External Stakeholder Committee was concluded. It had taken the allotted hour and a half. However, it had not moved the development of the Dog Park Master Plan forward to any significant degree. The discussion on the elements of the Plan had been very high level and of a general nature. It was still early in the process and it appeared the Parks and Recreation Department was not ready to present detailed information on the Plan elements to the Committee at this stage in the process.

Though it was still early in the Dog Park Master Plan process and I had only attended two meetings of the Committee, I left the meeting with the feeling the Parks and Recreation Department had an agenda for the meetings. They appeared to have a list of items they wished to cover in the meeting and they weren't going to let the Committee deviate from it. I had noted that every time the Committee started to get into an issue the

senior planner had not put before them, or the Committee got into discussion on specific ideas, actions and solutions to problems, the senior planner cut off the discussion. The Department definitely appeared intent on limiting the Committee's role to being solely a provider of feedback on internally developed items.

The Protectors and Defenders Begin to Stir

In the 35 days between the second and third meetings of the External Stakeholder Committee I attended two meetings of the Inter Neighborhood (INC) Parks and Recreation Committee. Though the primary focus of the two meetings was issues other than the Dog Park Master Plan, the Plan did come up for discussion in the meetings.

In the two meetings one of the three Inter Neighborhood Cooperation representatives on the External Stakeholder Committee, who was one of the Co-Chairman of the INC Parks and Recreation Committee, briefed the attendees on where the External Stakeholder Committee meetings stood as to schedule and issues being discussed. He brought up for discussion with the attendees at the INC Parks and Recreation Committee meeting the statement from the Parks and Recreation Department senior planner that all the interested parties represented in the Committee were in agreement with charging fees for dog parks. The Co-chairperson said he had objected to this characterization and had repeated the position that Inter Neighborhood Cooperation disagreed with charging fees for dog parks. From the discussion among the attendees at the meeting, there appeared to be consensus among the attendees at the meeting that the chairman should push this position at the External Stakeholder Committee meetings and gather more information on costs for the dog parks.

Underlying and influencing the discussion at the INC Parks and Recreation Committee meeting there appeared to be a belief on the part of the attendees that they had to defend the parks from the City's misguided policies and actions that were threatening the quality and usability of the City's parks. They exhibited the posture at the meeting that they were engaged in a battle with the City over the parks and needed to be ever vigilant to any action by the City that would be detrimental to the City parks. They were exhibiting the characteristics that had led me to label them the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks.

There were also indications and outright statements from the attendees that they were considering action outside the Park and Recreation Department's public engagement process to influence or prevent actions and policies by the Parks and Recreation Department they disagreed with. This was my first indication people were organizing and working behind the scenes and outside the normal public engagement channels to influence the policies and actions of the Department. It was evident this group of people took as their role to follow the Dog Park Master Plan process and, if needed, to take action to protect and defend the City's parks from the inclusion of any elements in the Plan they believed to be a threat to the parks.

The Third Committee Meeting

The third meeting of the External Stakeholder Committee was held on August 19, 2010, about a month after the second meeting. Unlike the first two meetings of the Committee this one was held in a commercial location, the REI store in the Platte River Valley section of the City, and was in the evening.

I arrived at the REI store well before the meeting was scheduled to begin at 7:00

P. M., so I occupied myself while waiting by wandering around the store. About 6:45

P.M. I made my way upstairs to the top floor of the store where the room where the

meeting was to be held was located. There were three or four other people gathered near

the door to the room waiting for someone to arrive and let them into the room, so I joined

the group. Mark, one of the Committee members, left his wife who had accompanied

him to the meeting, and approached me and asked what I thought of the meetings so far.

I answered him in as much of a noncommittal manner as possible that I didn't have an

opinion on the meetings yet, and was just absorbing them at this stage in my research.

With that our conversation ended and he returned to where his wife was standing.

Shortly after the brief conversation with Mark, the Parks and Recreation

Department staff conducting the meeting arrived with a store employee. The store

employee unlocked the door and those of us gathered outside the room and the Parks and

Recreation staff members entered the room. This saved me from any more questions

from Mark or other Committee members about what I thought about the meetings, so far,

and their structure.

The setting. Upon entering the room I noted it was a rather large room that

obviously was intended for meetings or similar events. There were a number of tables

arranged in a U shape in the middle of the room with chairs on the outside of the U.

There was a counter with a sink and cupboards on one side of the room where you could

set out refreshments. As with the other Committee meetings there were no refreshments

provided and so this area of the room went unused during the meeting. The walls were

mostly bare, except for a couple of display boards and a large topographic map of the

front range of the Rocky Mountains.

Shortly after entering the room the Parks and Recreation Department senior

planner leading the Committee meetings enlisted the people present to help him rearrange

most of the tables into a large rectangle with chairs around it, more or less in the middle

of the room. This is where the Committee members, the senior planner, his assistant, and

the Director of Park Planning would sit. The rest of us took seats at the few tables which

had not been used to make the rectangle for the Committee.

The senior planner placed a large map in the center of the rectangle of tables

where the Committee and the others who were expected to participate in the meeting

were seated. The map showed the existing and planned dog parks in the City and County

of Denver and surrounding communities with two rings around each of the dog parks

within the City showing the one mile and two mile distance from the dog parks. He also

distributed to the Committee members a handout with the agenda for the Committee

process, a copy of the map, and a listing of proposed policy elements for the Dog Park

Master Plan. Those of us not seated with the Committee were not expected or invited to

participate in the meeting, and so, did not receive a copy of the handout; nor could we

easily see the map or participate in the meeting discussions.

Setting up the discussion for the evening. With most of the Committee

members who were going to attend the meeting present the senior planner began the

meeting at 7:10 P. M.[6] He started off by stating the focus of the meeting would be to

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[6] A few members always came in late, and there never was a meeting where all the 21 Committee members attended. There were always a few members absent and some of the original 21 members never came to a

continue on with the issues introduced at the second meeting of the Committee and would

concentrate on the internal work group's recommendation on the locating of new dog

parks and the policies for dog parks.

Before beginning the discussion on the first item for discussion by the Committee,

locations for new dog parks and what should be the proximity of new dog parks to

existing dog parks, the senior planner provided some information and comments to frame

the issue of building new dog parks. His first comment was that there was no money in

the current budget, nor was it likely there would be much money in the budget in the near

future, for building new dog parks in the City parks. Therefore, he saw there being two

possibilities for how the demand for areas where people could have their dogs off leash

could be met. The first of these was to establish off leash areas in existing parks. Unlike

current dog parks such areas would be areas designated within a park where dogs could

be off leash, but such areas would not be fenced or have any amenities commonly found

at a dog park. The second idea was to look into having private concerns develop new,

fenced dog parks with amenities.

Having presented the funding limitations issue and two alternatives for addressing

it, the senior planner presented some data from the dog park survey conducted in March

and April 2009. The data showed that people considered the existing dog parks to be

somewhere between poor and excellent in quality, and that they desired new dog parks

and were willing to pay a fee for them.

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meeting. The senior planner just began the meetings when he thought he had enough of the Committee
members present to justify starting the meeting.

I never understood why the senior planner presented the data as it did not seem to fit or add any value to the tone and direction of the discussion held in the meeting. I guess it was just information he wished the Committee to take note of.

Discussion on new dog parks. With the issue of new dog parks framed the way he wished it to be, the senior planner then referred the members of the External Stakeholder Committee to the large map in the center of them, and to the copy of the map in the handout provided them at the beginning of the meeting. The senior planner began his comments by telling the Committee members the two rings around the dog parks shown on the map were the one and two mile service radius for the park.

The senior planner explained the Parks and Recreation Department considered the two mile radius circle to be the distance someone would be willing to travel to use a dog park, and so, they therefore had adopted the two mile radius as the service radius they would aim for in selecting new dog park locations. The map was designed to help in identifying gaps in coverage of the City, by showing what areas were not currently within two miles of an existing or already planned dog park.

When the senior planner opened the meeting to discussion of the map and gaps in coverage, the Committee member began their discussions with enthusiasm and engagement. The discussion on the two mile radius began with immediate objections to the radius. The objections all focused on the two mile distance being too large. One of the first objections raised was the two mile radius doesn't fit with urban areas such as the central section of the City where the map showed a gap. The Committee believed the standard of traveling two miles to use a dog park did not take into account the fact that

people in the denser areas of the City preferred to walk to a park with their dog and not drive.

The Parks and Recreation Department staff members present acknowledged a smaller service radius would be nice and certainly was reasonable, but they said this would require increased maintenance, which the Department was not in a position to provide under the anticipated budget constraints. Undeterred, the Committee members continued to argue against the two mile limit, and continued to emphasize that if a dog park was more than a comfortable walking distance people would not use the dog park, and two miles was more than a comfortable walking distance.

The Parks and Recreation Department staff members countered the argument by stating the objective of the process was not to meet the needs of everyone to have a dog park within a comfortable walking distance from their home, but was to provide more areas people and their dogs could use.

In response one of the Committee members pointed out that even if you went with the two mile radius there would not be coverage to the more densely populated areas such as the Washington Park area, as the City was not going to add a dog park or off leash area in that section of the City. So, as the member saw it the Department was not going to provide adequate coverage of the City by the dog parks it planned to be establish even if it adopted the two mile travel distance proposed. The member argued for providing coverage to all sections of the City where it was needed, no matter what travel distance was selected as the goal.

The senior planner took advantage of the introduction of specific areas needing coverage to move the discussion on to the five specific sites for new dog parks recommended by the internal work group shown in the handout. The Committee members brought up various objections and concerns, both current and in the past, they had with parks five parks proposed. The Parks and Recreation Department staff said they did not believe any of the objections or concerns were reasons that would prevent using the proposed parks as sites for dog parks, and so would continue to consider the proposed parks as sites for future dog parks.

With specific locations for dog parks open to discussion the members of the External Stakeholder Committee took the initiative to expand the discussion on sites beyond the five sites listed in the handout. Various members of the Committee brought up parks and other City land not on the list in the handout that might be considered in the process. The Parks and Recreation Department staff dismissed the sites brought up by the Committee members due to concerns such as uncertainties about the availability of the sites for use as a dog park, conflicts with other uses of the sites, environmental concerns in using the sites as a dog park, or that the Department did not see a need for a dog park in an area the Department saw as already adequately covered by another dog park.

The discussion on sites wrapped up with suggestions from members for consideration of school lands in the City and an inquiry why there were no sites being considered in the southwest section of the City. The schools lands were dismissed by the senior planner based on the difficulties in coordinating with Denver Public Schools and

issues that come with using school lands. The Parks and Recreation Department staff

responded that no southwest sites were being considered because there did not appear to

be an unmet need in the area. They guessed the need for dog parks was met by adjoining

cities or regional parks in the area. They said, however, they would consider putting an

off leash area in one of the parks in the southwest section of the City.

     Discussion on policy. At 7: 55 P. M., with 35 minutes left in the allotted time for

the meeting, the senior planner changed the focus of the Committee discussions to the

Draft Dog Park and Off-Leash Policy elements in the handout. The senior planner started

down the list of five policy items listed on the handout starting with the first item--

entrance to and usage of dog parks and off leash areas.

     With the introduction of the item, one of the Committee members representing

Inter Neighborhood Cooperation (INC), whom I will call Fred, raised an objection to the

idea of having a special tag for use of dog parks and off leash areas. Fred said he

believed it would be more efficient and yield more money to increase the level of

licensing of dogs in the City instead of imposing a new requirement to purchase a special

tag for use of dog parks and off leash areas. (This was the view on the issue held by the

INC Parks and Recreation Committee as expressed at their meetings I had attended.)

     The Committee built on the comment of the INC representative in their discussion

of the proposal that special tags be required to use a dog park or off leash area in a City

park. As part of the discussion the Parks and Recreation staff present said the internal

work group had discussed the special tag requirement and believed that this would result

in more people licensing their dogs in the City since to obtain the tag would require proof of a dog license.

In the midst of this discussion the Committee requested cost and revenue projections for the tag idea. The senior planner deferred the subject by expressing the preference of the Department that the Committee limit its discussions to the policy items for dog parks and off leash areas for now and then look into the cost and revenue projections later in the process.

With the subject of cost and revenue projections taken off the table by the senior planner, the Committee took up the next issue in the handout-- designating the fees collected for use of dog parks and off leash areas for the maintenance of the areas and enforcement of the rules. The idea did not generate much discussion and so the Committee discussion quickly moved back to the issue of charging fees for use of dog parks and off leash areas. Fred again objected to having a special tag for using a dog park or an off leash area instead of just getting the funding for the parks from the dog licensing fees. The Committee member from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board responded to the objection by saying a separate fee was needed because dog parks are a privilege and so the fee for them should be separate from the licensing of the dog. Also, there was the issue of people who don't use the dog parks but do license their dogs paying for dog parks they don't use, which wouldn't be fair.

With little time remaining, the senior planner ended the discussion on tags and fees and began to go over the last three policy items in the handout. As the senior planner went through the three items, Committee members would raise questions on the

policy items. There was not much discussion allowed on any one item, but as the question arose the Parks and Recreation staff answered the questions in an abbreviated manner, or deferred the answering of the question to a later date or another forum, so as to allow all three of the policy items to be covered in the meeting before it ended at 8:35 P.M.

My reflections. After the meeting a number of thoughts came to mind as I reflected on what had occurred in the meeting. The External Stakeholder Committee had now held three meetings and was two months into their portion of the Dog Park Master Plan process. I noted two trends that were developing in the conduct of the meetings. First, as I had noted in the second Committee meeting, the Parks and Recreation Department members at the meetings were very much leading the meetings and they were leading the meetings to comply with the agenda the Department had for the meetings. If the Committee deviated from the items or issues they wished discussed at the meeting, they stepped in and quickly brought the Committee back to the items or issues they wished discussed. If the Committee raised an issue the Department did not wish to discuss in the Committee meetings, the Department stopped the discussion by saying they would refer the issue to the appropriate forum which was not the Committee. If an item or issue was raised before the Parks and Recreation Department was ready to hold discussions on it in the Committee, they deferred the item or issue to a later date. The Department was establishing its control over the pace and conduct of the meetings and they were not going to let the Committee control the Committee meetings.

Second I noted the senior planner, from the statements he made in the meeting, determined consensus among the Committee members on issues discussed in the meeting based on his perception there was agreement and not by a vote or positive statement from the Committee members to that effect. If he believed there was consensus that was good enough for him, a case of authoritative interpretation (Barber, 2003).

Besides noting the two trends, I concluded that though a lot of discussion had occurred in the meeting, not much had been decided. Though the framework of a plan was emerging, it was not possible to tell from what occurred in the meeting what was going to be included in the Dog Park Master Plan. It appeared to me the City was still in the initial stages of developing the Plan, and so, was not ready to present any definitive elements to the Committee at this time.

The Fourth Committee Meeting

A few weeks after the third meeting of the External Stakeholder Committee I received notice for the fourth meeting. The notice informed all of us involved in the Committee meetings that the next Committee meeting was to be held from 7:30 A.M. to 9:00 A. M. on September 22, 2009 in one of the meeting rooms on the fourth floor of the City's Wellington Webb Building in downtown Denver. So, we were going back to the site of the second meeting and back to a morning meeting, which became the site and time of the Committee meetings for the rest of the Committee process.

I wondered if there was any significance to the change back to morning meetings at the Wellington Webb Building. Though nothing was said at a Committee meeting, in a later discussion with the senior planner leading the Dog Park Master Plan

process it came out that he had not been satisfied with the attendance at the third meeting held in the evening at a non-City site and so had decided to move the meetings back to the morning and hold them in City facilities. He had been led to believe by the Committee members that an evening meeting would be better for their schedules and so they would be more likely to attend meetings held in the evenings. When the attendance at the third meeting was not good in the opinion of the senior planner, he decided to move the meetings back to the morning which would be more convenient for the City staff and in his opinion would yield as good of attendance as a less convenient time and location as was the case in the third meeting.

As always I arrived at least ten minutes before the announced time for the meeting to start and found a seat in the back of the room. As with the previous Committee meetings held at the Wellington Webb Building, the room was set up with a large square of tables in the middle of the room with chairs arranged around the outside of the square, and a few chairs away from the tables against the side and back walls of the room.   People not on the Committee arriving after the chairs along the the walls were taken went to nearby meeting rooms and brought a chair back to the room to use. The senior planner and his assistant took seats at the front of the room near the entrance to the room and set up a computer and video projector to show PowerPoint slides.   The senior planner and his assistant put out name tags for the Committee members around the other three sides of the square of tables. This became the standard for the set-up of the room for all subsequent Committee meetings.

The Parks and Recreation Department senior planner started the meeting at 7:40 A. M. with five of the 21 External Stakeholder Committee members, him and his assistant, me, and one other observer present. The meeting began with the senior planner reviewing what had been discussed at the previous meetings and then asking for feedback on these items covered. One of the Committee members, Mark, brought up his concern with health, safety and sustainability issues with dogs in parks and pointed out the list of issues being considered in the Dog Park Master Plan did not include these issues. The senior planner referred to the item on fines and liability and the senior planner's assistant mentioned the item on design of dog parks as covering the issues on health, safety and sustainability. That ended the discussion of Mark's concerns for the time being.

Discussions on specific parks. With the issue of health, safety and sustainability deferred for the time being, the senior planner moved the discussion to consideration of four specific parks being considered for new dog parks introduced in the previous meeting. The senior planner first addressed Garland Park, one of the City's parks located in the southeast section of the City and in an area the internal work group considered did not have adequate coverage. This park had been identified by the internal work group as one of the parks they preferred as the site for a dog park. By referring to an aerial photograph of the park projected on the screen at the front of the room, the senior planner indicated the three areas in the parks which were being considered for the site of a dog park, and indicated which of the sites in the park the internal work group was recommending. One of the Committee members responded that he preferred another

of the sites in the park which was closer to the street and more visible and with better access.

With the issue of site characteristics opened up, the Committee began to discuss what characteristics they preferred for dog park sites. One of the Committee members brought up the need to have screening trees around dog parks, which was met by a challenge from another member disputing the need for screening. This led the Committee members into a discussion on the need for screening trees around dog parks both to provide shade and to screen the dog park from surrounding areas. The senior planner closed out the discussion on the issue of screening trees and the specific sites in Garland Park by acknowledging the issue and stating the City understood the issue and the maintenance issues that come with it.

The senior planner presented the next park, Cook Park, for discussion. Cook Park had been included with Garland Park as parks in the southeast section of the City to be considered as a site for a new dog park in the in the previous meeting, but was not a preferred park. There were a number of sites under consideration in Cook Park. (At 8:00 A. M. well into the discussion on the park another Committee members showed up and he had to catch up with the discussion as best he could.) The issue of insufficient trees at one of the sites in Cook Park was raised by the member who had previously objected to not having sufficient trees to screen the dog park in Garland Park. The issue of the sites being small and so not suitable for dog parks was raised as well. The discussion on Cook Park and the possible dog park sites in it was short lived and the Committee discussions were moved on to the next park.

The senior planner presented the third park, Harvard Gulch Park, which would provide coverage for a different area of the City than Cook or Garland Parks. There were various sites within the park being considered but one was preferred over the others due to a lack of conflicts with other park uses. One of the Committee members objected to the preferred site due to a concern with the high grass present in the area. The member also pointed out that the park had been removed from consideration as a dog park site when the original six dog parks were established as part of the pilot program in the 1990s. He also brought up the issue of dog waste as he had done previously. One of the Park and Recreation Department staff present stated the objection in the past to the park had been based on its use for police dog and service dog training and the park was no longer used for these purposes. (Between 8:10 A. M. and 8:15 A. M. during the discussion on Harvard Gulch Park another Committee member and two more parks and recreation staff joined the meeting, and as before, they were left to catch up with the discussion on their own.) Various issues were raised by members of the Committee with Harvard Gulch Park, but none seemed to catch on as issues needing more than a brief discussion among the Committee members or the City staff present.

With the end of the discussion on Harvard Gulch Park, the Committee moved on to the fourth park under consideration for a new dog park, Veterans Park. The senior planner referred to the map projected on the screen at the front of the meeting room showing the gaps in the coverage by dog parks. (This was the map that had been introduced at the previous Committee meeting.) The senior planner explained that Veterans Park was preferred over Harvard Gulch Park by the internal work group

because it provided better coverage for the denser urban areas of the City. An idea was floated in the meeting to choose both parks for new dog parks. This idea didn't gain any traction in the meeting and so died out quickly. (This was the first of a number of times in the Committee meetings that the idea of choosing all the areas under consideration instead of just one or two came up. The idea was never accepted by the City staff.) One of the Department staff raised the concern that the neighbors to Veterans Park did not wish to have a dog park in the park. A few members responded that this would not be the case, as people saw dog parks as a desirable use of parks. The senior planner closed out the discussion on Veterans Park and specific dog parks as a subject of discussion at this point.

Observation on the discussion on parks. The discussion on the four specific parks being considered for dog park sites was the first indication of the formation of an element of the Dog Park Master Plan. Though the rest of the Plan was vague, the Parks and Recreation Department appeared to have narrowed down where future fenced dog parks would be.

I noted in reflecting on the discussion on specific parks for new dog park, that in one portion of the discussions the Committee was concerned with screening dog parks to mitigate the impact on the park's neighbors to address the perceived reluctance of people to have a dog park in their neighborhood park, while in another portion of the discussion the objection to one of the parks based on the reluctance of neighbors was dismissed by the Committee. The dismissal was based on the assertion that people found

dog parks to be a desirable use of a park. This espousing of opposing views I found interesting.

I made a second observation that none of the parks suggested by the Committee members in the third meeting of the Committee were included in the list of parks the internal working group was recommending for new dog park sites. Only parks recommended by the internal work group which had been presented at the previous meeting were presented and discussed at this the fourth meeting of the Committee. This lack of inclusion of input from the Committee members I took as evidence the Parks and Recreation Department had no intention of allowing the Committee to have any input to the Dog Park Master Plan process other than to comment on the materials they presented to it. They were abiding by their role as the "experts."

Moving on to policy. At 50 minutes into the meeting the senior planner moved the discussion on to policy issues. The first policy issued raised was the recommendation to require the purchase of a tag for the use of dog parks and off leash areas. A general challenge to this requirement was raised concerning enforcement. The Committee member who was a veterinarian supported enlisting the veterinarians in the Denver area to help enforce the requirement. She saw a possibility of having veterinarians help in the education of the public on the requirement to license dogs and to disseminate information on dog parks and the rules for their use. The City's Director of Animal Care and Control, who had been participating in the Committee meetings, responded that the veterinarians in the past had not been interested in helping on such

issues. This led into a general discussion among the Committee and City staff about looking into engaging the veterinarians on the issue, but it led nowhere.

Once the discussion on the engagement of the veterinarians subsided, Fred, one of the three Inter Neighborhood Cooperation members, spoke up and reiterated his position against the requirement for the tag and a fee to use dog parks and off leash areas. The thrust of his objection was that the requirement would exclude the people who couldn't pay the fee from using the dog parks and off leash areas, and this would be unfair.   He followed his objection by calling for data on the costs and benefits of the tag requirement. Fred concluded his remarks by asserting that it would be better and more effective to increase licensing of dogs in general and divert the additional money raised to the dog parks rather than adopting the tag requirement for use of the dog parks and off leash areas.

In response to Fred's comments other members said they saw no connection between the fee for use of the dog parks and off leash areas and the licensing of dogs in the City. They saw the fee as being a means to spread the responsibility to pay for the dog parks among the users of dog parks, and that a separate fee would ensure money was specifically collected to pay for the dog parks and off leash areas. The consensus seemed to be that there was a need for money to construct and maintain dog parks and off leash areas and the fee is the preferred way to get the money.

As the discussion on fees and tags progressed, the member who was a veterinarian raised the issue of having corporations or other organizations sponsor dog parks. The Committee discussed this idea with the Parks and Recreation Department

staff present who went over the requirements for sponsorship of a park by an outside entity. The discussion on sponsorships led into a Committee member raising the idea of volunteers in the dog parks and off leash areas and their receiving a discount on the fee for use of the dog parks and off leash area.

The Parks and Recreation Department Director of Park Planning took over the discussion and moved it back to discussion of the request from Fred for a cost benefit analysis on the tag requirement. He said an analysis was being worked on and would be provided later. He built on this statement by asking the Committee members if they had any input on how the money from the tag fee should be distributed to cover the costs of building and maintaining dog parks and off leash areas. A few members provided input on where they would distribute the money collected from the tag fee, but there was no agreement reached on where the money raised through the tag fee should be distributed. The discussion on the tag fee ended with Fred coming back to the cost and benefits of the requirement and raising the issue of the difficulties in enforcement of the tag requirement and other rules and requirements related to the use of the dog parks and off leash areas.

The discussion then turned to gathering ideas on how to gain compliance with the rules and requirements of the dog parks and off leash areas. Enforcement by the City was the first action addressed by the Committee. One of the members of the Committee brought up the fact that the City currently couldn't enforce the prohibition of dogs being off leash outside a dog park and questioned how the City would enforce any new rules or requirements, or provide enforcement in new areas. The senior planner stopped the discussion on compliance at this point and moved on to other policy issues.

Discussing off leash areas. The next policy item—policies for off leash areas—was then introduced to Committee for the first time. One of the members of the External Stakeholder Committee brought up some research he had gathered from the internet on how New York City handled the hours for their off leash areas. This was followed on by one of the Parks and Recreation Department staff who described several ideas he had gathered on off leash areas and how these might be applied in the City's parks. He ended his presentation on the matter by asking that the discussion on off leash areas at this time be limited to off leash areas in general and not cover specific proposed parks at this time. This led to a Committee member cautioning against just talking about the Dog Park Master Plan and never actually implementing anything in it. He asked what the schedule for implementation would be. This was deferred to the end of the meeting.

With the discussion on examples of off leash areas in other cities and the schedule for implementation of the Plan put aside for now, a Committee member brought up his concern that there would be a lack of enforcement in the off leash areas during off peak hours. This led the Committee into a discussion on people educating and encouraging others to be compliant with standards of conduct in the dog parks and off leash areas by commenting on and modeling proper behavior. Another member of the Committee stressed a need for consistency in the standards and in how they are enforced.

Without resolving anything on enforcement, the discussion on off leash areas then shifted to who should have a say about in which parks an off leash area could be established. Mark, who was both a Committee member and neighborhood activists

allied with the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks grouping, said he believed

neighborhoods organizations should be given the choice of whether they get a dog park

or off leash area in their neighborhood park. He would encourage the interested parties to

work together on deciding where off leash areas should go. This was objected to by one

of the Parks and Recreation Department staff because in his experience someone in a

neighborhood would always object to having a dog park or off leash area in their

neighborhood park and so consensus to establish a new dog park or off leash area would

never be reached.   Mark responded that the neighborhoods and not the Parks and

Recreation Department should have the final say on whether a park gets an off leash area.

Fred jumped into the discussion at this point to support Mark's position, and asserted that

the reason he supported Mark's position was that neighborhood organizations represent

the people in their neighborhoods.

From the discussion on who needed to be part of the discussions on

establishing dog parks in specific parks and who should make the decision on such

questions, the Committee moved on to discuss how broad based the rollout of off leash

areas in parks should be. Parks and Recreation's proposal to limit the initial number of

off leash areas to just a small pilot project was met with some resistance. There appeared

to be a preference in the Committee to just make a decision and implement it instead of

trying a pilot and then make a decision on expanding the number of off leash areas. Mark

objected to allowing off leash areas in all parks. Parks and Recreation ended the

discussion on the extensiveness of the initial rollout of off leash areas by deferring it until

later.

The Committee next addressed issues of unfenced areas used by dogs. Mark brought up his continuing concern about dog waste in areas frequented by dogs in the parks and the hazard this presented to people using the parks. Many of the Committee members resisted Mark's objection indicating they had heard enough about the waste issue and didn't wish to hear anymore. Continuing the conversation, another member suggested that the use of parkways by dog walkers be considered. This was acknowledged as a positive suggestion by the Parks and Recreation Department staff.

Fred, who had shown himself as one of the more vocal Committee members closed out the conversation on the off leash areas in parks by commenting there was only one area in his neighborhood park that would be suitable for this use. He concluded his remarks by building on Mark's comments on dog waste by calling for a requirement that off leash areas be cleaned up after the end of their use by dogs before use by the public is allowed. As time was running out, the senior planner said he would take action to continue the conversation outside the meeting, probably on-line. I never saw any evidence that this occurred at least involving all of the Committee members and interested parties.

As the meeting wrapped up the senior planner called for people to provide input on where the money from the fee for the "privilege" of using the dog parks and off leash areas should be allocated. A member of the Committee reiterated her request that the City differentiate between off leash and out of control in their schedule of fines. The Parks and Recreation Department staff said they would consider the request. Without further discussion on these two items the meeting ended at 9:20 A. M. and the Committee

members quickly exited the meeting room to get on their way to their jobs and other commitments. The meeting had run over its allotted time by 20 minutes. I gathered up my stuff and after saying goodbye to the senior planner exited the room and proceeded back to my home to continue my other work for the day.

Observations about the meeting. The senior planner commented later in the process about what he considered to be a poor turnout at the third meeting. At this meeting, the fourth in the series of meetings, only seven of the 21 Committee members were in attendance. By my observations this was fewer than attended the third meeting. Even with only one third of the Committee members present and two of them not for the whole meeting, the senior planner continued with the meeting This low attendance by Committee members and senior planner's lack of concern about it continued through the rest of the Committee meetings. Though noted by both the Parks and Recreation Department staff and the Committee members after the Committee meetings had ended, nobody ever did anything about low attendance during the time the Committee met. My observation of the Department's lack of concern with poor attendance reinforced my conclusion the Department didn't really give the Committee any standing in the process, and so, it didn't matter that only a third of the Committee members were present at the meeting.

During this meeting I finally took note that the Parks and Recreation Department's Director of Park Planning who had been attending the meetings was more active in the meetings than the Department's senior planner who was allegedly the meeting leader. Not only did he speak up more than the senior planner to answer the

Committee's questions and say which actions would be taken under further consideration, but he also was the person who defended the Department's positions and decisions. Also, it was he rather than the senior planner who asked the Committee members for input on items. He was in fact the one who controlled the pace and flow of the Committee meetings. He was in fact the meeting leader and not the senior planner. This made some sense when I realized he was the senior planner's supervisor.

Now that I had observed four meetings of the External Stakeholder Committee, I was starting to form a conclusion on the meeting process. They were not posting the time and place of the meetings to their web site, announcing them to the public in some other way. Nor were they posting the results or minutes of the meetings to their web site as they had implied they would when they issued the announcement of the Dog Parks Master Plan process back in March 2009. They were keeping tight control over what was discussed in the meetings and had not incorporated any of the suggestions or requests of the Committee into the elements of the Plan being developed by the internal work group. It was starting to appear the Department was guiding the Committee process in such a way as to guarantee that it would look like the Committee had agreed to the Plan they wished to adopt.

The Fifth Committee Meeting

As with the fourth meeting, the fifth meeting of the External Stakeholder Committee was held in one of the small meeting rooms on the fourth floor of the Wellington Webb Building in downtown Denver. Again the room was set up with a square of tables and chairs with a few chairs around the edge of the room. As had

become the practice in the meetings, the Parks and Recreation Department senior planner, his assistant, and the Director of Park Planning, as well as the representative from Animal Care and Control sat at the table at the front of the room near the entrance to the room with the Committee members in attendance along the other three sides of the square of tables.

A difference in attendees. Unlike the previous meetings, there were people present at this meeting who were not City staff or Committee members. By the start of the meeting at 7:40 A. M. there were nine people in addition to me who were not associated with the Committee or a member of City staff present at the meeting. These observers included a member of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board who was not on the Committee and several neighborhood activists I recognized. I realized one of these observers had been at the previous two meetings and was the spouse of one of the Committee members. There were also more Parks and Recreation Department staff present at the meeting then there had been previously. The Deputy Manger of Parks and Recreation with responsibility for park management was present as well as two or three other staff people I had not seen at the meetings before. I wondered if this was because the Department was starting to receive pressure from outside the Dog Park Master Plan process and so felt it necessary to increase their monitoring of the process by attending the meetings.

Discussion on existing and new dog parks. The Parks and Recreation Department senior planner started the meeting by introducing the recommendations from the internal work group on proposed improvements and maintenance for existing dog

parks. He then asked for concurrence from the Committee on the recommended

improvements and maintenance. There were no significant objections from the

Committee members to the recommendations, and so, the senior planner took this as

concurrence with the recommendations by the Committee. With little input from the

Committee this element of the Dog Park Master Plan was settled.

With the recommendations on the existing parks quickly out of the way the

senior planner moved the discussions to new dog parks. As had become his practice, the

senior planner first presented the internal work group's current recommendation. The

internal working group had settled on one of the parks discussed in the previous

meetings, Cook Park, to fill the gap in coverage for one area of the City. The second

park now recommended by the internal working group to fill a gap in the southwest

section of the City was not one of the parks discussed at the previous meetings. The

internal work group was now recommending Vanderbilt Park which was further west

than either of the parks discussed as possible sites for a dog park in previous meetings.

The senior planner went over the advantages for both parks from the internal work

group's point of view. One point of note on Vanderbilt Park was that it had the

possibility of having a readily available partner to help in its development and operation.

The linking up with partner organizations was an advantage the Parks and Recreation

Department saw as important in any site due to the Department's lack of money to

construct and operate new dog parks.

When the senior planner opened the floor to discussion on the two parks, he

quickly got concurrence on Cook Park, but many of the Committee members objected to

the introduction of Vanderbilt Park. The Committee members expressed a belief that the lack of density in the area around Vanderbilt Park would not justify the selection of the site, and, in addition, people would be required to drive to access a dog park in Vanderbilt Park. The Director of Park Planning spoke up and justified the selection of Vanderbilt Park by responding "the Department is going for two mile coverage and not necessarily trying to allow more accessible parks. Also, there will be coverage from off leash areas. There is a balancing act." Based on how the statement was made and the context in which it was made, this response dismissed the objections of the Committee as not being valid.

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board member on the Committee (the second original Parks and Recreation Advisory Board member on the Committee had never attended any Committee meetings and was never replaced) asked for more details on why Vanderbilt was better than the parks other than Cook Park discussed in the previous meetings. The Director of Park Planning responded to the question by defending his position and reiterated the advantages he saw for the site in Vanderbilt Park. Another of the Committee members then entered the discussion and agreed with the change to Vanderbilt Park. This resulted in a number of the other Committee members again objecting to the change to Vanderbilt Park. The senior planner entered the discussion and pointed out there had been an issue about off leash dogs in the other parks considered in the previous meetings. The Committee members responded that the establishing of a dog park in Vanderbilt Park was not going to solve that problem and again brought up the problems with access to Vanderbilt Park. The Director of Park

Planning responded to the Committee's comments by saying he did not believe there was an access problem at Vanderbilt Park.

The discussion on new dog parks ended with a suggestion from one of the Committee members that three parks, Cook, Vanderbilt and Veterans--one of the previously considered parks--be accepted as sites for new dog parks. This idea was supported by the Committee members in general, but the discussion was ended without any commitment from the Parks and Recreation Department to accept the suggestion.

Discussion on off leash areas. Upon concluding the discussion on new dog parks, the senior planner moved the discussion to the subject of off leash areas. Though the subject of off leash areas and what they might look like had been discussed in previous meeting, this was the first time the subject of off leash areas was discussed to any depth. The senior planner began this portion of the meeting by presenting the recommendation from the internal working group for the Parks and Recreation Department to conduct a twelve month off leash pilot program in a few parks. The senior planner went through the criteria the internal working group had come up with for such areas and the hours they were recommending for them. He also went through the list of parks the Department would recommend be considered for off leash areas.

When the floor was opened up for input from the Committee members on having off leash areas in parks and the hours such areas should be available to people and their dogs, the Committee members began by asking questions about the policy on the tags required for use of dog parks and off leash areas in parks. This led into a discussion of the policies and rules for off leash areas in general. The senior planner went through

the policies as shown on the handout for the meeting. (The handouts had been provided only to the Committee members and the City staff involved in the meetings. Observers at the meeting, including me, did not have the handout and so were somewhat at a disadvantage in following the discussion on the policies for off leash areas.)

At this point in the meeting the neighborhood activist observers at the meeting began to make comments about the discussions concerning off leash areas in the parks. They had been quiet up to this point and now broke their silence to express their views and positions on the subject. They attempted to express their views on why they objected to off leash areas in parks. The senior planner stopped their entry into the meeting discussions by announcing that the observers at the meeting were not allowed to talk at the Committee's meeting. By making the announcement the senior planner regained control of the meeting discussions and silenced the observers for the rest of the meeting. He also made it plain that though the activists may be attending the meeting, they did not have the privilege to present input in the meeting.

Once he regained control of the meeting; the senior planner moved the discussion on to the subject of excluding certain areas from consideration as off leash areas. The senior planner and the Director of Park Planning recommended using the characteristics of the area and consideration of actual and potential problems with the area in deciding what areas in parks would be chosen for use as off leash areas. A variety of ideas on indicators that could be used to make the decision to use an area in a park as an off leash area were brought up and discussed by the Committee members. As this discussion continued, Mark again raised his health and safety issues with dogs in

parks. He said the issues were not reflected in the criteria and argued they should be part of the criteria as they are very important. He expressed the view that use of a park area for off leash dogs would make the area unusable for other park uses due to health and safety concerns.

There was a strong reaction by other Committee members to Mark raising his health and safety issue again. Two or three Committee members spoke up and objected to Mark raising the issues again. They believed the issue was becoming old and Mark was becoming unnecessarily repetitive on the issue. They then argued there was no difference between allowing off leash use of an area and allowing dogs to be walked on a leash in the park as to the health and safety issues raised.

Mark responded that the difference between off leash areas and dogs being walked in the park is the off leash areas have a much higher concentration of dogs. Further, most people walking their dogs on leash use the trails in the parks and this mitigates any conflict with other park uses. He ended his argument on the subject by bringing up a concern with dogs off leash bothering or attacking other dogs and people and referred to an article he had with him to support his argument. (The article was not provided to me or any of the other attendees at the meeting, and so, we all had to take it on faith the article supported his assertions on the matter.)

The Director of Park Planning addressed the issue of health and safety concerns in off leash areas by linking it to the dog park and off leash area tag and fee process. He said the process would require dog owners using the off leash areas to agree to be responsible, and so not create these problems. Therefore, he believed the problems

with health and safety issues would be less. In addition he believed the limiting of hours for use of the off leash areas, increasing enforcement in the off leash areas, and moving or closing off leash areas where problems come up would help to mitigate the problems.

This set off an exchange between Mark and the Manager of Park Planning with Mark challenging the Manager's assertions by bringing up the problems with health and safety in his neighborhood park. In response to the challenge the Manager of Park Planning asked: "then what is the solution to the problem?"   Mark responded that enforcement of the current rules and not creating off leash areas was the solution to the problem. There was disagreement with the response and disagreement among the Committee members about what was the cause of the health and safety problems in parks. Mark then referred to a piece of paper he had with him that he claimed was a letter from a realtor, and he quoted from this letter to support his position that the issue was important. (As with the article he had previously quoted from he did not provide the Committee or anyone else a copy of the letter.)

The Committee's perception was that Mark was now just pushing the health and safety issue beyond reason and was now holding up the Committee's meeting. Another Committee member accused Mark of not wanting dogs in parks at all, which was unacceptable to this member. As far as this member was concerned the issue should be dropped and the Committee should move on with its discussion of other issues. Mark took this attack personally and reacted accordingly. It was obvious from the reaction of the other Committee members that they were tired of Mark bringing up the issues over and over, and were not in agreement with his view of the issue or the importance of it in

the Dog Park Master Plan process. The exchange on Mark's health and safety concerns ended with Fred coming to Mark's defense, and supporting Mark's view that there was a need for adopting criteria for the off leash areas addressing the health and safety issues.

With the health and safety issue dropped for the time being, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board member of the Committee brought up an issue he had discussed with the Parks and Recreation Department senior planner outside the Committee meetings. He believed there should be only two off leash areas designated initially. This recommendation received support from Fred, but the other Committee members were silent on the recommendation. The senior planner acknowledged the recommendation and asked the Committee to move on to other issues.

Discussion of charging for use of dog parks and off leash areas. The senior planner next moved the discussion to the issue of requiring a tag for use of the dog parks and off leash areas. The veterinarian member of the Committee brought up requiring testing for parasites as part of the tag issuance process and banning intact male dogs from the dog parks and off leash areas. The feasibility of these two requirements was questioned and so the staff member from Environmental Health was asked to comment on the issue. He went over the licensing requirements for dogs and commented on why it would be hard to enforce the two requirements.

A Committee member brought up the idea of being able to apply for the dog park and off leash usage tag on line. He believed this would be easier and more customer friendly than requiring a person to come to one of the City's offices to complete the form and pay the fee. Building on this idea another Committee member suggested

using the doggy day care providers as a source to issue the tags. These two ideas led into a discussion on ensuring compliance by all dog park and off leash area users. The Director of Park Planning responded to the discussion by commenting that he believed compliance was achievable as in his view using a dog park or an off leash was a privilege and not a right.

As part of the discussion on compliance one of the Committee members brought up the system followed in Boulder. She emphasized that Boulder had recognized people do not read long documents, and so instead of using a long form with all the rules and requirements for using the Boulder dog parks listed, they require people to view a video and then sign a shorter form indicating they have viewed the video, and understand and agree to abide by the rules and requirements for using Boulder's dog parks. Another of the Committee members liked the concept and suggested it be done on line. As part of the discussion, the veterinarian member of the Committee again asked the requirement for certification of parasite testing be included in the process of issuing the tag. The senior planner agreed to check into the process from Boulder and parasite testing.

Mark, as part of ongoing effort to get recognition of the health and safety issues associated with off leash areas in parks, brought up the issue of liability. This issue quickly was dismissed by the Committee and the senior planner moved the Committee on to discussing the fee for the dog park and off leash area usage tag. The senior planner opened the discussion by presenting a pro forma summary of what the income expected from the fee would be and asked for feedback on how this income should be distributed. Fred, the most vocal of the Inter Neighborhood Cooperation

representatives on the Committee, again raised his objection to charging the fee rather than just concentrating on increasing the level of licensing of dogs to generate the income for dog parks and off leash areas. He believed the increased licensing would be better and would raise "real" money.

The reintroduction of the level of licensing in the City promulgated one of the Committee members to ask if all people realized they needed to license their dog and pay the fee for doing so. Discussion on the question appeared to indicate a consensus among the Committee members that it was more of a case of people not caring to comply with the requirement to license their dogs rather than not knowing about the requirement. Everyone agreed that increasing the level of compliance with licensing dogs would be good, and some of the members believed that the requirement for the tag to use the dog parks and off leash areas, if enforced, would increase the level of licensing.

Bringing the discussion back to the income from the tag fee, one of the Committee members suggested that, instead of applying percentages to allocate the income from the tag fee, it be allocated by prioritization. The way he saw it the income would be allocated first to education, then enforcement, and then the other costs of developing and operating dog parks and off leash areas. He believed that education is most important and it would resolve many of the problems that had been brought up about current and future dog parks and off leash areas. Fred supported this idea even though he was against the fee. He believed doing public outreach was very important in making the dog parks and off leash areas work.

One of the Committee members changed the subject of the discussion from the fee to the cost of a dog park. None of the Parks and Recreation Department staff present had any information on the costs of developing and operating a dog park with them, so the senior planner said he would gather the information. (As far as I know this was never provided to the Committee.) The Director of Park Planning discussed the issue in general and emphasized that the discussion on the issue needed to consider both the development costs and the operation costs for dog parks and off leash areas.

The discussion in the meeting changed focus when a Committee member brought up the issue of linking the start of charging a fee for using dog parks and off leash areas to the added benefits of improvements in existing dog parks, adding new dog parks, and adding off leash areas. The member believed the public would want to see some tangible benefit to paying the fee in order to feel a need to pay it.

After this brief detour, the Committee returned to discussing fees for using dog parks and off leash areas. There were a number of suggestions thrown out to the group by various Committee members though none were discussed in any significant detail. The senior planner ended the discussion on the fee issue at this point.

With the scheduled end of the meeting approaching fast, the senior planner stopped the Committee's discussion of the issues presented to them and began his wrap up of the meeting. There had not been a conclusion on any issue discussed during the meeting, so the senior planner went over the issues to determine if in his opinion he had concurrence from the Committee members on where the discussion on the various issues stood. This rekindled the discussion on the requirement for a tag separate from the City

dog license for using the dog parks and off leash areas. At 9:00 A. M. and the scheduled

end of the meeting, discussion came to an end quickly.

As I gathered up my stuff, I noted the attendance at the meeting had been

better than the previous two meetings. Thirteen of the Committee members were in

attendance at the end of the meeting and most had been there the entire time. I also noted

that my observation on the previous meetings were true for this meeting.

The Dog Park Master Plan was now starting to take form. The issue of

needed improvements and maintenance on existing dog parks was settled. It was clear

the City wanted only two new dog parks designated and had already decided in which

parks they would be built. The element of off leash areas had been introduced to the

Committee and the in-depth discussion on it started. The policy issues element was

underway and was taking shape.   It was now possible to see where the Plan was headed.

The Sixth Committee Meeting

All of the various people who were now attending the External Stakeholder

Committee meetings gathered for the sixth meeting of the Committee in one of the small

meeting rooms at the Wellington Webb Building in downtown Denver at 7:20 A. M. on

October 28th . It had been 14 days since the last meeting of the Committee. The tables in

the room were arranged in the usual square with chairs around the outside of the square.

The Parks and Recreation staff was seated at the tables at the front of the room nearest

the entrance to the room with the Committee members seated at the tables making up the

remaining three sides of the square. The rest of us who were just observing the meeting

either found chairs in the room or brought them from adjoining rooms and sat against the walls of the room.

At the beginning of the meeting at 7:42 A. M. seven of the 21 Committee members were present, as well as about five City staff, and five observers including me. One of the seven Committee members was a new person who joined the Committee at the meeting. She was never introduced to the Committee, so it wasn't until later when I asked the senior planner who she was that I found out she was a new Committee member appointed by a City Council member to replace a Committee member from his district that had left the Committee[7]. The City staff members present were the usual suspects who had been attending the meetings on a regular basis since the meetings began. The four observers, other than me, were neighborhood activists whom I recognized from other meetings.

The senior planner kicked off the meeting by going over the items in the Dog Park Master Plan concerning existing parks on which he believed he had agreement from the Committee. The only person who spoke up when the senior planner asked if his understanding was correct was the new Committee member. She asked about how the improvements and maintenance planned for the existing dog parks would be funded. In response to her question, the Parks and Recreation Department staff present went over the plan to use funding from the capital improvement budget line item in the Parks and

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[7] I found it interesting that the new member of the Committee had been appointed by a City Council member. The original Committee members had been chosen from the list of the interested people from the dog park survey conducted in the spring of 2009, and now the Parks and Recreation Department was going to a City Council member to appoint someone to the Committee. It also struck me as strange the Department wanted a replacement for a Committee member that had dropped out back in the first months of the Committee process when they didn't seem to care that only a third of the Committee members did attend the meetings.

Recreation budget to fund the improvements. They explained the intention was to make the improvements before the new fees proposed for dog parks and off leash areas use were instituted. This appeared to answer her questions and so the meeting moved on to the next issue.

Discussion on new dog parks. When Fred showed up the senior planner was launching into his presentation on the gaps in dog park coverage of the City and the location of the new dog parks recommended to fill some of the gaps. After mentioning the findings from the Trust for Public Lands showing that Denver ranked in the middle of similarly sized cities for the number of dog parks per 100,000 residents, the senior planner brought up for discussion the two parks, Cook and Vanderbilt, recommended by the internal work group.

The discussion of the proposed new dog park sites began with the new Committee member asking about how their development would be funded. Instead of answering the question, the senior planner reopened the discussion of the recommendation by the internal work group to choose Vanderbilt Park over Veterans Park for a one of the two new dog parks. The senior planner reiterated the reasons the internal work group preferred Vanderbilt. The member of the Committee from the City Council then asked if Veterans Park was no longer open to consideration anymore. The Director of Park Planning replied the Department was not ruling out consideration of Veterans Parks instead of, or in addition to, Vanderbilt Park to fill a gap in coverage, but conveyed it was unlikely.

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A Committee member brought up the coverage issue as a discussion item and forcefully argued for reopening the consideration of parks to be dog park sites. This instigated a significant amount of discussion among the Committee members and City staff about the issue. This culminated in another Committee member asking that Veterans Park be revisited as a site for a dog park. The Director of Park Planning defended the Parks and Recreation Department selection of Vanderbilt in a way that implied the Department was not willing to change its selection and consider Veterans Park any further. Though the member continued to push the consideration of Veterans Park, the Director of Park Planning continued to resist this. The matter died out without the Department indicating any willingness to change its selection of Cook Park and Vanderbilt Park as the only two new dog parks. During the discussion on the issue, the President of the City Council showed up at the meeting and took a seat in front of me near the Deputy Manger of Parks and Recreation for Parks who had also joined the meeting.

Moving on to off leash areas. With the discussion on new dog parks ended, the senior planner moved the discussion on to off leash areas. The senior planner announced the internal working group had settled on going with only two off leash sites and had decided to recommend that the two parks for off leash areas be Commons Park in the downtown area along the Platte River and City Park in northeast section of the City. The Director of Park Planning explained the goal of the Department was to make Denver a progressive city in the area of dog parks and having off leash areas such as the two sites

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would show this to people inside and outside the City. He said the Department wanted to conduct a pilot program establishing off leash areas in the two parks and see how it goes.

The City Council member of the Committee asked about how the tracking of data for the pilot would be done. The Deputy Manager for Parks and the Director of Park Planning discussed in general how they would go about collecting data from and tracking the pilot program, and presented an example of how New York City tracked a pilot of off leash areas there.

The next issue was raised by a Committee member who lived and worked in the downtown area of the City, and who was involved in the planning and building of the Railyard Dog Park.[8] She objected to putting an off leash area in Commons Park, expressing a concern that the group developing the Railyard Dog park would see the establishment of an off leash area in Commons Park as a negative action by the City. As a result, the group might not complete the Railyard Dog Park.

Other members then directed the discussion away from the Railyard Dog Park and towards Commons Park. Fred, the vocal Inter Neighborhood Cooperation Committee member, brought up the issue of dog waste in the park and how this would make the areas set aside for the off leash area unsuitable for other uses. As Mark, whose major issue was health and safety in off leash areas, had quit attending the Committee meetings by this meeting, Fred took up the health and safety issue. The Deputy

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[8] The Railyard Dog Park is a dog park located in Lower Downtown Denver which was designed, funded, and built by a private non-profit organization. The dog park was completed and turned over to the City in September 2010, but at the time of the Committee meetings construction on it was awaiting completion of fund raising. It is not located in a City park, but stands alone.

Manager for Parks interjected himself into the discussion and defended the selection of Commons Park.

The member who brought up the conflict with the Railyard Dog Park raised the issue again. She reiterated her belief that the establishment of an off leash area in Commons Park would have a negative effect on the completion of the Railyard Dog Park. This opened up a free flowing discussion involving a number of the Committee members focused on the issues related to putting an off leash area in Commons Park. To address some of the issues raised, the Director of Park Planning suggested having a partnership between the Department and an outside group to monitor the off leash use in the park and so gain better compliance by users of the area and reduce the cost of managing the area. The City Council member of the Committee spoke up in support of ensuring there was not a conflict between putting an off leash area in Commons Park and the completion and operation of the Railyard Dog Park. In response to the comments from the City Council member, the senior planner mentioned that the establishment of an off leash area in Commons Park would not happen until sometime in the future.

Fred then jumped into the discussion by raising a question as to the need for an off leash area in Commons Park with the Railyard Dog Park in the same area. He also objected to an off leash area in Commons Park because it would cut into the area in the park useable by humans. The second issue was responded to by another Committee member who said the area proposed for the off leash area in Commons Park was not used very much because of drainage issues. Another Committee member jumped into the discussion and supported the establishment of an off leash area in the Commons Park. A

third Committee member commented that people are already using the park as an off leash area and so the establishment of a specific area in the park for off leash use could only improve the situation.

The Committee member who had raised the potential for a negative reaction by the Railyard Dog park group again raised the issue. This time the Parks and Recreation staff present said they would consider dropping consideration of an off leash area in Commons Park. The City Council member of the Committee asked Parks and Recreation to look at choosing another one of the City's parks as a site for an off leash area instead of Commons Park. The Parks and Recreation staff present at the meeting said they would look into that and would contact the Railyard Dog Park group to gauge their reaction to an off leash area in Commons Park. The issue of an off leash area in Commons Park was left with a commitment by Parks and Recreation to reconsider the use of Commons Park as one of the two sites for an off leash areas pilot program.

With the issue of the off leash area in Commons Park shelved, the senior planner moved on to the issue of placing an off leash area in City Park. Fred brought up the need to consult with the neighborhoods around City Park about the placement of an off leash area in the park. This elicited a small amount of discussion among the Committee members, but the group quickly moved on to discussion of the specific areas in City Park under consideration for an off leash area.

The specific areas in City Park being considered for an off leash area were presented and discussed by the senior planner, the Deputy Manger for Parks, and the City Council member of the Committee. Then the senior planner asked for the Committee's

consensus on the off leash pilot program. Instead of indicating his consensus, a member raised a concern that people would perceive the program as not producing any action in a timely manner. The member said people want to see action coming out of the Dog Park Master Plan process and not the long delays before anything is done as now appears will be the case. The Director of Park Planning said that time was needed to get everything set up and funded and so it would not be possible to do things quickly. The City Council member of the Committee encouraged Parks and Recreation to implement the Plan elements as quickly as they could.

Another Committee member stepped into the discussion and recommended that the process to develop the plan be task oriented and not time oriented. He believed this would help to make the implementation of the Plan more action oriented earlier on in the implementation process. (I noted at this point in the discussion that the City Council President and the Deputy Manager of Parks were now engaged in a deep conversation outside the discussion involving the Committee. I was unable to tell what they were talking about.) The Director of Park Planning responded to the recommendation by saying the implementation of the Plan would be driven by when money was available. The member acknowledged the situation as described but asked that implementation of the Plan elements be sooner rather than later.

Fred suggested the Department might be able to achieve faster implementation of the Plan elements by seeking guidance from the City's previous efforts to develop partnerships to assist in establishing dog parks. He recommended that the Parks and Recreation Department conduct a survey to determine who might be willing to

be part of such a partnership. The Parks and Recreation staff said they already had the information on this, and so, didn't need to do another survey. I assumed the information the Department was referring to was the responses to the questions in the dog park survey conducted in spring 2009 which asked if the respondent would like to participate in partnership efforts to manage and improve dog parks. The Department's response ended the discussion on the issue.

At this point the senior planner reminded some of the neighborhood activists who were observing the meeting not to talk during the meeting as this was distracting to the Committee's discussions. The neighborhood activists had been talking among themselves in quiet voices about the discussions being conducted in the meeting and what their opinions were of the positions, views and recommendations being voiced in the discussions. In response to the reminder from the senior planner, the neighborhood activists stopped their talking among themselves.

Moving on to the tag issue. With his determination he had consensus from the Committee on the off leash areas issue; the senior planner moved the discussion on to what would be required to show that a person and their dog had the right to be in a dog park or off leash area--the tag issue. There was some light hearted give and take on a suggestion from the new Committee member that the City should require the people to wear the tag showing their dog had the right to be in the dog park or off leash area and not the dog. Fred then asked about the cost / benefit analysis he had requested in a previous meeting.   He wanted to know how the income from the dog park / off leash area tag would compare with the income from just increasing licensing of dogs. He also

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raised the idea of requiring people when they obtained the tag to show they had insurance to cover their liability for their dog injuring a person or another dog.   One of the Parks and Recreation Department staff and the representative from the Animal Care and Control disagreed with the member's idea of requiring insurance for dog parks and off leash area users. In addition, the Director of Park Planning disagreed with the idea because this would impose a requirement on the users of the dog parks and off leash areas that no other park user had to meet. Fred ended the discussion on the issue by stating the Inter Neighborhood Cooperation Parks and Recreation Committee had taken the position that users of dog parks and off leash areas be required to have liability insurance.

Another Committee member made a recommendation that the policy on the tag for use of dog parks and off leash areas be the process followed in Boulder. The senior planner responded that he had talked with the parks department in Boulder and Boulder reported they had found people were not complying with their process requirements. So, the senior planner said he was not sure that using the Boulder process as a model was a good idea. In response to this another member of the Committee suggested that there should be some form of test that a person would have to take and pass to obtain the tag for use of dog parks and off leash areas. The response to this from the Director of Park Planning was an agreement that education of the users on the requirements for using the dog parks and off leash areas was very important. The discussion of the tag issue ended with a request from one of the Committee members that the Department keep the idea from Fred to increase licensing instead of implementing the tag program on the table and open.

As time was running out in the meeting, the senior planner ended the discussion and reviewed the issues discussed and the status of each as he saw it. The only comment from the Committee members to this was one from Fred, who reminded the senior planner about the potential conflict between the off leash area in Commons Park and the new Railyard Dog Park. With that the meeting ended and everyone made their way out of the room. On the way out I stopped to talk to the senior planner and make my usual request for a copy of the handout for the meeting, which he provided me.

The meeting confirmed that the plan element on existing dog park improvements and maintenance was settled. The element on new dog parks appeared to be settled with the Department of Parks and Recreation set on two dog parks, one in Cook Park and one in Vanderbilt Park. The element on off leash areas was becoming clearer with the City pushing for pilot areas in two different parks. The element on fees and policies was firming up, but exactly what the Department's decision on this would be was still open. The Plan was continuing to take form.

The Seventh Committee Meeting

As usual, I arrived at the room in the City's Wellington Webb Building about 15 minutes before the meeting was scheduled to begin at 7:30 A. M. on the morning of November 10th. I claimed my usual chair in the back corner of the room and settled in to observe the meeting. Unlike at the other meetings the senior planner who had been leading the meetings came back to me shortly before the meeting was to begin and gave me a copy of the handouts for the meeting. The handout included the annotated agenda for the External Stakeholder Committee meetings showing the items the City had

or intended to present to the Committee and the status of the various issues presented to the Committee to date. The handout also contained the analysis of the income from just dog licenses and a combination of dog licenses and dog park / off leash area tags. I had finally become an accepted part of the Committee process.

By 7:36 A. M. people were still filtering into the meeting room. There were already eight observers other than me present, and more arrived during the first half hour of the meeting. One of them commented as she entered the room she "was attending the hearing." Another observer passed out a handout he had prepared to the Committee members and some of the City staff present. (I contacted the person after the meeting and requested a copy of the handout, but never received it.) A number of the observers asked the senior planner before the meeting began when they would be able to make comments. The senior planner explained that comments from the public would be taken outside the Committee meetings at either a public meeting or by email.

The senior planner began the meeting at 7:45 A. M. with seven of the 21 Committee members present. The attendance by Committee members had dwindled significantly over the six months the Committee had been meeting. Only one-third of the Committee members showed up to this meeting, even when you counted the eighth Committee member who showed up a half hour into the meeting. There were almost as many City staff as Committee members present at the meeting, and the Committee members were greatly outnumbered by the observers. The Parks and Recreation Department didn't seem to care that this was the situation and just went forward with the

meeting as they had all the other times when two-thirds to a half of the Committee members were absent.

The first item discussed in the meeting, as had become the practice in the meetings, was to review the status of the items on the Parks and Recreation Department's cumulative agenda for the External Stakeholder Meetings and determine if everyone on the Committee agreed that was the status of the items. That out of the way, the senior planner moved the Committee on to the discussion of off leash areas continuing the discussion begun in the previous meeting. The senior planner began the discussion by announcing that due to conflict with the off leash area in Commons Park and the Railyard Dog Park, it had been decided to go with just one pilot off leash area. This pilot off leash area would be located in City Park. He then opened the floor for discussion of City Park as an off leash location.

The first input on the areas in City Park proposed for off leash use was a comment from a Committee member there were many geese in City Park. The potential for conflict between the geese and the dogs in the park was discussed. The Director of Park Planning commented the geese would probably move on from any areas where there was a concentration of dogs and so it wouldn't be a problem for long. This portion of the discussions ended with a comment from the City Council member of the Committee that there were positive feelings about having an off leash area in City Park.

Raising concerns with the outcome of the process. The discussion then focused on the concern of one of the Committee members that a pilot program with only one site was too limited. He expressed a concern that the pilot program with only one off

leash area and it being in City Park would be seen by people as too limited and so not a serious effort on the part of the City. Another Committee member commented that people would see the effort now proposed as too limited to justify paying the fee for the dog park and off leash area tag. He did admit he wasn't a strong advocate for the fee anyway.

The Director of Park Planning spoke up to defend the level of effort contained in the proposed elements of the Dog Park Master Plan as it stood at this meeting. He said people needed to realize the fee would pay for construction of new dog parks and the establishment of off leash area. He also defended Vanderbilt Park as a dog park site from the challenge it would not be as accessible as other possible dog park sites. He ended his defense by pointing out the fee income would also pay for enforcement of the rules in dog parks and off leash areas, as well as the tracking effort in the pilot program.

At the end of the Director of Park Planning's comments, Fred brought up the fact that New York City only requires a dog license to enter their dog parks. He used this fact to justify his assertion that increasing the licensing of dogs in the City would be a better solution to raising funds for dog parks and off leash areas than the tag and fee idea.

A Committee member brought up an article (Seeber, 2009 November) in one of the local online neighborhood newspapers about the Dog Park Master Plan process. A number of people in her neighborhood have provided her feedback on the article and they see no value on the proposed improvements and additions to the dog parks in the City and so don't see any need to pay the fee if it was adopted. She said she and many other

people were frustrated with the way things were going. The City Council member acknowledged there were problems. The Director of Park Planning closed out the discussion by saying something had to be done as the status quo was not acceptable and so the City and its residents needed to move on.

Back to fees and fines. The discussion moved on to the tag fee and fines for violating the dog park and off leash area rules. A member said he supported the tag fee and did not find the New York City dog park process without a fee to be adequate in Denver's case. The senior planner redirected the discussion to the handouts containing the cost and income spreadsheets, which had been passed out at the beginning of the meeting. These were the Parks and Recreations response to Fred's call for a cost / benefit analysis on the income from just an increase in licensing of dogs and both licensing and the tag fee. Fred had been calling for this type of information since the fourth meeting of the Committee in September 2009, and, in what was to be the last Committee meeting, it was finally provided.

As the senior planner went through the spreadsheet on income without the tag fee for use of dog parks and off leash areas the members asked questions and made comments. Some were about the spreadsheets and some were about issues related to the income issue. Fred, who had been adamant about not having a tag or a fee for dog parks and off leash areas but instead just increasing the level of licensing, asked about a separate tag denoting voice control of the dog. The senior planner said there would be one tag and would require proof of voice control of animal. There was brief discussion on the issue of having a separate tag for voice control, but it never amounted to much.

Another Committee member then took the discussion in the direction of whether or not the funds from the tag or increased licensing would be segregated in the City budget for dog parks and off leash areas. After some discussion on the matter, the Director of Park Planning said the City Budget Director had told him that the funds would not be segregated in a separate account, but would be marked to indicate the funds collected from the tag fee should be spent on dog parks and off leash areas. The member who brought up the issue expressed a concern that in the future the funds may be taken for other uses since they were not going to be segregated.

After any questions about the first spreadsheet were asked and clarifications provided, Fred spoke up again. He said he believed the compliance level shown in the spreadsheets was too low. He believes more people will license their dogs and so the numbers in the spreadsheets were biased.

Without resolving Fred's concerns, the senior planner moved on to the second spreadsheet based on the assumption there would be a separate fee for use of dog parks and off leash areas. There was discussion to clarify the details of the spreadsheet. Fred then brought the discussion back to his issue of not charging a fee but just increasing the licensing of dogs. He didn't believe his position was understood by the Parks and Recreation Department staff. The Director of Park Planning said he did understand the member's position, but he disagreed with it. The Director of Park Planning believes gaining the needed funds for dog parks and off leash areas from increasing licensing is unfair to those who purchase a license but don't use the dog parks or off leash areas. They are paying for something they don't use.

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A member of the Committee brought up the issue of rabies. The City staff had ruled the issue of rabies control out of bounds for the Committee's discussion back at the beginning of the Committee's meetings. Therefore, the senior planner dismissed the issue and brought the discussion back to the topic of fees by announcing there would be a discount in the fee amount for those who provide volunteer services in the dog parks and off leash areas.

Fred then brought the discussion back to his issue and stated he believed the Parks and Recreation Department had misrepresented his position in their comments on it. He went through his position again and reiterated his belief that going with increased licensing and enforcement would provide enough funds for dog parks and off leash areas. There was disagreement from the Animal Care and Control staff member attending the meeting and the City Council member of the Committee that an increase in licensing would be better. Their position was that dog parks are a privilege and so, as the Director of Park Planning said, they are not a right and so are equated to a special use in a park which would require a fee. In addition, the senior planner brought up that dog parks and off leash areas are a new program with new costs and so new income is required.

A member expressed a concern that the dog park and off leash area fee would start before any tangible improvements are made to the dog park system. This, in his opinion, would discourage people from paying the fee as they see no value for what they are paying. The Director of Park Planning responded that there would be improvements to the existing dog parks before the fees would start so there would be a value. Two other members commented that the fee needed to be linked to increased

value in the dog parks or there will be less compliance with the fee and tag requirement. The senior planner then declared there was consensus on the tag fee issue and moved the discussion on to fines. As had been the case in previous instances where the senior planner declared there was consensus, I didn't see consensus on the issue.

The discussion on fines was short lived, but there was some discussion of an idea by the City Council member of the Committee. She asked if it would be possible to issue a tag to someone with a dog without a tag in a dog park or off leash area instead of issuing a citation to them. In her opinion this would save the person having to pay the fine for not having a tag and still get the person to pay for a tag. This was countered by another member of the Committee who pointed out that in their view people are not honest enough for this to work.

The senior planner attempted to move the discussion on to other policy issues, but a member brought up another issue concerning fines. The member resurrected the idea of separating the offense of a dog being off leash in an undesignated area from a dog being out of control anywhere in a park. She advocated for the change as she had done a number of times before in the meetings. There was no commitment from the Parks and Recreation Department staff present on what they would do about the idea.

Moving on to other off leash policies. The senior planner moved the discussion on to the next item on his list of off leash area policies, the days and hours of operation for such areas. When the senior planner opened the floor for comments and questions on the item, a member asked about what areas the policy on days and times

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would apply to. The senior planner reiterated the days and times would only apply to the pilot off leash area and any future off leash areas designated.

After these clarifications about the proposed days and times for off leash areas in the designated parks, the Committee jumped into the discussion on the issue. The discussion focused on the need to have different hours and days for each park. Fred commented that the uses of the proposed areas in the areas under consideration as off leash areas in City Park were different than the uses in parks that currently contain a dog park. Therefore, he foresaw problems and conflicts occurring if the proposed areas in City Park were used as off leash areas. The City Council member of the Committee followed up on Fred's comments by reminding the senior planner that City Park is an urban regional park and so none of the areas in the park could be classified as low use areas, which would be suitable for an off leash area.

After the discussion on the suitability of the areas selected in City Park for use as an off leash area, the senior planner moved the discussion on to the items in the list of responsibilities for off leash areas. He emphasized the need to form a partnership with a group or organization to help in enforcing them. The senior planner noted the absence of any current partnership that would meet this need. There was some discussion among the members of the Committee and the Parks and Recreation staff present at the meeting about the issue of the responsibility of people for their dogs in off leash areas. One member suggested that signs be posted to educate the users of the areas about their responsibilities. The Parks and Recreation staff concurred with this suggestion.

The senior planner moved on to the criteria to be used to evaluate the pilot off leash area. He went over the criteria the internal work group had come up with and took comments from the Committee members on them. One member suggested that the Parks and Recreation Department do an assessment of the off leash area chosen to set a baseline and then evaluate against the baseline. There was agreement among the Committee members about the idea.

Closing out the Committee meetings. With the end of the discussion on the items for off leash parks, the senior planner began to wrap up the meeting. This was the last of the Committee meetings before the public meetings, and so, the senior planner announced that public meetings would be scheduled probably in December and the Committee would be reconvened after the public meetings to comment on the findings of those meetings. He also announced the Parks and Recreation Department was planning on holding a meeting in January to form a partnership group to assist the Department in managing the dog parks and off leash areas in January. There was resistance from both the Committee members and some of the observers to having the public meetings in December. The Parks and Recreation staff said they would consider moving the public meetings to a later date.

As the meeting wrapped up and people prepared to leave one member questioned the voice control requirement in the policies presented and the fact there was no test proposed as part of the tag issuance process. Another member joined in on the discussion and recommended the voice control requirement be strictly enforced in the beginning to make sure everyone was aware of it and complying with it

On the way out of the room one of the Committee members commented to me and the assistant to the senior planner that "she didn't understand who was telling people about the Committee meetings and she was upset that one of the Committee members would encourage people outside the Committee to attend the meeting." She said she had talked with other members and they were also upset about the breach of decorum on the part of another Committee member. She indicated who she thought was the Committee member who had been encouraging people to attend the meetings. Both the senior planner's assistant and I said we didn't think it was the person she thought and indicated who we thought had been encouraging people to attend. That was the extent of our conversation and we all continued to do what we had been doing to get our stuff together and exit the meeting room.

Observations on the Committee meetings. The Parks and Recreation Department had gotten out of the External Stakeholder Committee what it wanted. It had presented the various plan elements to the Committee over the six months the Committee had held meetings. The plan elements were formed as well as the Department wished them to be at this stage in the process. Based on what was presented in the Committee meetings the plan elements for improvement and maintenance of existing dog parks, for new dog parks, for the off leash pilot, and for the fees and policies for these areas were settled. The Department just needed to present the Dog Park Master Plan to the public and get their input. That was the next phase of the Dog Park Master Plan process.

Chapter Four: Public Meetings

I found out about the public meetings to be held on the Dog Park Master Plan in early January 2010. There were to be three meetings where the public could give its input on the draft Dog Park Master Plan. There would be two conducted by the Parks and Recreation Department and one conducted by the City Park Alliance. The official announcement of the two meetings the Parks and Recreation Department was holding was sent out by the senior planner in charge of the Plan process on January 14th, only two days before the first of the meetings, and the announcement of the meeting being held by the City Park Alliance was sent out on January 28, 2010.

The First Open House Public Meeting

The first of the public meetings sponsored by the Parks and Recreation Department was held on Saturday January 16, 2010. It was scheduled for 9:30 A. M. to 11:30 A. M. and was to be held at the Scheitler Recreation Center located in Berkeley Park in the far northwest corner of the City. The flyer announcing this meeting and the other Department public meeting had been distributed through the normal Parks and Recreation Department communication channels and it was posted to the dog park

section of the Department's web site. The announcement was also emailed to interested parties by the senior planner in charge of the Dog Park Master Plan process.

I woke up early on the day of the meeting, got ready and went out to catch the bus at the bus stop in front of my home to start my journey to the meeting. After transfers to light rail and to another bus, I arrived at the bus stop at 44th Avenue and Sheridan Boulevard and started my walk up Sheridan to 46th Avenue and then down 46th Avenue to the recreation center where the meeting would be held. As I tended to do, I had arrived well before the 9:30 A. M. start time for the meeting and so had some time to sit in the waiting area of the recreation center while I waited for the Parks and Recreation staff to arrive and set up the meeting room.

While waiting I took note of a few factors concerning the meeting. First, the meeting was being held on a Saturday morning at a recreation center located in a park in the farthest reaches of the northwest corner of the City. Second, Berkeley Park, the park surrounding the recreation center where the meeting was being held, was the site of one of the City's existing dog parks. Third, according to the flyer for the meeting, there would be activities such as rabies vaccination, licensing, and obedience training available in addition to the meeting on the draft Dog Park Master Plan. These all appeared to be conscious decisions on the part of the Parks and Recreation Department. Though I never found out why the Department chose to hold the meeting when and where they did or why they scheduled other activities with it, I am sure they all had an impact on who attended the meeting. This was one of the small details that never got dealt with in my research.

Meeting set up. The first two of the Parks and Recreation staff arrived at about 9:00 A. M. followed soon thereafter by two more Department staff members. As they began to set up the room for the open house on the draft Dog Park Master Plan, other City staff and non-City staff began to arrive and set up the other rooms for the additional activities that were occurring along with the open house. The set up of the various rooms and functions were not quite completed when the first two open house attendees, besides me, arrived at 9:20 A. M. I followed these two people into the room where the open house was to be held. As the Parks and Recreation staff completed the set up of the room for the open house meeting the two other attendees and I wandered around the room looking at the display boards the Department staff had set up.

The room where the open house was held was the recreation center's gymnasium. The Parks and Recreation Department staff placed 22 display boards arranged in four clusters. The display boards contained a combination of text and pictures. The flow of the display boards was in a clockwise rotation.

The first cluster positioned along the wall of the room opposite the entry door running along the wall and consisted of four display boards. One of the display boards in the cluster had information on the background of the dog park issue, another had a summary of the chronology of the Dog Park Master Plan process to date, another had some highlights extracted from the results of the survey conducted back in March and April of 2009, and the fourth had a table showing where Denver ranked among other cities on the number of dog parks per 100,000 residents.

The second cluster of display boards continued along the same wall as the first cluster and ended at the corner diagonal from the entry door. This cluster of display boards consisted of four boards which contained pictures and information on the existing six dog parks established as part of the dog park demonstration project in the 1990s.

The third cluster of display boards was located along the wall at the end of the room furthest from the entry door. This cluster consisted of five display boards and covered information on the best practices for dog parks from other cities both within Colorado and other states.

The fourth cluster of display boards was located along the wall of the room containing the entry door. The cluster consisted of nine display boards which covered the recommendations contained in the draft Dog Park Master Plan. The first display board listed the four elements of the Plan and summarized them. The second board described the first of the elements--improvements to the existing dog parks. The third board described the second element--changes to fines and fees and increasing the enforcement staff. The fourth through eighth boards described the recommendations on new facilities to be added to the dog park system in the City. Included in this cluster were two display boards which were aerial photos of the two parks, Cook and Vanderbilt, recommended as the sites of new dog parks with labeling to indicate where the new dog parks would be located. Another board had an aerial photo of City Park with labeling showing where the off leash area proposed for the park would be located. The ninth display board in the cluster described the Parks and Recreation Department's recommendation on forming a

partnership group and listed the date and time set for the organizational meeting of the group.

At various locations around the room, intermingled with the display boards, were tables with handouts listing the four elements of the draft Dog Park Master Plan and a summary of each element. At the tables were also comment sheets and pencils for the attendees to use in recording their comments on the Plan and anything else related to dog parks in Denver's parks.

The meeting itself. By the official start of the open house at 9:30 A. M. eight people had showed up and were making their way around the room looking at the display boards and talking among themselves, or talking with the City staff present at the meeting. People continued to arrive and by 9:40 A. M. there was 12 people present in the room. As people completed comment sheets the Parks and Recreation staff took them and either placed them in a pile near the entrance to the room or taped them up on the wall by the entrance for people to read. The staff told people the comments received would be posted to the Parks and Recreation web site after the meeting. (I never found where the comments were posted on the Parks and Recreation Department web sites, if they ever were.)

People came and went from the meeting during the time I was there. Most people just came in wandered around the room looking at the display boards and left. Some people completed comment sheets and gave them to the Parks and Recreation staff present at the meeting, while others left without providing comments. Sometimes there was only one person at a cluster of display boards, but most of the time there were several

people looking at a given cluster of the display boards. People as they looked at the display boards discussed the information on the boards with the other people standing at the cluster.

Though the composition of the groupings of people around the four clusters of display boards was fluid during the meeting, one grouping around the cluster of display boards on best practices was stable throughout the meeting. This grouping contained many people that I recognized as being part of the overall grouping of people I labeled as the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks and so I assumed the people within the grouping were those attendees that aligned themselves with that grouping. They spent the majority of the meeting talking with the other members of their grouping and only left the grouping to ask a question or make a comment to one of the Parks and Recreation Department staff.

The Parks and Recreation Department staff walked around the room mingling with the attendees and answering questions. The Director of Park Planning tended to stay in front of the cluster of display boards explaining the recommendations contained in the Dog Park Master Plan. The senior planner joined the Director of Park Planning in front of the cluster from time to time. This location was where most of the people spent the majority of their time and where most of the discussion with Parks and Recreation Department staff occurred.

I wandered around the room and stopped at various groupings of people to listen in and gather a sense of what the views and opinions of people were at the meeting. As I moved around the room I came to the grouping of people at the cluster of display boards

on the Plan recommendations where the Director of Park Planning was having an intense discussion with a number of people about enforcement of rules in off leash areas. One of the people was rather aggressive about making his point about the inability of the City to enforce the rules in such areas. For this reason he was against designating off leash areas in any parks. No matter what the Director of Park Planning did to try to move the discussion on to another topic the person would drag it back to the topic of enforcement. The person finally grew tired of arguing and moved on, ending the discussion

At another time the topic in the grouping in front of the display boards on the Plan elements was the legality of the Parks and Recreation Department's plans for uses in parks such as dog parks and off leash areas. This topic had been brought up in other meetings on park planning and was broader than just the dog park planning effort. The issue was whether the Department was changing the use or transferring control of a portion of a park without abiding by the requirements of the City Charter or the Municipal Code for such actions. There was a perception on the part of some City residents that the proposed Dog Park Master Plan was in violation of the Charter. There was a disagreement between the Department and the citizen activists concerned with parks on the interpretation of the language in the Charter and the Code. After a brief discussion on the topic, the Parks and Recreation staff deferred the matter by saying that since the matter involved legal questions a definitive answer on the matter could not be arrived at the meeting, but would require involvement of the City Attorney's office. Therefore, discussion on the matter would have to wait until a time when the City Attorney's office could be part of the discussion.

The issue of whether the actions by the Parks and Recreation Department in managing the parks within the City were allowable and legal under the City's Charter and the provisions of the Municipal Code on parks and their management was an ongoing issue in the dialogue between the citizens who saw themselves as the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks and the City. Though the Parks and Recreation Department continued to say that they had discussed the matter with the City Attorney and were confident their actions were legal, the citizen activists continued to assert that the Department's actions were illegal. As far as I know the issue has never been submitted to an appropriate body for a definitive answer to the question. It continues to be an issue which underlies the discussions on all park management actions, including the Dog Park Master Plan.

During the two hours of open house, I occasionally made note of the number of people present. Though the number of attendees varied slightly over the two hour period the number of attendees, not including myself, was 14 or 15 at any given time. I never came up with a total number of people who attended the meeting on my own, and never asked for the information from the Parks and Recreation Department. I did ask the assistant to the senior planner in charge of the Dog Park Master Plan process if, on a relative basis, the attendance at the meeting was what they had expected; she said that it was less than they had expected.

In addition to the attendees there were five City staff, four from Parks and Recreation and one from Animal Care and Control, present at the open house. Though a few (not more than four or five) people I recognized as neighborhood activists associated

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with the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks group were present over the two hours of the open house, most attendees appeared to be just people with an interest in dog parks and off leash areas.

Towards the latter half of the open house I came back around the room to the display boards with the recommendations of the Dog Park Master Plan and joined the group there talking with the Parks and Recreation Department's Director for Park Planning. Though this was a different group of people from the ones discussed above, the topic again was enforcement. This group, however, focused on the role volunteers would play in enforcement of and education about the rules in off leash areas. The discussion went on for a number of minutes and ended without any resolution to the issues raised in the discussion. This was typical of the discussions that occurred during the open house involving attendees and the City staff. Both sides made their points and responded to the other side's points, but there never was a resolution reached.

Towards the end of the meeting I engaged in a conversation with one of the senior Parks and Recreation staff. In the discussion, the topic of why the Department had chosen an open house format for the meeting came up. According to the Department staff member the Department chose the format as they believed it would draw the best response from the public. She said in the past they had received complaints from people who had attended meetings held in a public hearing format. The people had told the Department they had withheld their comments in such meetings because they felt intimidated by other attendees and believed their comments would not be given standing in the decision making process. She said the Department was trying out the open house

format with the use of paper comment sheets to gather the input from the public to see if this would mitigate the reluctance of people to provide comments at meetings. We discussed the topic for a few minutes until she was called away to discuss something else with another of the Department staff present.

At 11:40 A. M. as the meeting began to wrap up there were still people talking with the City staff present at the meeting. As the open house was winding down, I decided I would leave the open house and head on home. It was a long journey back across the City and I was hungry. So, I exited the recreation center and retraced my path back to the bus stop at 44th Avenue and Sheridan Boulevard to start my journey home. My observation of the Dog Park Master Plan process was done for the day.

My reflections on the meeting. In reflecting on the first open house I noted a few observations. My first observation was that, as I had expected, the Parks and Recreation Department had not made any changes to the Plan elements they had presented to the External Stakeholder Committee. The Plan did not reflect any of the comments, suggestions or feedback provided by the External Stakeholder Committee over the six months the Committee had met. The Plan presented was the Plan the Parks and Recreation Department had developed internally. There were no alternatives presented for comment by the public; nor was the Department asking for any input from the public on alternatives to what was included in the draft Plan. The message conveyed was: Here is the Plan, do you like it or not? Second, based on my observation of the meeting, the people who attended the open house were neither all positive nor all negative about the draft Plan. It appeared to me that there was a mix of positive and

negative feelings on the Plan and the issue of dogs in parks. There was no clear signal in

peoples' communication and actions during the meeting that indicated whether the

Department should go forward with the Plan as presented.

Second Open House Public Meeting

The second of the Parks and Recreation Department open house meeting was held

on Saturday January 30, 2010 from 1:30 P. M. to 3:30 P. M. at the Cook Park Recreation

Center in Cook Park, which is in the southeast section of Denver.   This meeting was

more convenient for me as it was closer to my home and was in the afternoon and not the

morning.

On the day of the meeting, I left my home and traveled north up University

Boulevard, had lunch, and then caught the bus east on Evans Avenue to the transfer point

at Monaco Parkway and Evans Avenue for the bus heading north on Monaco Parkway to

Cook Park. After changing buses and making the trip north to Cook Park I got off the

bus and walked across Cook Park to the Cook Park Recreation Center located at 7100

Cherry Creek South Drive. I was about an hour early for the meeting and the recreation

center was busy, so I chose to sit outside to wait for the Parks and Recreation staff

conducting the meeting to show up.

About 12:45 P. M. as I was sitting outside the front entrance to the recreation

center a man rode up on his bike. He got off his bike, parked it, and sat down next to me,

and we began to talk. He said he had ridden over from the northwest section of Denver

for the open house meeting. I commented that the first open house would have been

more convenient. He agreed, but said this was the one he could come to. About five

minutes later four people walked up to the front door of the recreation center and from their conversation it was obvious they were there for the open house. So, a half hour before the open house was supposed to start there were six or maybe more people waiting for the Parks and Recreation Department staff to arrive and set up the open house.

A little after 1:00 P. M. the senior planner who was in charge of the Dog Park Master Plan process and his assistant arrived at the recreation center and began to set up the room where the open house would be conducted. While they set up the display boards and put out the handouts and comment sheets, as they had at the first open house, all of us non-City people who had already arrived for the open house entered the room. The display boards were arranged in the same clusters that they had been at the first meeting. However, this time the clusters were arranged in a counter clockwise flow. Though I had seen the display boards at the first open house, I like the other attendees began to wander around the room looking at the display boards. I noticed that as they moved around the room looking at the display boards the other attendees engaged in conversation about the information on the display boards and other topics of interest to them.

While the senior planner was trying to set up a table with the handouts and comments sheets for the process, an attendee engaged him in a heated conversation about the proposal to require a special tag for use of the dog parks and off leash areas in the City's parks. The gentleman was very forceful in presenting his argument against the tag and for the need for more enforcement of the rules in the parks. The gentleman saw the special tag as just an attempt by the City to make money, and as unneeded and without

any value. The gentleman continued to argue with the senior planner and even

questioned the cost of the display boards for the open houses as a waste of City money.

He had very strong opinions and expressed them very forcefully. I recognized him as

being one of the neighborhood activists involved in the Protectors and Defenders of the

Parks grouping. I had seen him at some of the meetings of the people associated with the

group. After about ten minutes of arguing with the senior planner the gentleman moved

on, though he came back shortly thereafter to argue more and to question the design of

the dog park survey conducted in the spring of 2009.

By the 1:30 P. M. scheduled time for the start of the open house there was almost

40 people present at the open house plus me and the two Parks and Recreation staff in

charge of the open house. This was a much better attendance than at the first meeting.

As with the first open house, there appeared to be a mix of people present, though

according to my observation there were more neighborhood activists with an organized

opposition to the draft Dog Park Master Plan present than at the first open house. As

with the first open house some people had their dogs with them. One woman upon

entering the open house commented that she had expected a public hearing and not an

open house. She seemed disappointed the event was an open house and not a public

hearing.

As I was wandering around the room listening in on the conversations among the

attendees, I came across a conversation between one of the neighborhood activists I knew

and the Parks and Recreation Department's Director of Park Planning. (The Director and

a representative of the City's Animal Control Department had joined the open house after

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it began and were now engaged in conversations with the public in addition to the senior planner and his assistant who were present when the open house began.) The activist commented that he understood the mayor wanted the Dog Park Master Plan to go through and so it would be approved no matter what the residents of the City thought about it. I noticed a group of people around a number of City Council members and so I moved on to that group.

Unlike the first open house where no City Council members attended, three council members attended this open house. Councilwoman Peggy Lehman representing Council District 4, Councilwoman Marcia Johnson representing Council District 5 and Councilwoman Jeanne Robb representing Council District 10 were in attendance at the meeting. None proposed new dog parks or the proposed pilot off leash area in City Park was in their districts. They had taken up a position near the entrance to the room in which the open house was taking place and though one of them would break away to go look at one of the display boards or talk with one of the attendees now and then, they pretty much stayed in one place and talked among themselves and to people who came over to them. In the time I spent listening to the conversation in the group around the City Council members there seemed to be some uncertainty on the part of the City Council members as to the process being followed on the Dog Park Master Plan, the purpose of the open houses, and if the outcome of the process was predestined or not. The City Council members appeared to be at the open house solely to gauge the feelings of the attendees on the Dog Park Master Plan process and so to get a sense of the level of support and opposition to the Plan.

As the open house was well under way and the room was very crowded, I took a break from wandering around the room and made my way to a quiet area at the edge of the room. As I looked out on the room I tried to make sense of what I was observing. Few people were looking at the display boards. Most everyone was in groupings holding conversations with other people, the Parks and Recreation staff, or the three City Council members present at the open house. The attendees seemed to be more interested in talking with their fellow attendees and the City staff about the issues than they were concerned with learning about the draft Dog Park Master Plan from the display boards.

While taking my break and observing the open house from the margins, I considered the purpose of the open house: "to afford the public an opportunity to provide input on the draft Dog Park Master Plan" (Meeting Announcement from the Parks and Recreation Department, January 14, 2010)   In considering the matter, I focused on how effective the format of the open house was in meeting that purpose. There were the comment sheets that people could fill out and turn into a Parks and Recreation staff member.   There were also the Parks and Recreation staff members themselves, who should have been another channel to gather input from the attendees. However, there were a few vocal attendees opposing the Plan who monopolized the staff members time and so prevented most people from ever getting the opportunity to speak with a staff member and express their views. In addition, I noted, as was the case in the first open house, the Parks and Recreation Department staff never took notes on the conversation they had with people at the open house. Did this result in a loss of input from the public?

As I prepared to begin to wander around the room again, I noted it was 2:30 P. M. and the number of people present at the open house had decreased to about 30 people. The number of people present continued to decrease as I moved around the room and by 2:45 P. M. it was down to 20. The City Council members had left by then, and the atmosphere in the room was one of people beginning to tire of being at the open house and so it felt to me the open house was starting to wind down.

As I wandered around the room I took note of two comments in two different conversations. First, a woman in talking with the Parks and Recreation senior planner and the Director for Park Planning said she "believed her neighborhood is being ignored as there is no effort to have a dog park / off leash area available to the neighborhood that would be in walking distance." She believed other people with power were preventing the placement of a dog park or off leash area within walking distance of her neighborhood and she was upset that was the case." Second, one of the people who had been a member of the External Stakeholder Committee came up to me and said "Parks and Recreation had not gotten a 'representative sample' of the population to participate in the Dog Park Master Plan process and this had damaged the validity of the process."

By 3:10 P. M. the number of people in addition to me and the four City staff members was down to 12. There had been a surge of people at the beginning of the open house and then after the first hour the number of people began to drop. A core group of around ten people were present throughout the entire two hours of the open house. These ten people were all neighborhood activists whom I recognized and they were all associated with the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks group. They came to oppose

the Plan and they made sure their views were heard. A few of the External Stakeholder

Committee members attended the open house, but their number was probably no more

than four. In a conversation more than two months after the open house, I was told that

many of the External Stakeholder Committee members believed it was improper to attend

the open houses. They believed they had had their say and so should not attend the open

house and give their input.

At 3:30 P. M. I exited the room where the open house had been held and made my

way out of the Cook Park Recreation Center and back to the bus stop on the west side of

Cook Park to start my journey back home. For January it was nice warm, pleasant

afternoon.

As I waited for the bus and on my way home on the bus, I thought about the open

house that day. As I thought, a number of questions came to mind. First, why had the

City Council members attended the open house? The neighborhood activists appeared to

have come to the open house with a plan and a purpose beyond just giving their input on

the Plan. What was the purpose of their organized attendance at the open house, and

what impact did their attendance have on the planning process for the Plan? The stated

purpose of the open house was to collect input from the public on the Dog Park Master

Plan. How did the way the open house played out fulfill or hinder this purpose, and was

the stated purpose the true purpose the Parks and Recreation Department was trying to

fulfill in having the open house? These were all questions I did not have an answer to,

but were ones I felt I would need to answer in some way by the end of my research.

Public Meeting Sponsored by the City Park Alliance

In January, when the Parks and Recreation Department announced the two open house meetings they were conducting, they announced a meeting to be conducted by the City Park Alliance. This meeting was advertised by the Parks and Recreation Department in the announcement of it as

> an important opportunity to voice your suggestions on the draft recommendations under consideration for dog park facilities and programs in Denver. An off-leash hours program is being proposed in City Park to test this concept. If a successful model is able to be tested positively during the proposed pilot period, consideration will be given to expanding the program to additional parks. Come hear the details of plan proposals and help the City continue to shape draft recommendations that will provide successful solutions to the City's growing needs! (Parks and Recreation Department Email, January 28, 2010)

The meeting had not been mentioned prior to January 2010 and it was sponsored by the City Park Alliance--a citizens group who watched over City Park and what the City was doing with it--and not by the Parks and Recreation Department. The meeting was held in the evening of Tuesday, February 9, 2010 at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science located in City Park. The meeting was being hosted and conducted by the City Park Alliance, but the Parks and Recreation Department was to present the Plan and take public input as part of the Dog Park Master Plan process.

It seemed significant to me that the meeting was occurring. It was the only meeting in the Dog Park Master Plan process which was not sponsored and conducted by the Parks and Recreation Department. It was in a City facility, but unlike the other two public meetings was not sponsored by the City. The other two public meetings had been conducted in the open house or poster session format, while this meeting was to be conducted in a public meeting with questions and answers, and comment format. These

differences and the fact the meeting had not been part of the original Dog Park Master

Plan process, but had been added, made me wonder if there was more to the meeting than

was being advertised. Was the meeting evidence of power being exerted behind the

scenes by someone outside the announced Dog Park Master Plan process, or was it as

advertised: a civic minded group, the City Park Alliance, being a good citizen and

affording the public another opportunity to share their views on the Dog Park Master

Plan. I didn't know which of these it was or if there was some other purpose to the

meeting. So, I went to the meeting expecting it to have a different purpose, expecting for

it to play out differently than the two open houses, and hoping my observation of it would

yield insight into these two expectations.

As I had done for the other meetings in the process, I took the bus to the meeting.

I caught the bus near my home and after a transfer of buses got off the bus at the stop

closest to the Museum of Nature and Science on Colorado Boulevard and then walked

over to the museum. The entrance to the part of the museum where the meeting was to

be held was on the west side of the Museum and not at the north or main entrance to the

museum. The meeting was being held in the museum's auditorium and the display

boards from the open houses were set up in the lobby outside the auditorium.

When I arrived in the lobby about fifteen minutes before the 6:00 P. M. scheduled

time for the start of the meeting, there were already people present looking at the display

boards and talking among themselves. The senior planner, his assistant and the Director

of Park Planning were all present and mingling with the people in the lobby answering

questions.   As the time for the meeting to start approached the group began to move

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towards the auditorium, so I joined the flow and went into the auditorium and found a

seat near the back of the room from which I could observe the meeting.

The woman from the City Park Alliance who was to moderate the meeting started

the meeting at 6:05 P. M. by thanking everyone for coming and the Museum of Nature

and Science for hosting the meeting. She then went over the format of the meeting, the

Parks and Recreation Department staff would do a presentation describing the Dog Park

Master Plan process and the draft Plan and then there would be a question and answer

period, followed by a comment period.

I noted that there were about seventy people present at the beginning of the

meeting. The people present from City government included not only the three Parks and

Recreation staff who had been out in the lobby, but a number of the Parks and Recreation

Department leadership, the head of Animal Care and Control for the City, one or two of

the Mayor's staff and a number of City Council members.

As she continued her opening remarks the woman from the City Park Alliance

noted that the meeting was the first meeting on the Dog Park Master Plan held in the

neighborhoods where City Park is located. From the context and manner in which the

statement was made, the message I received was the City had finally come to speak to the

people who counted in the process.

Parks and Recreation Presentation. After the meeting moderator from the City

Park Alliance finished her opening remarks, she turned the floor over to the Parks and

Recreation Department to do their presentation. The Director of Park Planning led off

with a description of what he believed were the issues and positions held by the people

interested in the subject of dog parks and off leash areas in the City's parks. He believed

saw there were two main positions held by people. The first of these was that dogs were

running wild in the parks and causing significant problems. The second position was

there were insufficient areas for people to take their dogs in the City's parks. He then

went on to state that dogs cause less damage to the parks than some other activities

especially sports. He also said that the issues concerning dogs in parks and dog parks are

not unique to Denver and that as far as the Department was concerned the status quo was

unacceptable as it would continue the current situation in the City's parks which people

were complaining about, and so something had to be done. The Director concluded his

remarks by saying that though the Department believes the proposed Dog Park Master

Plan was a good plan, and he asked the people against the proposed plan to provide

suggestions and ideas on what would work.

Once the Director of Park Planning completed his remarks, the senior planner did

his presentation on the process and the proposed Plan. The senior planner's presentation

covered the elements of the process followed by the Parks and Recreation Department in

the developing the draft Dog Park Master Plan that was being presented that night. He

listed the steps of the process to date. He described the membership of the External

Stakeholder Committee and the internal work group that had been involved in the Parks

and Recreation Department's development of the plan from June through November

2009. He summarized the background and context of the dog park issue in Denver.

None of the information presented was new to me.

Once he had finished describing the elements of the process to date, the senior planner outlined the next steps in the process. These would include collecting comments at that night's meeting, taking the public's comments back to the External Stakeholder Committee and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board for reaction, and then briefing the City Council on the proposed Plan. The senior planner said that once those steps were completed the Department would draft the final Plan, which they hoped to do by summer 2010. These steps were the same as had been described to the External Stakeholder Committee in its last meeting on November 10, 2009.

The senior planner, after concluding his description of the process for developing the Dog Park Master Plan, moved on to the elements of the proposed Plan. He first went through the Plan in general and then went through each of the Plan elements in detail. The Plan as he described it was the same as had been presented to the External Stakeholder Committee in their meetings in the summer and fall of 2009. However, I noted that his presentation of his recollection of the External Stakeholder Committee agreement with the elements of the Plan differed from my recollection. For example, in discussing the charging of fees for using dog parks and off leash areas and the establishment of an off leash area in City Park he stated that both the internal work group and the External Stakeholder Committee were recommending these elements be adopted. My recollection of the External Stakeholder Committee meetings was that the Committee had not reached a consensus in support of the two items as the senior planner stated in his presentation. This was another example of the senior planner hearing what he wanted to hear in the External Stakeholder Committee meetings, which resulted in the senior

planner's record of the Committee's agreement or disagreement with the elements being different than mine.

During the presentation on the recommendations a number of the attendees tried to raise questions or make comments. These were cut off by the meeting leader from the City Park Alliance. The attendees were asked to hold their questions and comments to the portion of the meeting set aside for them.

Question and Answer Time. After the 35 minute presentation by the Parks and Recreation Department on the Dog Park Master Plan and the process followed in drafting it, the meeting leader opened the floor up to questions from the attendees concerning the Plan or the process.

The City Park Alliance meeting leader moderated the question and answer portion of the meeting. She called on people who raised their hands and someone with the wireless microphone would move to the person and provide them the microphone so they could be heard when they asked their question. The order of the questions was controlled by the meeting leader by her recognition of people who wished to ask a question.

The first question concerned the location of the off leash area for City Park. The senior planner in response to the question said the exact site had not been chosen, but that it would be away from sports fields and high use areas of the park. This led to a few questions about the criteria to be used in evaluating the success of the off leash area pilot in City Park. Though the questions asked for specific criteria the senior planner in responding said there were no specific criteria developed yet, but he did list the types of issues that had been brought up in the External Stakeholder Committee discussion on the

issue. The Director of Park Planning then joined in to the discussion of the criteria and development of the pilot off leash area in City Park and said people should provide input on what they would like to see included in the criteria and their views on the areas that should be considered for the area.

An attendee asked if other parks were considered as sites for off leash areas or dog parks. In answering the question the Parks and Recreation staff referred to the push back from the External Stakeholder Committee and the community as a whole to placing off leash areas and dog parks in large parks and said this had caused the Department to back off on areas other than those included in the proposed Plan. Neither the senior planner nor the Director of Park Planning specified what other parks had been considered for off leash areas by the Department in its planning efforts or the fact that Commons Park had been presented to the External Stakeholder Committee and then withdrawn because of its conflict with the Railyard Dog Park. As follow up on the question on consideration of other parks the person asked when meetings had been held, and there was an expression of frustration about the lack of opportunities to provide input on the proposed Plan.

The next person recognized asked a question about which of the facilities for dogs would be covered by the fee proposed. The senior planner replied that the fee was all inconclusive and covered all facilities. This was followed up by a question about whether lack of success with one type of facility would result in elimination of all dog facilities. The answer to the question was that each facility and type of facility would

stand on its own and lack of success in one facility or one type of facility would not affect the other facilities.

The next set of questions in the chronology of the meeting switched to the area of control of dogs in the dog parks and off leash areas and how the rules for such areas would be enforced. The focus here was on how the City defined being under control and what the coverage by enforcement personnel would be in the various areas. The questions challenged the City's ability to enforce the rules in dog parks and off leash areas due to a lack of resources. The City admitted that it did not have the resources to have enforcement personnel present at dog parks and off leash areas at all of the times the areas would be available for use. The Director of Park Planning did state that the one of the uses for the fees would be to hire more enforcement personnel, so the problem of lack of enforcement would be lessened if the Plan were adopted.

The mention of using some of the money collected through the use dog park and off leash area fee for enforcement resulted in one person questioning the fairness of charging the responsible dog people for the cost of enforcement of people violating the rules. The response to this question from the Director of Park Planning was to go over what will be funded with the fees and remind people the City is required to recover its cost of providing services through fees.

The portion of the meeting dedicated to questions and answers was wrapped up by an attendee asking if use of the dog parks and off leash areas would be limited to only responsible dog people and their dogs. The answer to the question from the Parks and Recreation staff was that they had talked to other local governments and the sense they

got from the conversation was it was not possible to do that. They reported the consensus among the other areas was that it was too difficult to determine who was a responsible dog person and who was not. With that the question and answer portion of the meeting was ended after a duration of 35 minutes at 7:15 P.M.

The Time for Comments. The City Park Alliance leader of the meeting then called for comments on the Plan. She said the comments should be limited to two minutes in length.

The comments section of the meeting started off with comments from two people who appeared to me to be in favor of dog parks and off leash areas. They made comments about facilities needed in the parks for dog people and their dogs. The first was to ask for inclusion of an off leash area in Mayfair Park. The second was a request for recognizing the need for plants or structures to provide shade in dog parks and a request to allow dog training classes in the parks. These were the first and only comments on facilities for dog parks made in the meeting.

The next few comments chronologically in the meeting were in opposition to the off leash area proposed for City park. The comments all focused on the belief that dogs, if not contained in a fenced area, would run wild and cause harm to people and other dogs. The comments also brought up the City's lack of available personnel to enforce the rules in the off leash areas. The people commenting expressed a belief that allowing an off leash area in a park would deny them and others the use of their parks.

In advocating for no off leash areas, one commenter also expressed a belief that dog people should pay for the privilege of taking their dog or dogs to a park. Another

commenter advocated using the fees for maintenance and not for enforcement. This linked back to the belief that people who paid the fees were responsible dog people and they shouldn't have to pay for enforcing the rules on non-responsible dog people as they were not causing the problem. These were two different views of the fee issue expressed close together in the meeting.

Throughout the comment period the majority of comments supported not having off leash areas in parks. Interspersed among these comments there were a few advocating for off leash areas and their establishment in more than just City Park. Many people believed that allowing off leash areas in parks would increase the conflicts among park users, including some of the people who advocated having off leash areas. Some people advocated for considering parks other than the larger parks as sites for off leash areas. There even was one person who called for establishing off leash hours in all of the City's parks.

After 25 minutes and 23 comments, the leader of the meeting from City Park Alliance closed out the comment period and thanked the attendees and City staff and officials for coming. She then allowed the Parks and Recreation Department staff to make some closing remarks. As part of their closing remarks Parks and Recreation again said they would go back to the External Stakeholder Committee with the comments collected in the three public meetings and then brief the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, Inter Neighborhood Cooperation, and the City Council on the results of the process. The formal meeting ended at 7:45 P. M.

Many people left immediately after the meeting ended, and a few people moved out to the lobby to look at the display boards. Most of the people, especially the ones I recognized as neighborhood activists, stayed in the auditorium with the City staff and officials and talked in small groups that formed and dissolved as the topic under discussion in the group changed. Though I never joined any of the groups and so don't actually know what was discussed in the groups, my guess would be the neighborhood activists were making their points with the City officials, especially the City Council members, on how they felt about the Dog Park Master Plan's proposal to have an off leash area in City Park among other things. By 8:00 P. M. the groups had pretty much dissolved, the Parks Recreation staff was taking down the display boards in the lobby and the remaining attendees were working their way to the building exit. I exited the building and made my way back home.

Observations on the Meeting. After the meeting I went over my notes and thought about the questions I had before the meeting. The participants in the questions and answer portion of the meeting brought up many of the same arguments and challenges that had been brought up in previous meetings by people opposed to the Plan. They questioned such things as the fees to be charged, they questioned how the City would enforce the rules for dogs in parks contained in the Plan, they questioned lack of availability of areas in parks for dogs to be off leash, and they questioned the lack of specificity of the Plan elements.

The comments made during the meeting revolved around the health and safety issues of off leash areas in parks, such as the issues of dogs attacking people and other

dogs and wild animals in the parks, and the issue that off leash dogs would make areas of the parks unusable by people who should be the primary users of parks. Though the preponderance of questions and comments were against dogs in parks, there were questions and comments that were in favor of dog in parks. I took note that both the question and the comment sections were cut off before all people had an opportunity to speak and so it is hard to know a true ratio of the people at the meeting who were for and against the Plan.

As to the questions I had going into the meeting, it seemed to me that the meeting was a show of force by the people in opposition to the Dog Park Master Plan, especially to the placement of an off leash area in City Park. Unlike the public meetings conducted by the Parks and Recreation Department that there had been many more City officials present. The tone of the meeting appeared to be conveying the message to the Parks and Recreation Department there was a group of people who were upset they had not been part of the planning process and they were now showing they had access to people who could exert power to modify the Plan or stop it all together. Were my questions answered? No. Did I have a feeling there was more going on than what was being presented to the public? Yes. Did I have proof of any of this? No. I would just have to let the process play out and see what the final outcome would be.

The Comment Sheets from the Public Meetings

At each of the three meetings open to the public the Parks and Recreation Department made available to the attendees comment sheets on which the attendees could write down their comments about the Dog Park Master Plan. Three months after the

meetings were concluded I received copies of the 167 comment sheets the Department

had collected at the three meetings.

> **Method.** As I had done in the observation of the External Stakeholder Meetings

and the three public meetings, I reviewed the comment sheets in an attempt to see what

meaning could be made from the comments contained within them. The use of texts as

part of an ethnographic research project is well founded and accepted in qualitative

research. My seeking of meaning from analysis of the textual artifacts as part of my

research on the Dog Park Master Plan process is based on the call from Goodall (1994;

2008) and Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) for researchers of organizations and

community to strive to find meaning within the observations they make in order to

develop a true and complete representation of what happened in the organization or

community.

> In analyzing the comment sheets to determine the meaning I could derive from

them, I used thematic analysis as described by William Foster Owen (1984) as a

sensitizing influence. The looking for meaning in textual analysis, such as I did on the

comment sheets, is a recognized way of doing textual analysis (Ryan and Bernard, 2003)

as well as one of the methods for finding meaning recommended by Lawrence-Lightfoot

and Davis (1997).

> There was a limitation in the information that could be derived from the comment

sheets. The comment sheets only asked for comments and did not ask the people

completing them to provide any demographic information about themselves or to indicate

at which of the three meetings the comments were provided. Therefore, I treated the

comment sheets as one set of data and did not attempt to infer any meaning from them for any specific meeting or group of people. I treated the sheets as representing the common beliefs of all of the attendees at the three meetings.

General opinion on Dog Park Master Plan. On an overall basis more of the comment sheets indicated support for adding fenced dog parks (83 people or 49.7% of the respondents) to the City's parks as envisioned in the Plan than opposed (24 people or 14.4% of the respondents) the proposal. On the other hand slightly fewer people were in favor (45 people or 26.9% of the respondents) of unfenced off leash areas than opposed (47 people of 28.1% of the respondents) them. The comments on the specific elements of the Plan were mixed, and it was not uncommon for there to be both comments against some element(s) of the Dog Park Master Plan and comments in support of others on the same comment sheet. This made it hard to classify many of the responses as being for or against dog parks and unfenced off leash areas. Therefore, there were a significant number of comments sheets I was unable to classify as being either for or against dog parks or for or against off leash areas.

The comments on the sheets were wide ranging and in general covered many of the same issues as had been raised and discussed in the External Stakeholder Committee meetings concerning the Dog Park Master Plan. People supported or opposed the specific dog park sites contained in the presentation on the Plan. People attacked the proposed actions concerning how the rules and ordinances on dogs in parks would be enforced and the fees proposed for using the dog parks and unfenced off leash area. People praised and complained about the plan for adding amenities to existing dog parks

and the ones proposed for future dog parks. People complained about the impact the dog parks would have on their local park.

        The opposition to dog parks. Besides commenting on specific elements in the Dog Park Master Plan, some people gave comments as to why they were opposed to dog parks and off leash areas in general. These comments were especially enlightening from a context and dynamics point of view. The comments fell into three general areas, the first of which was dogs in unfenced off leash areas would interfere with other park users. The comments in this area were ones such as:

> I was attacked by a dog 10 years ago, and the experience was very traumatic for me. As a result, I have an uncomfortable feeling when dogs approach me, and I want to be able to experience Denver's parks without being afraid.

Another example is:

> Off leash parks in areas without nearby residences with close monitoring may be okay but current proposal is terrible idea (1) dogs pose threat to safety (in packs especially) (2) dog waste is threat to health (3) dogs off leash pose threat to grass, especially during dormant period . . .

There were a number of quotes which address the impact on what are considered to be people with less voice and less choices in the community. Some of these were ones such as "dog fights to determine dominance threaten elderly and disabled who have nowhere else to walk," or

> Dog Parks are not acceptable for the poor, who cannot afford the drive elsewhere, the elderly, who depend on parks for exercise, the very young, who are especially vulnerable to attack.

The last of the examples of quotes representing this area are ones such as:

> Please include this reality in your fenced in plans. It isn't possible to pick up dog poop under the snow in the dark – so when the spring comes it will be smelly & messy. Law suits will happen if dogs are off leash in city parks.

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A second area of opposition to dog parks came in the form of considering dog parks as a lesser use of parks and so not entitled to the same level of support. This can be seen in comments such as "furnishings / amenities for kids and people first" and "people (humans) & kids should come 1st," which is consistent with the comment in the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) meeting that in a conflict between kids and dogs, dogs will always lose. Another comment was "we're closing recreation centers but putting in dogs parks. What is wrong with this picture?" Another view on the matter is: "I object strongly to funds being spent to provide for the most violent guests of the park. They have no respect for the very rules that will make a dog park work on a daily basis." One comment captures the connection between not being as good as other uses and the need to pay a fee:

> The fee tag program is a great way to support the dog parks. Since not all taxpayers own dogs, all should not be expected to pay for dog parks. I do not support an unfenced dog park in City Park. It will not support off leash areas without impinging on pedestrians, children, playgrounds, runners, and dogs on leash.

The idea of people who wish to have dog parks paying a fee to cover their costs is also present in comments such as "A $10 fee is a joke. The rest of the park users who do not have a dog will have to pay for sod replacement, animal control, law suits, etc." Another comment in this vein "Owners who use dog parks must pay fees for maintenance & restoration."

The final area deals with opposition to the Dog Park Master Plan because of the issue of privilege. Some people believe the Parks and Recreation Department is privileging dog people by establishing dog parks and off leash areas. The following two quotes demonstrate this belief:

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This project benefits middle-class, able-bodied, medium-large and large dog owners. It doesn't address 'needs' by handicapped dog owners, older owners. Dog owners are affluent citizens who should deal with their desire to run their dogs with their private friends. A city department should not be funding this small elite group.

Why is a government agency using public money to fund dog parks used by a segment of the dog owning population: (1) They choose to own large dogs (2) They are predominantly under the age of 40 (3) They are able-bodied (4) They are predominantly white. What about handicapped owners of small dogs?

Other people believe the Plan de-privileges the public in two ways. First, "a dog park fee commercializes use of the park – parents don't pay for their kids." Second, the Plan is seen as "another scheme from Parks and Recreation that ignores the neighborhood organizations' input before it goes out for public comment." The opposition of people to the Plan based on either the granting of or denying of privilege by the Department of Parks and Recreation all speaks to the belief the Department is not listening to the public and so either incorrectly privileges or does not privilege the impacted portions of the public in the Plan.

The pro dog park people. On the other hand, there was a significant number of responses in support of dog parks and unfenced off leash areas. The tone of these comments were more consistent with the view that dogs deserved a place to play and exercise in the parks, and of the view that dogs and their people have as much right to use the parks as anyone else.

Many comments alluded to the need for spaced for people to be with their dogs. One person called for having an area "big enough so many people can be throwing Frisbees & use chuckits which enable the dogs to run free and far" and allow them to "spend a lot of quality time with my furry kids." Another person also noted a need for a

time and place where they could "spend quality time with their dogs." There was also the

call to recognize the needs of people without backyards by mentioning "a lot of us live in

apartments and townhouses and have dogs." This is actually one of the things for which

the opponents to dog parks fault the people with dogs. In support of unfenced off leash

areas one person commented "My dogs enjoy open space with trails and waterways more

than fenced in small areas." This is in line with the comment of "the need for adequate

space to let the dogs off leash & be able to get a good human walk" in support of

unfenced off leash areas instead of what is seen as small fenced dog parks.

Comments on the need for a place where dogs and human can exercise together

led into comments about putting dog parks into more places to achieve better coverage.

This is shown in comment such as

> I represent 45 signed members of [a neighborhood.] Several handicapped, many
> elderly who believe their dogs need more exercise, faster than a crawl to keep
> them healthy. Most cannot drive to a [an existing] dog park.

Another person called for "dog playgrounds within walking distance," and asked the

Department to "look where people go already . . . My guess is they won't stop just

because a few new areas (not in walking distance) open up." This was also addressed in

quote from another person who commented:

> I think that the small neighborhood parks need some off leash areas/times. I
> don't want to have to drive 6 miles to City Park when I can walk 2 blocks to my
> neighborhood park. The majority of people that use the neighborhood parks are
> close by residents & most of them want to have the park clean & safe so are
> responsible dog owners.

One person captured the social aspect of dog parks and the issue of entitlement to

space for dogs along with the other uses in parks when they commented:

I love going to dog parks & I love that dog owners stand around & chat with each other while dogs play. It's a great way to bring people together & make friends. It happens! Please keep up your wonderful work to bring more dog parks into the neighborhoods. Denver is filled with other amenities that have no use for me (playgrounds, soccer fields, etc.) but they are important for others & I appreciate that. Now is a great time to bring a few parks in for dog owners.

A number of people at the public meetings commented about the entitlement of dog parks to be recognized as an equal use of city parks along with the rest of the uses that the taxpayers pay for through their taxes. As one person commented: "if you can spend money for a 'boche ball' area . . . find money for dogs! More people have dogs than a boche ball." Another said: "Dog owners pay all local property and other taxes that provide services for other families. Using some of our tax dollars for dog parks is as important to me as the taxes for playgrounds for parents of children." This was echoed by the person who said: "The city taxes dog owners in the form of a license fee. Why should they not be able to engage in innocent activity, just as soccer players, children on playgrounds, and concert goers do? Where's the fairness?" Finally there is the person who said "Why should you have to pay a fee to use the dog parks. Why not pay a fee to have children use the park" which not only shows opposition to paying a fee that is not required of others but also equates a dog with a child as a member of the family.

The people who supported dog parks and unfenced off leash areas wanted two things. They wanted to have space in their city parks, preferably close to their homes, where they could take their dogs and have some quality time with them. They also wanted it recognized that they and their dogs had the same entitlement to use the parks as anyone else and shouldn't have to pay more to do so.

Chapter Five: The Final Plan

With the completion of the two open houses conducted by the Parks and

Recreation Department in January 2010 and the public meeting conducted by the City

Park Alliance in February 2010, the public engagement portion of the Dog Park Master

Plan process ended. So, as the days passed in February I looked for the announcement of

the External Stakeholder Committee meeting to go over the public comments received in

the two open houses and the public meeting, and the Department's response to the

comments, as had been announced in the final Committee meeting in November 2009

and at the February 9, 2010 public meeting at the Museum of Nature and Science. The

meeting of the External Stakeholder Committee and the issuance of the actual final

approved Plan were the last two items I needed to complete my research.

Finding Out the Pilot Off Leash Area Had Been Eliminated

On February 27, 2010 at the Inter Neighborhood Cooperation Zoning and

Planning Committee meeting, I received the first indication the draft Plan had been

changed. Towards the end of the meeting as the attendees were announcing events and

developments in their neighborhood, one of the attendees, who had been a member of the

External Stakeholder Committee, brought up the Plan. The City Council member who

was in attendance, whose council district included City Park, and who had been a

member of the External Stakeholder Committee, followed this up with an announcement.

She announced that the City was considering establishing a dog park as an interim use of

the recently acquired site for a new recreation center just south of City Park. She said the placement of a dog park was being considered at the site as a substitute for the pilot off leash area in City Park which had been eliminated. She said the pilot had been eliminated as result of the input received at the February 9, 2010 meeting on the Dog Park Master Plan at the Museum of Nature and Science. The attendees at the meeting reacted positively to the news and moved on to announcements from other attendees.

The unexpected announcement at the meeting was my first indication of what was happening to the Dog Park Master Plan. The announcement had been short and delivered in a passing manner, but it seemed to be common knowledge among many of the attendees, especially the ones who lived in neighborhoods surrounding City Park and the ones who identified with the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks grouping. I started to have a feeling that pressure was being applied behind the scenes to shape the elements of the final Dog Park Master Plan, and this effort had begun with the meeting at the museum

Final Dog Park Master Plan Meeting

The next time I heard anything about the Dog Park Master Plan was an email in early March 2010 from the senior planner in charge of the Dog Park Master Plan process announcing a meeting of both the internal work group members and the External Stakeholder Committee members to review and provide input on the final recommendations to be included in the Plan. The meeting was scheduled for the evening of March 15, 2010 in the large hearing and meeting room on the fourth floor of the City's Wellington Webb Building in downtown Denver.

Upon arriving at the Webb Building and making my way up to the room on the day of the meeting, I found the senior planner, his assistant and the Director of Park Planning for the Parks and Recreation Department were already in the room and shortly people started to gather for the meeting. The senior planner moved around the room talking with the people as they arrived. The conversations appeared to be focused on the fact the final recommendations to be presented at the meeting were a compromise and the fact the pilot off leash program in City Park had been taken off the table.

When the meeting began at 5:50 P. M. there were 19 people present besides the three Parks and Recreation Department staff members and me. The 19 people were all from either the internal work group or the External Stakeholder Committee. There were ten members present from the External Stakeholder Committee. None of the people present were ones I associated with the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks grouping.

The senior planner as the leader of the meeting started the meeting off by having everyone introduce themselves. Unlike in the first two External Stakeholder Committee meetings, the senior planner did not have me, the only observer at the meeting, introduce myself. Once the introductions were concluded, the senior planner began his presentation of the elements of the recommended final Dog Park Master Plan.

Existing facilities element. The first element discussed was the upgrade of the existing dog parks. The Parks and Recreation Department had included in the Dog Park Master Plan a recommendation to make improvements in the existing dog parks. This was the same as had been included in the draft Plan presented at the public meetings in January and February 2010. The Department had added language to the element to

address sequencing of the improvements by specific dog park. There was little discussion on this element.

Fines and fees element. The next element of the Plan presented included the recommendations for increasing staffing levels, adding a fee, adding new fines, and refining the responsibility requirements for dog park users. All of the recommendations presented, except for the one on fees, were the same as what had been presented to the External Stakeholder Committee and the public in the meetings the Department conducted with them. The fees recommended had been increased from what had previously been proposed. The senior planner in charge of the meeting then opened the floor to discussion on the fees. One attendee said "he would play 'devil's advocate' by questioning why the City would expect dog people not close to a dog park to pay the fee for use of dog parks." The senior planner deferred discussion on the comment and said the Plan was a package deal and not subject to change. The group then moved on to a discussion among multiple attendees and the Parks and Recreation Department staff about allowing a discount on fees for people with multiple dogs. There was a preference in the discussion towards allowing a discount.

Once the discussion on fees died out, the group moved on to discussing the fines. Though there was not a change from the draft presented previously, the group wanted to bring up some points they believed were important to the issue. The discussion revolved around the issue of how the new regulations would be enforced. There was a concern expressed that with the recommendation to support the Environmental Health Department plan to eliminate the requirement to present proof of vaccination when licensing a dog

there would be less compliance with the requirement to vaccinate dogs. This was seen as a health and safety issue and thus very serious. People also brought up the problem of people providing false information to enforcement staff and the lack of education on the requirements and responsibilities for dog parks. The group agreed the City needed to do a better job of education and achieving compliance with the requirements and responsibilities in dog parks and parks in general.

New facilities element. At 6:30 P. M., a half hour into the meeting, the senior planner moved the group from the discussion on fees and fines on to the element of new facilities. The senior planner presented the recommendations to be included in the Dog Park Master Plan on new facilities. He characterized the recommendations as being more aggressive than the original draft recommendations. The recommendations presented included adopting a one mile service radius for any new facilities being considered, restricting new facilities to fenced dog parks, and a commitment to continue to search for vacant areas to be developed as dog parks and opportunities to partner with outside entities to acquire and develop new dog parks. The recommendations did not include the two proposed dog park sites in Cook and Vanderbilt Parks; nor did it included any recommendation for an off leash pilot area in City Park or any other park. The two specific parks had been dropped from the plan as well as the pilot of an off leash area in City Park. They had been replaced by general language on continuing to look for sites for dog parks and working with partners to establish dog parks as part of new developments. The senior planner commented in his presentation that there had been organized opposition to the off leash pilot in City Park. None of the Parks and

Recreation staff present explained why the two specific dog parks had been dropped from the Plan. The recommendations did contain language indicating there was a bias against converting existing park areas to dog parks in the future.

The reaction to the presentation was swift and aggressive. There was a question raised about why the sites in Cook and Vanderbilt Parks were no longer included in the Plan and were they still under consideration. The senior planner said the two sites were still under consideration, but were not going to be included in the Plan. He said the City was backing off specific sites as this level of detail in the Plan was never the Department's intention. In subsequent discussions with the Parks and Recreation Department staff well after the March 15, 2010 meeting, I found the opposition from City Council members to the sites was the reason the two specific dog park locations were removed from the Plan was there was opposition from City Council members to the sites.

Another question raised on this element was why the off leash pilot include in the Plan at the last External Stakeholder Committee meeting in November 2009 had been eliminated. The senior planner admitted that push back from organized groups in opposition to the pilot had played a big role in the decision to eliminate the pilot. The Director of Park Planning expressed a preference on the part of the Department to take what it could and not try to fight for the off leash pilot, which would delay the process.

The discussion on the new facilities element of the Dog Park Master Plan was concluded with a suggestion from one of the attendees that entities that sponsor a dog park in the future should be recognized for their sponsorship. In response, the Parks and

Recreation staff raised a concern about the sensitivity of recognizing sponsors in parks. It appeared the suggestion did not have any support and would be ignored.

Partnership element. With the discussion on new facilities concluded on a negative note, the senior planner moved the discussion on to establishing partnership groups to assist the Parks and Recreation Department in advocating for and managing dog parks in Denver. The senior planner announced that back on February 8th an organizational meeting had been held to form a partner group to begin the implementation of this element of the Plan. The senior planner characterized the group as active and aggressive in getting organized and taking on the partnering with the Department to advocate for dog parks and their management. The Director of Park Planning said the City would work with the new group and would offer the members of the group discounts on the dog park fees in recognition of their efforts.

With all of the elements presented and discussed, the senior planner called for a consensus on the Dog Park Master Plan elements as presented. This never came. Without asking again the senior planner announced the next steps in the Dog Park Master Plan process. The first of these was briefing the City Council Public Amenities Committee on the final Plan recommendations the week of March 22, 2010. The step after that was preparing the final Plan document, which he predicted would be completed by May 2010.

As the meeting was being wrapped up, one of the External Stakeholder Committee members expressed a concern "that there is no meat in the recommendations in the Plan and that people will not be satisfied." He went on to say "most people will

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see nine months [of work] for nothing."   The Parks and Recreation Department Director

of Park Planning disagreed that nothing had been done. He said "he believed the one

mile standard and the current amount of dog parks in Denver being equal to other cities is

a great accomplishment." He went on to express the view there would be a Plan adopted,

but there is no promise the element recommendations contained in the Plan would be

implemented. He closed out his comments by saying the Parks and Recreation

Department planned to implement the fees recommended in the Plan in January 2011.

With the conclusion of the group discussion the attendees began to gather their

things and prepare to leave. As people started to exit the room, discussion continued

among groups of one to four people, some containing one of the Parks and Recreation

staff and some not. I stayed for a few more minutes and when it became obvious I would

not be able to gain any further useful data I left and made my way back to my home.

The Briefing of the Plan to the PRAB

After the March 15, 2010 meeting just described, information on the status of the

Plan dried up. Then in October 2010, seven months after the meeting, I found in the

agenda for the October 14, 2010 Parks and Recreation Advisory Board meeting posted on

the Parks and Recreation Department web site an item that the Department was going to

brief the Board on the Dog Park Master Plan recommendations. Therefore, I decided I

would attend the meeting and listen to the briefing and see what the status on the Plan

was.

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board or PRAB is an advisory body within

the Parks and Recreation Department created by the City Charter and charged with

advising the Manager of the Department on matters of policy or park operation (Board of Parks and Recreation, 1987). The Board is made up of thirteen members appointed by the mayor, the city council and the local school district, and is considered to represent the members of those bodies (Board of Parks and Recreation). It reviews and provides feedback to the Department on proposed rules, the annual budget and any other Parks and Recreation Department policies or actions put before it.

The October 14, 2010 meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board was held from 5:30 P. M. to 7:30 P. M. in the large hearing and meeting room on the fourth floor of the City's Wellington Webb Building. The board was seated at tables arranged in a U shape at the front of the room with Parks and Recreation Department staff grouped at the end of one of the legs of the U. The board chairman led the meeting assisted by the Department staff. The public attendees at the meeting were seated facing the board in rows of chairs. There was a microphone placed in front of the seating area for the members of the public to use in making comments during the public comment period at the beginning of the meeting. Public comments were not allowed during any other part of the meeting.

There were a number of items on the board's agenda for the evening along with the Dog Park Master Plan. The first of which was the time set aside for public comment. A member of the partnership group formed back in February 2010 took the opportunity to speak in favor of the Dog Park Master Plan. She supported the recommendations in the Plan. She asked the Department to consider setting aside areas within dog parks for small dogs. She advocated for increasing the level of licensing of dogs within the City. She

expressed her group's disappointment that the off leash pilot had been eliminated from the Plan and asked that off leash areas be included in parks in the future. She was the only member of the public present to speak on the Dog Park Master Plan or dog parks.

With the public comment period out of the way, the board took up the first two items on the agenda, and then came to the agenda item on the Dog Park Master Plan. The senior planner presented the Plan to the board on the Plan. He opened his presentation by noting the Department had found there was an increasing demand for areas where people could exercise their dogs off leash. He went on to say that people feel they don't have space to do this or to socialize with other dog people. He also stated the Plan was still in a draft status. The Director of Park Planning then joined the presentation and said: "he recognized some people do not want dog parks, but he wants the Plan for all and to address the problems in parks with dogs." The senior planner wrapped up the introduction portion of the presentation by announcing that four new dog parks–Railyard, Colfax and Josephine, Lowry, and Parkfield—would be coming on line in the coming year.

The senior planner began his presentation of the actual Dog Park Master Plan by saying "the recommendations in the draft Plan have not changed from what was briefed in March 2010." He then went through the recommendations in the Plan, which matched exactly with what had been presented at the March 15, 2010 meeting to the External Stakeholder Committee and internal work group members. He then asked for questions from the board. There were a few clarifying questions asked, but there was little discussion on the Plan.

The board then moved on to the remaining items on its agenda, and the meeting ended at or about 7:30. I left the Webb building and made my way back home to await the next installment in the process.

The Final Dog Park Master Plan Is Issued

After the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board meeting in October 2010, I again went into a waiting mode for the final Dog Park Master Plan to be issued. Periodically, I contacted the senior planner who had headed up the Dog Park Master Plan process or the Parks and Recreation Department communication liaison, and inquired as to when the final plan would be issued. I was told repeatedly it was almost done and it would be issued in a month or so. This went on from the October Parks and Recreation Advisory Board meeting until finally at the end of March 2011 the senior planner notified me he was making the final edits to the Plan and it would be issued shortly. A few days later I checked the Parks and Recreation Department web site and found the final Plan had been posted on the web site. After encountering some problems downloading the electronic file of the Plan from the web site and having to contact the communication liaison for help, I finally obtained an electronic copy of the Plan on April 13, 2011.

The Plan was now completed and approved. It was now the official Plan that would guide the Parks and Recreation Department in managing dog parks in the City. The process to develop the Plan was completed. The Department could now check it off its list of things to do.

What was in the Plan? The Dog Park Master Plan &Policy Recommendations (Denver Parks and Recreation, 2010) was 46 pages in total. It was laid out in a similar

manner to the poster board presentation for the public meetings. After the title page, page of acknowledgements and credits and the one page table of contents, the Plan began with a three page introduction section. The introduction introduced the plan and described the goals and objectives that guided the Parks and Recreation Department in developing the Dog Park Master Plan.

The next section of the Plan was a six page section describing the planning process followed in developing the Plan. This section of the report provided a one page flow chart of the process and a one page diagram and description of the input process showing the various interest groups that had an input into the development of the Plan according to the Parks and Recreation Department. The third page of the section had a summary of the roles and membership of the internal work group and the External Stakeholder Committee. This was followed by a one page description of the three public meetings. The last two pages of the section described the on-line survey conducted in the spring of 2009 and provided 12 bulleted highlighted findings from the survey the Parks and Recreation Department had found significant.

The next section of the Plan was a one page description of the process used in gathering and evaluating best practices from other United States and international cities. This section contained a listing entitled "Unique Highlights from Best Practice Research." This listing gave a briefing description of the highlights of ten local and national cities and three international cities dog park systems.

The next or fifth section of the Plan was a nine page section on the existing dog park system in Denver. This section described current conditions at the six original dog

parks and the rules and maintenance policies in place for the operation of the six dog parks.

Finally on page 23 of the Plan the section on Recommendations began. The section addressed the four categories–upgrading existing facilities, improving staff enforcement / education, new facilities and design standards, and developing partnerships–in which the Parks and Recreation Department had categorized the recommendations the Department had settled on. The Plan addressed each of these categories in a separate part of the section. The recommendations, which to me were the most important part of the Plan, made up 13 of the 46 pages of the Plan or 28 percent of the Plan. Of the 13 pages in this section of the report the Plan included five pages on improvement to existing dog parks, three pages on improving staff enforcement / education, two pages on new facilities and design standards consisting of a map showing the existing dog parks and a page of design standards to be used in the future for managing dog parks, and a one page discussion on partnering with citizen groups in the management of the City's dog parks.

The Plan concluded with an eleven page appendix section containing various lists and graphic images supporting the Plan sections.

What I thought of the Plan. I read through the Dog Park Master Plan & Policy Recommendations (Denver Parks and Recreation, 2010) and was disappointed. Considering the length of time it took to prepare and the amount of effort expended by all parties involved it was short on details and gave a distorted view of what had come out in the process and the efforts by the participants in the Dog Park Master Plan process. It did

not meet the criteria set forth by the recognized experts in the parks and recreation management community such as Harnik (2010) for what should be included in an exemplary master plan for a city park system.

Besides not being of a quality recommended for exemplary master plans, the Plan provides a distorted view of what happened in the Dog Park Master Plan process.   One example is in the Introduction to the Plan (Denver Parks and Recreation, 2010, p. 5) where the Department makes the statement "Public support for off-leash dog park facilities within Denver parks is essentially split down the middle, . . ."   This statement is not supported in the Plan document by any information or references. I would label the statement to be inaccurate based on the information available. Though the public input gathered through the comment sheets from the public meetings was split more or less equally in favor of and opposed to off leash dog park facilities, the responses to the survey conducted in the spring of 2009 as well as the discussion of the External Stakeholder Committee members were overwhelmingly in favor of off leash dog park facilities.

Information about the meetings conducted as part of the process contained in the Plan is incorrect or missing. On page 9 of the Plan (Denver Parks and Recreation, 2010) the Plan says the internal working group and the External Stakeholder Committee "met for a final meeting to review a presentation, discussion and acceptance of the final recommendations in *February 2010*" (emphasis added). The meeting was on March 15, 2010 and, based on my observation of the meeting, I would disagree that the members of the two groups "accepted" the final recommendations.   The summary of Internal,

External and Public meetings contained in Appendix 6 on pages 45 and 46 of the Plan

does not list the August 14, 2009 or October 14, 2010 External Stakeholder Committee

meetings.

The Plan makes assertions about the role of the External Stakeholder Committee

which I know from my observations mislead the readers of the Plan about the role and

actions of the External Stakeholder Committee. One example of this is the statement on

Page 6 of the Plan (Denver Parks and Recreation, 2010) which says: "City staff, the

Internal Advisory Committee [what I refer to as the internal work group] and the External

Stakeholder Committee developed the plan and policy recommendations based on the

following goals and objectives, which were *agreed on* by all the staff and *committee*

members at the outset of this planning effort" (emphasis added). The External

Stakeholder Committee members were not allowed to develop any part of the plan or

recommendations, but only served a review and comment function in the process. The

goals and objectives were presented to the External Stakeholder Committee at their first

meeting, but there was never a positive agreement from the members to them. On page

29 of the Plan (Denver Parks and Recreation, 2010) in discussing increasing field staff

the Plan says:

> Understanding that increasing staff means finding additional sources of revenue,
> the Internal Advisory Committee and External Stakeholder Committee members
> conducted extensive analysis and then advanced a fee system for dog park facility
> users.

The External Stakeholder Committee only reviewed and commented on what was

presented to them and there was significant disagreement with the fee idea when

presented to the Committee. The implication that the External Stakeholder Committee

was active in the analysis of the need for a fee or in the development of a fee structure is therefore misleading.

The only specific recommendations in the Plan were those for improvements in the existing facilities. The rest of the recommendations were vague and general in nature. There was a lack of detail and the lack of information about the path forward. The inaccuracies in the Plan as detailed above also gave an impression there had been more involvement by the public in developing the recommendations contained in the Plan than there was.

The Plan was the type of plan people had complained about in the past. It was a document that lacked any vision or a program that could be implemented, and so, was a document that looked good, but had no heft. It would be put on the shelf and never followed. The process had produced the type of Plan the City was known for--a safe, vague, non-controversial Plan. Unfortunately, the process had not produced the Plan that the interest and commitment of the parties involved in drafting the Plan deserved.

Chapter Six: Filling the Gaps

From the beginning of my research on the Dog Park Master Plan process in the spring of 2009, I had believed I would need to go beyond just observing the process in order to fully understand it. This belief was confirmed as I conducted my observations of the External Stakeholder Committee meetings and the public meetings from June 2009 through March 2010. First, I realized that my observations alone would not allow me to fully understand the experience of the people who were members of the External Stakeholder Committee. Second, I recognized there were dynamics and people outside the process who had influenced and guided the ultimate outcome of the process. Therefore, once the final Dog Park Master Plan meeting was concluded on March 15, 2010, I began to pursue information sources to fill these gaps in my knowledge.

Interviews of the External Stakeholder Committee Members

To fill the gap in my understanding of the experience of the External Stakeholder Committee members in participating in the process I conducted interviews with as many of the Committee members and City staff involved in the meetings as I could. The interviews, as expected, yielded useful information for my research.

Method. In person interviews were conducted individually with the interview participants. I met with the interview participants at a time and place that was convenient to both of us. The locations for the interviews varied from one of the participant's

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homes, to the conference room of the Communication Studies Department at the University of Denver, to the participants' offices, to the Denver Botanic Garden. The interviews were audio recorded and transcripts made. The interviews sessions were conducted in May and June 2010 and lasted anywhere from more than 15 minutes to almost 55 minutes.

The interviews were conducted using a script of open ended questions. A copy of the script is attached as Appendix C. All participants were asked the demographic and main questions, but the wording of the main questions and any follow up questions depended on the flow of the interview and the dialogue occurring in the interview session. I did not adhere to the exact wording of the questions on the script, and once the main question was asked I played the role of fellow participant in the dialogue about the question. I was a participant in the interviews and not a disinterested researcher. My objective in the interviews was to obtain a narrative from the participants focused on areas of interest indicated by the main questions in my script. In the interviews I allowed the participants to control the flow and pace of the interview and I only intervened to redirect the dialogue when I believed it was necessary to refocus the dialogue to better address an area of interest.

The participants in the interviews were recruited by email. I emailed all 21 members of the External Stakeholder Committee and the five City staff who were active in the Committee meetings asking them to participate in an interview. Of the 21 Committee members, nine responded to my initial email indicating an interest to participate, and of those six actually met me for an interview session. Of the five City

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staff contacted three expressed a willingness to meet with me and be interviewed and ultimately I was able to meet with two of them. My method of selecting the participants in the interviews falls within the classification of convenience sampling.

I requested review and approval of my research protocol by the University of Denver's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in the fall of 2009. The protocol for the interviews was approved by the University of Denver's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects on December 8, 2009. The participants in the interviews were offered confidentiality, and to protect their identities pseudonyms were used in any quotations used in the reporting of the findings from the research project. I obtained informed consent from the participants by having them sign an informed consent form at the beginning of their interview session. At the request of the Institutional Review Board I obtained acknowledgement from the Parks and Recreation Department that the City was aware of my research, and I received an opinion from the Denver Board of Ethics that my research project and the compensation paid, a $50 gift card, for participation in the interviews did not violate the Denver Code of Ethics.

The transcripts of the interviews were analyzed to determine what meanings the interview participants attributed to their participation in the External Stakeholder Committee meeting process. As with the analysis of the comment sheets generated in the public meeting, I used Owen's (1984) thematic analysis method as a sensitizing influence in deriving meaning from the interviews. There were three main themes, which described the experience of the participants in the External Stakeholder Committee

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meetings, that came out of my meaning making on the interview transcripts. These themes are discussed in the following sections.

One thing in common is dogs. All of the members of the External Stakeholder Committee, as Alex[9] said, had "one thing in common. We all seemed to care about dogs." Where they differed in this common theme was in how they saw dogs' use of parks. The predominate view of the Committee members was that dogs had a right to use parks and dogs were respectful users of the parks. The members of the committee saw dogs as members of their family and so, as one person put it, saw "taking your dog to the park is like taking your kid to the playground." People see their dogs as their "furry children," and as such the dogs have just as much right to use the parks as would any human child. Another person who supported this view, Jennifer, said:

> You know, like even playing Frisbee with your dog in the center of a grass lot is very different from taking your dog to a dog park. Taking your dog to a dog park is like taking your kid to the playground. They go to the playground, they go play with all the other kids, you're not interacting with your kid, you're just watching them play. You know taking your kid with you on a bike ride or playing Frisbee with your kid in the park, you're interacting with your kid. So, same thing with the dogs. You know you take them to the dog park, they're playing with all the other dogs, and you're not interacting with them. But, you know, you're in the middle of a grassy lot throwing your Frisbee, they're thinking, they're interacting, um, you know, it's just a very different experience. . .

Alex expresses the belief that dogs are respectful, under control users of parks when she quotes another dog person as saying: "He thinks his dogs should be able to have some time in the park off-leash because they're in control and, you know, dogs that are in control should be able to do that."

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[9] As I have stated before, pseudonyms have been used for the participants in the interviews where they are quoted to protect their confidentiality. Quotations from the interview participants used in reporting the results of my research were edited for clarity, but as much as possible the original words of the participants were used in the quotations.

However, there was recognition that there were people that did not wish to have dogs in parks running free, and so they needed to take these views into account. Jane expressed it well when she said: "it's not just about dogs having a place to play, it's about the other side too and people wanted the park to be, to remain a pristine, beautiful, green place." She identified this view as being a primary reason why the group in lower downtown portion of the city decided to develop their own dog park, the Railyard Dog Park, and so relieve pressure on existing parks in the area from dog use. Others took the view that there were times available when low usage of the parks would justify the use by dogs. This can be seen in the following quote from Jennifer:

> There are tons of times I go to Washington Park and it's a huge grassy area in the center. If you had off-leash hours from 7:00 to 9:00 so you could play Frisbee with your dog in the park when nobody is there. I think it is a more efficient use of the area and it would expand, it would fill a gap.

On the other hand there were a few Committee members who believed dogs caused too many problems in parks to be considered good users of the parks. Mark expressed their point of view well and had this to say about the health issues related to dogs in parks:

> . . . dog waste is loaded with unhealthy parasites and the thought of having dogs running around and then expect people to throw blankets in the same area and have picnics, or have children throw their Frisbees and not realize where the Frisbees are landing and what potential it does to their own health is, um, is ridiculous. And it was interesting that the environmental health person that did participate during one part of the session admitted that grass is an inappropriate surface for these areas, i.e., you can't pick it all up. Even if it does get picked up, you can't get it, all.

In addition, Mark sees safety issues if dogs are allowed to run off leash in parks as would be the case if unfenced off leash areas were allowed and expressed them as follows:

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The response I get to off leash activity are from a grandma that has a two year old toddler that now is terrified of dogs because the kid was jumped on by an off leash dog. I hear from the bicycle rider that was thrown off a bike by an off leash dog. I hear from people that say the dogs are running into the street with a handler running after them screaming come back, and the dog almost hit by a car. I have taken field trips to an off leash with people of title (I'm going to put it that way) during times of heavy use and they are amazed at what they see and hear when they're in the middle of it. Another experience was a person walking through a park and being surrounded by dogs and the owners not paying attention that the pack mentality took over. There are many safety issues with the dogs themselves as well and including the health of the dog.

He followed with this comment on damage to the parks by dogs and his belief that the parks are for people first:

So then the notion of well the way we can fix it is if we have an off leash site and that site gets worn down into a mud field, then what we do is we nurture that site and we move the area to another site. And if that gets worn down, we move to another site. Well that's nonsense. What you're doing is making the whole park then a dog park and I believe the parks system is people first . . .

Mark was one of the most vocal members of the External Stakeholder Committee and brought up the above issues a number of times in the Committee meetings with little or no success in getting any indication they would be considered in the Dog Park Master Plan adopted by the City.

As can be seen, though the group may have had the common interest of dogs as their unifying theme, they differed in how they saw dogs using the parks. On the one hand were those who saw dogs as "children" and therefore had a right use the park. This group also saw a way of sharing the parks. The other group, though small in number, considered people the primary users of parks. The group considered dogs as out of control and unacceptable users of the parks because they caused health and safety problems. Dogs would eventually damage the parks, and likely this damage would

displace people. This division among the views of the Committee members was never resolved.

Are you listening? The city staff came into the process with an agenda. In some cases the agenda was literal and in other cases it was metaphoric. That is, the Parks and Recreation Department did have agendas for the meetings and they stuck to them. It was also obvious in the way the Department structured the process that they looked to themselves as the experts and so they established their internal work group of city staff as the body that would develop the proposed alternative and draft the master plan.

The Parks and Recreation Department looked to the External Stakeholder Committee as a sounding board. As stated before, one of the city staff interviewed said:

> The external stakeholders committee was essentially developed to act as a sounding board to our planning process . . . as a way to sort of reach out to the public without holding public meetings, two or three public meetings throughout the process continually. It was an opportunity for us to sort of reach out and get that initial feedback before we actually went out to the bigger, the larger public body, to solicit some input on some of the recommendations that were being developed.

In a metaphoric sense they came to the process with an agenda. That is, they had decided what was the best way to design and implement the dog park concept in to the City's parks, and they were only looking to the public as represented by the External Stakeholder Committee to help them refine their great ideas. This became obvious to the members of the external Stakeholder Committee as the process went on and they began to feel that the City was just going through the motions in the process and had no intention of giving the Committee's input any weight.

The impression of the Committee members was that the City was performing a ritual to make the final decision look good. This can be seen in the comment from Alex:

". . . I think some of it was a little rote, like, oh, yeah, we allowed the citizens to be represented so they went through the motions, a bit . . ." This feeling is best portrayed in the following words from Bobbie:

> . . . we seemed to be more superficial, more, rather external to the process that was going on. . . honestly, by the end I think we [the committee members] all sort of felt slightly . . . like we had. That it was a process that the government had required that they go through to have this external input, and whether or not it made a difference was extremely unclear. . . I'd like to think we made a difference overall, but I think that that only revealed itself along the way, over a long period of time that that external felt very external. . . I felt very extraneous, I think, as the process continued than I did at the beginning of the process. At the beginning of the process, I think we were made to feel like we mattered, if anything that we were actually required, which was sort of an interesting feeling too. And, maybe halfway through the process felt like that wasn't necessarily so, and that we were just a big, filling a role, that they needed filled.

Alex in her interview hit on a similar feeling:

> [The City] already established certain things that were and weren't gonna happen regardless of what we said, because they already had figured out what was gonna work in the city and what wasn't, or what the City was willing to do, or what the neighborhood was willing to do, etc.

The Parks and Recreation Department's view that the External Stakeholder Committee was just a "sounding board" colored their interaction with the members of the Committee and the people who attended and provided comments at the public meetings. The Department in its dealings with the Committee kept to their agenda of looking to the Committee to comment on what the internal work group had come up with and not looking to the Committee to provide new input on subjects or to expand the discussions beyond the plan elements developed internally. This adherence to a belief in the rightness of the process as envisioned by the city staff led to a belief on the part of the committee members that they were not heard in the process.

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The committee members interviewed consistently said they believed they were heard and listened to in the process. However, all of them brought up instances and made comments that would indicate that they did not truly feel that their voices were heard and taken into account in the process. This feeling on the part of the committee members came from their belief that issues that they raised were not acknowledged by Parks and Recreation in the process. There was a belief on the part of the committee members that the City came in with an agenda and issues that did not fit that agenda were not dealt with. Jennifer commented in her interview "I just felt some things were kind of missed or not heard or at least if they did hear them they didn't relay very well at the next meeting that they picked up on that."

Alex not only picked up on the city not being open to new ideas or issues, but also the city believed they were the experts in her comment:

> . . . which was in a way kind of diminishes of what maybe are the expertise of any of those people . . . It sort of diminishes the idea that we have experience in this field and the government people necessarily don't.

Alex also said on the City not being open to new ideas of other issues: ". . . so we weren't really encouraged to think about really the process much. You know more and more small solutions that might fit into that overall scheme of things." Buffy's comment on not being allowed to bring up other issues was "If we say this stuff and then it's just kind of like brushed aside, and maybe appearing to be brushed aside . . ."

A good example of an issue on which discussion was suppressed in the committee meetings was Mark's repeated attempts to raise the issue of disease transmission and the degradation of the park surfaces by dogs that are off leash. This was never discussed beyond being recognized as an issue by the Parks and Recreation

Department staff and the members of the committee. In his interview Mark commented

that in his view the Parks and Recreation Department didn't deal with this and other

issues, glossing over any disagreement in the minutes of the meeting by indicating there

was consensus when, at least in Mark's view, there was none. As he said:

> There were big holes in the process that could have been dealt with on a much
> more upfront, scientific fashion instead of presenting concepts and a nod of the
> head or no response meant a positive response. The minutes that came out from
> the senior planner I replied to and voiced in those responses my own particular
> thoughts about those minutes that it was not by consensus, that there were
> problematic areas that need to be explored further.

It should be noted none of Mark's comments about the minutes were ever shared with the

Committee by the senior planner.

The issue of not being listened to on new or different issues and ideas was

connected by the committee members to the issue of the City coming into the meetings

with an agenda that they weren't going to deviate from. Alex conveys this well in her

comment:

> And what I found was certain subject matters were just never brought up and I
> was never able to really discuss certain things that I thought would help. Because,
> they [Parks and Recreation] seemed like you said maybe a little bit brought forth
> an agenda of what issues they wanted to cover and any side issues were quickly
> dismissed in a way, you know, because that wasn't sort of the main thrust of what
> they wanted to talk about.

A different viewpoint on the City having an agenda was expressed by Jennifer in her

comment:

> I think it came kind of toward the end and it seemed a couple, some of the later
> meetings that they had pretty much made up their mind that they were gonna go
> with one [dog park] over the other, yet they were still taking feedback on it. Um,
> but didn't seem as open to, you know, I think the suggestion was, well, why don't
> you keep it open, don't foreclose this one, you know, keep 'em open and, it
> seemed like the decision had pretty much been made . . .

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However, there was feeling by the committee members that though the City had an agenda they were still somewhat open to changing the details of the plan based on feedback as can be seen from this comment from Jane in talking about the elimination of Commons Park from consideration as a site for an off leash area due to the conflict with the new Railyard Dog Park:

> I think several of us felt like Parks and Recreation was just gonna do whatever they wanted because what they put forth as recommendations at one point in the process seemed to not have anything to do with what we had been talking about. But as soon as we all made our voices known, and I think there were council members present that day, they shifted course and sort of reconsidered.

The belief that they were not listened to and not understanding the level to which they would be able to influence the final decision were sources of frustration to the committee members. This may be one reason why the attendance at the committee meetings declined as the process went on. The frustration felt by the committee members is well said in the following quote from Bobbie:

> I feel like it was a little bit unclear when we started the whole process about, um, what the process was for. I think in the long run the impression that I had was that at some point during this process, whether it took six months, whether it took a year, we would come to, um, there would be action involved. So there would be, um, a yes or a no. Yes, there's going to be a dog park at [this park] and we're gonna start making it this summer. Yes, there are going to be off-leash hours and we're going to do them in [this park] and these are gonna be the hours. Um, so in the end I feel we were told that's not what the process was about. What the process was about was garnering opinion, sorting out what would be good to consider and not good to consider and then we'll take it on from here. And to arrive at that latter, for it to have taken a year, that's a long process to just sort of get some opinion and then move on on their own. That was a long process. And I think there was sort of inherent frustration involved when we got to that point to say, wow, well, did I really need to be here at 7:00 in the morning every month for the last year for us to have come up with this.

As can be seen from the above paragraphs, the members of the committee felt frustration that they may have been heard but they weren't listened to, that they believed

they were going to have a bigger say in the end product, and they may have been wasting

their time. They expected to be listened to and they expected that the time they put in

would have some value, neither of which do they believe occurred. In the end the

impression was that the City came in with an agenda and they weren't going to deviate

from it. The Parks and Recreation Department didn't really want to hear ideas and

suggestions from the public, but instead just wanted their view of what was a good plan

confirmed.

And then they caved to the pressure. Starting with the third meeting of the

External Stakeholder Committee the city started to present specific locations for new

fenced dog parks. These locations were discussed and the locations of the proposed new

fenced dog parks were refined and changed as the process went on. As the process

moved forward the discussion of new fenced dog parks was joined by discussion of

unfenced areas where dogs could be off leash in parks. The inclusion of specific

locations in parks for new fenced dog parks and unfenced areas where dogs could be off

leash during certain hours was a consistent part of the External Stakeholder Committee

meetings from the committee's third meeting until its last meeting. The

recommendations on specific locations and operating procedures for new fenced dog

parks and unfenced off leash areas in parks flowed out into the other public engagement

events held by the Department. However, the final recommended Plan presented at the

meeting with the External Stakeholder Committee members on March 15, 2010 did not

contain any of these specific locations or the pilot program for an unfenced off leash

area. The Departments rationale for the change was "push back from organized groups

was big in the decision to drop the idea of a pilot unfenced off leash area in a park," and "there never was any intention to include specific sites in the final Plan." Both of these were taken by the Committee members as a sign the Department had caved to outside pressure.

The belief that the City had caved in to an outside group and so violated the integrity of the process was present in the comments of all of the Committee members interviewed. One example of this comes from Buffy in discussing her impressions of the March 2010 meeting with the Committee members when she said:

> And the whole off leash thing which dominated a lot of the early meetings was just docked. We're not gonna do that. People aren't ready for that, quote/unquote, you know, type thing. And I'm like well what happened, you know. And they were just, it seemed to me, and maybe I didn't press hard enough, but it seemed to me that they were pretty reticent to, you know, say what happened, why all the sudden that was just off. And I think I'm making more of an assumption that, like I said, they bowed to the angry mob about it, so. I was pretty disappointed in that and I was like, well, I guess [another committee member] was right, you know, because… And so, you know, and I guess that's, the other thing I would say to answer your question on the overall experience of being on this task force is that, you know, I hate to say this because it's probably because that's what I'm looking for, but, you know, the activists, the people that are against things all the time, the loudest people, you know, came in at the last, the eleventh hour and changed a lot of the scope of what they were trying to accomplish.

She went on to say:

> . . . you know, and all this stuff was discussed, you know, pros, cons, this, that, and I even looked at, um, some of the … minutes and a lot of it was general consensus next to all of these topics about off-leash stuff. And then this, to me, my perception, and I asked [the senior planner who led the meetings] and he said, yeah, well, people just aren't ready for it yet. So he never really said for sure if it was that [museum] meeting or not, but then all of the sudden, you know, we're not doing off-leash stuff, so. I was disappointed because it seemed like the, a situation that, or at least one topic that had been such a dominate thing that had been discussed and then, um, just gets put by the wayside because of my perception that I got, the angry mob got it going.

The feeling that an outside group swayed the decision and eliminated the input

from the committee members in making the decision was also conveyed in the following

from Alex:

> . . . [Parks and Recreation] decided there was too loud a voice on the other side so it was just not gonna happen, period. They basically said that to us. So, it was like, because us regular people didn't speak up loud enough, that's basically how they put it. There was big contingency of debaters on the other side and. Okay; our side [the pro-dog park people] didn't speak up enough so it's not gonna happen. Period.

Jennifer took a slightly different view on the issue of the City caving to a small

group outside the process. She held the view that the City was predisposed to cave to

pressure. She conveys this in words such as:

> I felt there were also some kind of hints, of, you know, political pressure in their [the City's] minds in terms of , you know, what's the public going to think of this, when we present this, you know, what\'s going to happen, they're going to blow up.

Jennifer went on to say:

> I know just in general [the City is] kind of famous for backing away from kind of cutting, what could be considered to be cutting, edge planning concepts for the reason of wanting to avoid controversy and to have everybody like them. . . it was a little disheartening just in general . . to see them back off these issues for a reason I felt was not because it wouldn't help them solve the problem but because it would be really hard for them to, to present this forward. . .

Jennifer felt so strongly about her frustration with the process she wrote me an

email after her interview session that said, in addition to other things, the following:

> . . . as I mentioned in our meeting, I became aware that the City was moving beyond our recommendations and incorporating what seemed to be their own perception of what may be possible (or "easy") to achieve to caveat/narrow what they heard from our group. . . nothing frustrated me more than planners that are afraid to plan. Planning depts. were created because people seemed tired of reacting to development and community problems and letting those issues dictate their community – the City has done just that, so much for problem solving.

Not only did the committee members believe that some outside group, which was unknown to them, had influenced the process and that the City had a predisposition not to fight for the proposed plan that came out of the process, they also believed some of the committee members were working outside the process to influence the final recommendation. This can be seen in the comments from Bobbie in her interview:

> The meeting that happened at the [museum] came as a great surprise to a lot of people that there seemed to be one particular committee member who had organized an entire community to show up. . . I would expect as a committee member that, you know, I would really frown upon you taking that role on for yourself to go out and, and, whip up some kind of political storm and allow that sort of interfere with the process. I think there were a lot of committee members that are very upset about what happened.

The fact that the Committee members were upset with those among their membership who went outside the Committee to influence the outcome of the process is supported by a comment from one of the committee members at the end of one of the meetings about being upset that other committee members were stirring things up outside the committee meetings and encouraging non-committee members to attend the committee meetings.

An admission that at least one Committee member went outside the process to influence the final Plan comes in a comment from Mark in his interview. When asked about his influence on the process he said: "I don't think it, the impact I had, was a result of participating in the committee. I think the impact I had [was] with the external things that I'm involved in." When asked if the committee had had any influence in the final recommendation Mark replied: "Not at all."   It was very obvious to the committee members that some of their members were working against the committee outside the committee process.

The members of the Committee interviewed (and it is believed the Committee as a whole) believed the City caved to pressure from outside the Dog Park Master Plan process and so abandoned the recommendation on the new facilities in the Plan. This is a strongly held belief and is supported by both the Committee member's comments and the words of the Parks and Recreation Department staff in interviews and discussions.

The interviews conducted with the External Committee members confirmed my observations of what had occurred in the Committee's meetings and the Dog Park Master Plan process. My observations were that the Parks and Recreation Department had come in with and agenda and they weren't going to hear anything that disagreed with that agenda. The Committee members had the same impression. My observation at the end of the process was that outside influences had been applied to make sure the Parks and Recreation Department didn't adopt their agenda for the Plan, and the Committee members confirmed that was their observation also. The interviews brought to my attention the feelings that people held about dogs as part of their family and how they viewed dogs as users of parks. The interviews brought clarity to my observation and my perception of what the process had meant to people who were involved.

Information from Incidental Contacts and the Press

In my observations of the Dog Park Master Plan process it became obvious to me there were forces outside the process that were influencing the process. This realization made me more sensitive to noticing comments and presentations in meetings I attended outside the Dog Park Master Plan process and articles in the local media I either happened upon or someone pointed out to me. Though I was not included in much of the

discussions and meetings that went on outside the Dog Park Master Plan process, I did encounter people in meetings who commented on issues related to the process, and I found articles in the local press related to the process. Both of these sources provide me information that I found pertinent in understanding the dynamics present outside the Dog Park Master Plan process that may have influenced it. The following sections discuss what I found.

Other meetings. Before, during and after the time period when I was actively involved in observing the Dog Park Master Plan process I attended meetings in the City involving people active in their neighborhoods and interested in what the City government was doing that impacted their neighborhood. Though these meetings were not part of the Dog Park Master Plan process there were times in the meetings that the issue of the Plan or issues related to parks within the City came up. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss or hear information on an action of the City government and how it impacted the residents of the City. Though not part of the Dog Park Master Plan process, these meetings yielded information that I found applicable to my research and so I took note of it.

One general theme that came out of my observation of the these meetings was that neighborhood activists as a group believe they represent the city population as a whole and they know what are the correct and desired actions and policies that should be implemented in the parks within the city. In their opinion, this makes them the group that needs to be consulted and their directions followed by the City in making plans such as the Dog Park Master Plan for the city's parks. They demand the City give them one or

more seats on any committee, task force, or board that is deliberating on policy development in the city. They label as invalid any process that does not involve someone from the interested group of neighborhood activists as central players in the process and they dismiss any other people that hold a view different than theirs. They take offense to any disagreement from the City with their positions and view such disagreement as evidence the City is intentionally ignoring their views and their desires as to what the City's plans should reflect. They project a position that you are okay if you agree with them, and if you disagree with them, you are the enemy.

Combining my observations of the public meetings held as part of the Dog Park Master Plan process with the discussions in meetings I attended outside the process, I came to a conclusion about the practices of the neighborhood activists in participating in public engagement events for park related issues. The activists coordinated with others who held their view on the issues so as to ensure they had a common position and that as many of their followers attended the event as possible. At the meeting they all signed up to speak and reiterated the agreed to position. This was done to present an appearance of an overwhelming volume of input at the event supporting their position on the matter under consideration. They then demand the City go along with their position as they portray the overwhelming volume of input as a demonstration that their position is the position held by the majority of the City's residents. They attempt to conflate the input given by the large turnout of their followers at the event with the position of the population as a whole.

The general view projected by the neighborhood activist groups is that dogs in parks as a use of the parks is a less desirable use than other uses of the parks. This can be seen in a comment at a Parks and Recreation Board Meeting in October 2010 where the results of the Dog Park Master Plan process were briefed to the Board. One of the board members said: "you can't equate dogs and children as to their right to use the parks. The dogs will always lose." This view is at the foundation of the justification for charging fees for dog park users because that use of the parks is a privilege and not a right and so a fee to pay the cost is justified unlike using tax money to pay the cost as is done with playgrounds and such.

Another position on dogs in parks is the one that is held by people like the woman I met at a meeting who equated being for unfenced off leash areas with being an irresponsible dog owner. She considered irresponsible people who had large dogs as part of their families and who because they do not have adequate space at home due to living in an apartment or condominium to exercise their dog, wished to use the parks. This view goes along with the view by some neighborhood activists that people who have dogs as part of their families do not have the same rights to use the park as other users of the parks.

Articles from the local press. Over the course of the Dog Park Master Plan process there were a number of articles, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor concerning park usage and in some cases dog parks. The articles yielded a number of interesting insights.

The articles in the papers during public engagement phase of the Dog Park Master Plan process primarily addressed the fact that the process was ongoing and, as the process progressed, issues that were coming up in the process (see Davis, April 2009; Davis, November 2009; Fong, July 2009; McPhee, March 2009; Osher, March 2010; Plaven, May 2009; Richert, August 2009; Richert, January 2010; Seeber, November 2009).

The articles written about the Dog Park Master Plan during the process quoted predominantly three groups: the public information staff of the Parks and Recreation Department mainly press releases and responses by the Department to statements by others quoted in the press; people associated with one of the neighborhood organizations against the Plan who had contacted the press and provided their position on the Dog Park Master Plan as part of their campaign to influence the decision making against dog parks; people the press contacted in a park to obtain their opinion on the dog park issue. This latter group I noted was almost always in favor of dog parks and off leash areas and saw them as good additions to the parks.

Looking at the dichotomy between people who were quoted and associated with an organization and just the average person on the street leads to three insights. The first is the appearance that the opposition was organized and was approaching the local papers with their positions. In some of the meetings I attended outside the Dog Park Master Plan process some neighborhood activists who were later quoted in the media admitted they had contacted the media and instigated an article on the dog park issue. The second is that the neighborhood activists represented themselves as speaking for the majority of people. In one article a neighborhood activist is quoted as saying "senior citizens and

parents of small children were concerned about dogs running around and possible

knocking people down" (Davis, May 2010). I noted the activists never discussed how

they knew what the majority's position on the issue was. The third insight was that there

appeared to be both support and opposition to the Plan, though only the opposition side

was associated with organizations. These insights all speak to the difference between the

pro and con dog park groups and their ability to influence the media coverage of the

views on the Dog Park Master Plan.

Dog parks and dogs in parks were commonly mixed in with other issues

concerning parks in newspaper articles (Ditmer, November 2010; Helper, June 2010;

Preziosi, December 2009).   These types of articles were uniformly negative on

proposed uses for parks and advocated the disapproval of any plans to allow for off leash

areas in parks. People who opposed dog parks and dogs in parks were commonly

interested in a range of park use issues. They were not a grouping of people who had a

single issue view, but were concerned with parks and all their uses and the defense of

parks from uses they saw as bad or inappropriate for the parks in the City.

The divide between the Parks and Recreation Department position on appropriate

uses for parks and the position of the grouping of people who normally opposed the

Department on park uses was based in how the two groups saw parks. A good example

of this was the pro and con opinion pieces published in the December 2009 *Washington*

Park Profile, which demonstrate well the divergent views held by the two groups. The

Manager of Parks and Recreation, Mr. Patterson, in his piece, which was in favor of the

proposed use addressed in the pieces, uses language that speaks to diversity and

responsiveness to changing needs and wants of the City's population. He says that in

order to fulfill the Parks and Recreation Department mission it "must respond to the

changing needs of all its citizens and what they request of their park system" (Patterson,

December 2009, p. 5). In another section of his opinion piece he outlines the need for:

> . . . a policy that balances the desire of some to keep the majority of our festival permitted parks open to the public, while also addressing the desire of other citizens to expand how their parks can be used (Patterson, p. 8).

Later on he continues:

> . . . we cannot see into the future to know what uses our park guests will want to pursue. Our job is to ensure the system will continue to thrive for the next 100 years and we will do that by creating policies that protect our assets for the long-term, but also address the needs and desires of a changing urban community (Patterson, p. 8).

Mr. Patterson is "talking the talk" of a park planner which is based on the current view in

the literature on park planning that parks should be ever changing places that reflect the

views and values of the citizens of the community in which they reside.

The three people who wrote the opinion piece in opposition to the proposed use

invoke a view that the proposed use was in violation of the purpose for which the city's

parks had been created and they knew best. This can be seen in language in their piece

such as:

> The principles of 'free and open' have guided Denver's park system since 1868 . . . . Denver's parks were created to be places where citizens regardless of background or economic circumstance, could picnic, play or simply relax in a natural environment. . . . Parks were envisioned as a refuge from commercial life (Ambrose, Felice & Johnstone, p. 5).

The following expresses well how dramatic they consider the proposed change to be:

> The proposed policy represents the greatest change in park management since Denver's system began, and would change dramatically how park spaced could be used. It might better be called the 'Fence-Off-Sections-of-Denver-Parks-and-

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Charge-the-Public-to-Attend-Events Policy.' It would offer events open to those able to pay to be admitted (Ambrose, Felice & Johnston, p. 5).

They conclude their piece by asserting the authority they believe they have because they represent the view of a number of neighborhood organizations. They do this by citing a number of neighborhood organizations that have passed a resolution in opposition to the policy. This, as well as the rest of their piece, speaks to their view that the Parks and Recreation Department is violating the principles on which the city's parks were founded and under which they are defending the integrity and sanctity of the city's parks by opposing the policy. This same dichotomy of views was present in the Dog Park Master Plan process and similar views were expressed by both sides in supporting their positions on the Plan.

There were a number of instances, mostly in letters to the editor, where there were comments made related to dog parks and how they fit into the hierarchy of park uses in the City. One person took the position that dog people were selfish: "The proposed new rules in Denver to allow dogs to run off leash are arrogant on the part of dog owners . . ." and "Some of these people are set in making the city parks more useful for their animals than our children" (Watkins, February 2010, p. 18C). One of the city council members was quoted as saying "Since a proposed off-leash area at City Park is receiving mixed reactions, a dog park at the nearby site might be a better option since it wouldn't be using park land" (Richert, March 2010, p. 4).

Such comments set up an exchange of letters to the editor in response to the following statement in the June 2010 *Washington Park Profile*:

After advocating unfenced, off-leash areas for dogs within existing parks, DPR 'heard the people' and withdrew the idea. Now we hear there's a citizen initiative

planned by some "other people" to allow off-leash dogs, unfenced at certain hours in certain parks. So, again we say, many folks don't want dogs dashing around apt to knock over things (and less-agile people), swiping sandwiches, barking, nipping, and leaving their "gifts" in the grass. . . Here's a solution: take your dog for a nice run on a leash (Helper, June 2010, p. 5).

To the statement some people wrote in a letter to the editor:

. . . you were very insensitive and less than compassionate toward dog owners, who have a serious need. You insulted us Ms Helper. Your end comment, 'Here's a solution, take your dog for a run, on leash,' clearly indicates you are not familiar with owning a dog that MUST run freely off leash – in a controlled environment (Rooker, J & B and Friends, August 2010, p. 5).

In response another letter to the editor appeared in the September 2010 paper:

Dog owners . . . should understand that city parks . . . serve a large number of people. The emphasis is on people. The administration of facilities and the use of the park has been accomplished with wisdom and effective accommodation to the needs of the surrounding neighborhoods. Those of us who use the park on a regular basis would be very disappointed to have that change (Heindenfielder, September 2010, p. 8).

This exchange is a good example of the continuing struggle between the dog people who wish to have a place in the parks where they can run their dogs and believe that they are as entitled to space for their desired use as any other users of the parks, and the people in opposition to such a policy who believe that use of parks by dogs is a secondary use that should come behind other uses, especially ones involving people.

Chapter Seven: The Academic Literature and Analysis of the Process

Chapters One and Two introduced the research project and provided some contextual background to it. Chapters Three through Six described the Dog Park Master Plan process and my experience in it, as well as addressing the experience of at least some of the participants in the process. In this chapter I will address the academic literature and use it to analyze the Dog Park Master Plan process.

In Chapter Two I noted the Dog Park Master Plan process existed in a multi-dimensional, multi-facetted environment involving various interests and dynamics. This condition also exists in the literature that can be applied to the explanation and analysis of the process and its dynamics. Therefore, my discussion of the literature and application of it to the analysis of the process will involve literature from a variety of academic disciplines.

How Democracy Serves to Explain the Process

In the discussion of public participation, the ideal (Innes & Booher, 2004; Tracy, 2010; Tracy & Dimock, 2004) or the principles (McComas, 2003a) or the traditions (McComas, 2003b) of democracy are commonly referenced as a foundational principle of why people participate and should have the right to participate in their government's decision making processes. Laurian (2004) places participation in decision making as fundamental to the democratic process. Authors such as Bohman (1996) and Gutmann

and Thompson (1996; 2004) base their conception of public deliberation on the concept of deliberative democracy which is itself based on meeting the ideals of democracy. This linkage of democracy and participation has historic roots (McComas, 2003b) as are evidenced by the observation by Alexis de Tocqueville (2000) in his writings in the early nineteenth century about the propensity of the citizens of the United States to wish to participate in the political decision-making of their communities.

The concept of democracy and the ideals of democracy according to the literature are accepted as being foundational and figure prominently in understanding participation by the public in their government and its decision making processes. Democracy is looked at as an "unexamined starting point" for the discussion in meetings, and it is never argued that it is "problematic for [a} group to act democratically" (Tracy, 2010, p. 60-61). "Democracy [is] assumed to be a good to which all in the group [should be] committed" (Tracy, 2010, p. 61). Democracy is so embedded in the ideals of people in their interactions in public meetings that evoking it in a meeting as a discourse strategy can be looked at as the use of a "god term" according to Tracy (2010, p. 61)

The question here is not whether democracy is foundational in the study of the participation by the public in the decision making processes of their government, but rather what are the ideals of democracy that people are performing or exhibiting or complying with when they participate in forums of interaction with their government in such processes? There are a number of normative ideals of democracy that scholars have linked to how people participate in their government's decision-making processes. Tracy

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(2007a; 2010) lists eight different normative ideals of democracy – direct or real,

representative, deliberative, participatory, discursive, unitary, strong and communicative.

Karen Tracy (2007a; 2010) introduces another form or kind of democracy and

argues from a communication point of view that what is seen in observing the public's

participation in meetings of local government groups, such as city councils and school

boards, is not people performing or exhibiting or complying with one of the normative

democratic ideals of democracy, but instead people performing or exhibiting their version

of democracy. Tracy (2007a; 2010) labels this phenomenon ordinary democracy.

What is ordinary democracy? Tracy sees her concept of ordinary democracy as

a kind or form of democracy like the normative ideals of democracy, which she dismisses

as not accurately describing what occurs in actual local governance meetings. Her

purpose in developing a new concept of democracy was to provide a tool she could use in

her analysis of the discourse occurring in local governance meetings that would more

accurately described what was happening in these meetings.

Karen Tracy's conceptualization of ordinary democracy is based on its use as a

tool in the analysis of the discourse that occurs in meetings of local governing boards. As

such, Karen Tracy (2010) describes ordinary democracy as:

> *Ordinary democracy* is the name I give to the communicative practices that occur
> in local governance groups. The concept refers to what actually happens in
> groups committed to acting democratically. Two features of ordinary democracy
> deserve mention. First, ordinary democracy emphasizes the local, prototypical
> school boards and city councils. Second, ordinary democracy is observable. It is
> not a normative ideal; it can be seen and heard. When governance groups meet,
> ordinary democracy is what they are doing. The communicative practices
> governance groups use will be affected by ideals of what it means to act
> democratically that permeate American public life. At the same time, ordinary
> democracy is shaped by a host of individual- and group-level purposes. It reflects

the routine concerns of those who plan meetings of citizens who attend and speak, and of members of the public who read the news and watch the cable broadcast. Ordinary democracy includes communicative actions that uphold the ideal of democracy, and it includes actions that challenge, appeal to, and subvert the ideals. . . . Ordinary democracy is what happens. Its home is the public meeting. (p. 2-3, emphasis in original)

Tracy (2010) argues for ordinary democracy to be classified as a type or form of democracy like the normative ideals of democracy. She characterizes ordinary democracy's place in relation to the normative ideals of democracy as follows:

Democracy as a practice and democracy as a principle have had little to do with each other. This chasm is problematic. Ideals formed without attention to the communicative actions that would enact them are inherently limited. There needs to be traffic between observations concerning what is democratic governance and prescriptions about what such governance ought to be. Ordinary democracy foregrounds democracy's empirical face. (Tracy 2007a, p. 6)

Though Tracy dismisses the normative ideals of democracy as not explaining democracy as it occurs in actual instances of governance, she does compare and contrast ordinary democracy with the normative ideals of democracy in her description of ordinary democracy (2007a; 2010). She also recognizes that, since most local governments operate under the principles of representative democracy, the principles of representative democracy do play into her conceptualization of ordinary democracy. In fact Tracy (2007a; 2010) grounds her concept of ordinary democracy in representative democracy. This grounding of empirical observation of what occurs in a local government meeting in representative democracy is at the heart of the work by Tracy (2007a; 2007b; 2010; Tracy & Durfy, 2007).

Tracy (2010) reinforces the link between ordinary democracy and representative democracy in her discussion on the rights of participation in local governance meetings. Unlike in direct democracy where participants would have an equal opportunity to

participate, "this equality of the right to participate doesn't exist even nominally in representative forms of governance like school board meetings" (Tracy, 2010, p. 65)

> School board and city council formats give elected officials the right to vote with citizen input restricted to speaking at meetings (or by telephone or in writing). Citizens' words may shape how elected officials frame and vote on issues, but if we take citizen response to surveys as a gauge, citizens often feel that their words are ignored. (Tracy, 2010, p. 65)

This feeling of being ignored is reinforced by the belief that the real decisions making is made outside the public meeting and therefore, "the talk that occurs in public meetings is a performance, a ratification of decisions that were talked into being elsewhere" (McComas quoted by Tracy, 2010, p. 6).

This is the same situation that was present in the Dog Park Master Plan process. The decisions on the Plan were not made in the public meetings such as the External Stakeholder Committee meetings or the open house comment sessions conducted by the Parks and Recreation Department, but were made in the internal meetings of the Parks and Recreation Department or the interests groups who ultimately influenced the Plan. I believe that many of the participants in the Dog Park Master Plan process, and possibly in many other decision making events conducted by the City and County of Denver, would agree that "citizens often feel that their words are ignored" (Tracy, 2010, p. 65).

In her discussion of ordinary democracy Tracy (2010) distinguishes between participation in public hearings, which she does not consider ordinary democracy, and participation in local governance meetings, which does consider ordinary democracy. As Tracy (2010) sees it:

> Studies of citizen participation in public hearings are not easily applicable to citizen participation in local governance meetings. Unlike public hearings, which focus on the consideration of a single issue, are held only to discuss that issue,

and almost always occur no more than a few times, local governance meetings are regularly recurring events that involve standing categories of people (e.g. elected officials, teachers, and school administrators, parents, and other citizens) who make decisions on a wide array of resource-allocation and symbolic issues. These differences are important: participants frequently have ongoing relationships with one another – they are not just unknown "authorities" and "public audience" – and what is talked about in local governance meetings varies topically. (p. 65)

In local governance meetings "different categories of participants (i.e. ordinary citizens, those designated as 'experts,' district administrators, staff, elected officials) are granted different speaking rights" (Tracy, 2007a, p. 10).

Though the process I studied was more like the public hearing as classified by Tracy (2007a; 2010) it had some similarities to the public meetings described as the site of ordinary democracy. The Dog Park Master Plan process I studied was like a public hearing in that there was only one issue discussed – the Dog Park Master Plan --, the process was of a limited duration, and the process involved "authorities" and the public at large. The process was like a local governance meeting in that the participants in the process did have ongoing relationships in many cases with the city staff and other participants, and the various participants in the Dog Park Master Plan process had different rights to speak.

The presence of an ongoing relationship between the "authorities" and members of the public, I believe, is unique in local governance, and so, creates a unique connection between public hearings and task forces as constituted by local government and ordinary democracy. The different levels of speaking rights though is not unique to local government or only applicable in local governance meetings as envisioned by Tracy (2010), and so to list this as discriminator between public hearings and local governance meetings is not correct. The rest of the discriminators listed by Tracy (2010) do appear to

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be valid, and so make the connection between ordinary democracy and the Dog Park

Master Plan process less strong.

Ordinary democracy is a transient, localized phenomenon (McDaniel &Gronbeck,

2007).   Ordinary democracy is very place and time oriented. The form of it that is

exhibited in a specific governance body's meetings is unique to that time and that place

(McDaniel & Gronbeck). Because ordinary democracy is local, the relationships and

conflicts present in it become personal (McDaniel & Gronbeck). People meet face to

face in the meetings and so their conflicts are personal, and yet it is highly likely that they

will see each other and have a relationship outside the governance meeting (Tracy,

2007b). This complicates the interaction in the meetings and may complicate their

relationship outside the meetings (McDaniel & Gronbeck). The relevance and meaning

of the arguments and facts presented in meetings are dependent on the local

understanding and historical knowledge that is present in the community (McDaniel &

Gronbeck). All four of these imperatives are requirements of ordinary democracy

(McDaniel & Gronbeck).

The four imperatives are what make ordinary democracy a here and now event

that is unique to the site at which it occurs, and are what make it unique to local

governance meetings. The localness of ordinary democracy leads the local governance

bodies conducting meetings to tailor the design, structure, and agenda of its meetings to

reflect local norms, values, and conditions, and not to follow any normative mandate

prescribed by outside experts (Haspel & Tracy, 2007).

This localness and personal connection inherent in ordinary democracy makes it a phenomenon that is more emotional in nature than other forms of democracy. Unlike the normative ideals of democracy, which advocate dispassionate discussion in public meetings, in ordinary democracy there is exhibition of strong emotions in public meetings. Public meetings are seen in ordinary democracy as scenes of problem solving and involve advocacy and competing interests (Tracy, 2010). In such situations the communication in the meeting may become impassioned (Tracy, 2010). People attend the meetings and participate in them because in many cases they are angry or upset (Tracy, 2010). They come to the meetings to express their outrage and criticize their government and fellow citizens (Tracy, 2010). To Tracy (2010):

> People are unlikely to rouse themselves unless they are disturbed by what is happening. Such is the character of ordinary democracy. Communities do need harmonious, quiet times in which citizens are pleased, or least not dissatisfied, with their boards' decisions. But a democratic body's sense of itself is affirmed and sustained through conflict. . . . However, uncomfortable conflict and dissension may be, they are also evidence that the right to speak out is alive and well. If the full tangle of legitimate aims that should be occurring in ordinary democracy is to be honored, then reasonable hostility needs to be the communicative yardstick in times of dissension. (P. 207)

However desirable and expected dissension and outrage may be in the discussion that occurs in ordinary democracy, according to Tracy (2010) it has the potential to bring with it negative results in some cases. In some cases the expression of outrage and criticism may "cut and bruise a few parties" (p. 94) in the process and the hurt inflicted may be so severe as to limit or prevent the ability to work together in the future. The likelihood someone would feel hurt by another's comments is dependent on whether the person is in agreement with the views and positions of the other person. When describing attacks on their positions, "speakers frame themselves and those affiliated with their

views as making legitimate criticisms, whereas those who oppose a speaker's views are characterized as engaging in personal attacks" (Tracy, 2010, p. 184).

Another facet of the expression of dissension and/or outrage is the possibility that the emotional fallout from such expressions may cause harm to the speaker in the future through impacting their relationship in the community. Hariman (2007) speaks to this in his discussion of the lack of distance present in the relationship among participants in local public meetings. In his discussion he talks about the difference between the concerns of someone who is communicating in national media versus local media and says:

> She [the national media person] doesn't have to worry about her child not being invited on a trip another mother is organizing, or being shut out of information about teachers or doctors or merchants or informal summer sports organizations, or what the banker will think and whether the family business will suffer, or what her mother-in-law will say to whom. When one speaks at a local hearing, these and many similar concerns must be on one's mind. To put it bluntly, small towns are celebrated as authentic havens of democracy primarily by those that don't have to live in them. (p. 238)

This potential for immediate and personal impacts of speaking one's mind at a public meeting may make some hesitant to speak their mind and certainly colors their speech. It is a true risk of speaking out in a local public meeting, and is one of the negatives of people exercising their right to express their views and opinion in public.

Besides the impact that speech in local governance meetings might have on others, there is the issue of how the topics of discussion are limited and controlled in meetings. The meetings are conducted by a local government body that has the power to control what is deemed important enough to be discussed at the meeting by choosing to include or exclude items from the meeting's agenda (Tracy, 2010). Additionally, the

convening government body exercises its sovereign power to control the meeting and the talk that occurs in it by how it schedules, sets up, and conducts the meeting (Hariman, 2007). Another factor that contributes to less than robust discussion in the meetings is the fact that in most meetings extensive and meaningful discussion on a subject almost never occurs (Tracy, 2007a; 2010). It is normal for there to be only limited discussion and/or short speeches (Tracy, 2007b; 2010).   According to Hariman (2007) through the setting of the structure and standards for meetings "public speech and citizen education can be curtailed by relatively sovereign local institutions as they maintain the guise of democratic participation to legitimate themselves" (P. 235).

The requirement in local government policies today that the decision making of local governance bodies be conducted in the bright light of public and media scrutiny has both good and bad results. These laws and policies were designed to ensure transparency in government and give citizens a chance to be informed and aware so they can participate in a meaningful and appropriate manner (Innes & Booher, 2004). They were intended to eliminate the making of decisions outside the public forums (Inness & Booher; Tracy, 2010). However, they have unintended consequences that are negative. These policies constrain the public officials from reacting in a timely manner or engaging in self-organizing dialogue because they require prior notice of all discussions and actions by the governing bodies (Innes & Booher). The glare of the spotlight may discourage participation by people and may discourage riskier, more innovative problem solving by participants in the process (Tracy, 2010). The cumulative effect of the limitations on a free flowing and open dialogue with all parties involved in the decision-

making process is the limiting of the voice and influence of participants in the decision making process, and so limiting the quality and breadth of the decisions made (Tracy, 2010).

The concept of ordinary democracy is an important tool in the analysis of local government decision-making events because it acknowledges the fact that people do not perform ideals in their day to day lives, but perform what they believe is the required democratic process based on their views, values, and the situation. However, ordinary democracy is not the stand alone form or type of democracy as Tracy (2007a; 2010) would have us believe, but is in reality dependent on the normative ideals of democracy to provide the principles and practices that people performing it use to develop their version of democracy for the situation at hand. Therefore, the principles of such normative ideals must be taken into account in the analysis of the phenomenon of participation.

Representative democracy. As Tracy (2007a; 2010) grounds her concept of ordinary democracy in the practical manifestation of the normative ideal of representative democracy, I will start with it as one of the types of democracy to be discussed. This is also appropriate in that the process I studied is grounded in the principles and practices of representative democracy.

In representative democratic governments the citizens of the community elect representatives to make the decisions, set the policies and procedures, and enact the laws to carry out the functions of the community (Pitkin, 1967). The authorization to perform

these responsibilities and to represent the citizens of the community comes through election to the governing body for the community. Pitkin (p. 43) sees this process as:

> . . . working from an authorization definition, the crucial criterion becomes elections, and these are seen as a grant of authority by the voters to the elected officials. Normally this grant of authority is limited as to time, so that the officials' status as representatives ends when the time comes for new elections. In each election, voters grant authority anew, name representatives anew, though of course they may reauthorize the same individuals for another term. The definitive election is the one that puts a man into office, for it is that election which gives him authority and makes him a representative. Elections are acts of "vesting authority."

In the case of my study Pitkin's definitive election would be the election of the council members and the mayor which authorized them to take on the responsibilities of representing the residents of the City in making decisions affecting the City and the residents. The elected officials are charged with doing what the people they represent would do in their best interest, if the people took the action directly (Pitkin).

Though we think of our representatives in a representative democratic government as being the elected officials of the government, in reality the staff and administrators appointed by the elected officials also are representatives of the people (Pitkin, 1967). These appointed officials take on the role of doing for the people what neither they nor their elected officials have the knowledge and capability to do for them (Pitkin). They are the "experts" who are there to make decisions and carry out actions on behalf of the people in a dispassionate, fact based, apolitical manner (Newman, 2009; Pitkin, 1967; Williams & Matheny, 1995), because they have superior knowledge and act as the disinterested third party. The role they play in the process and the fact that they are normally appointed by the elected officials make them, as representatives, less connected to the public they represent.

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Though it is accepted that elected and appointed officials in representative democracy must act for the benefit of the people, the level to which he or she must consult with the people and be responsive to their wishes and concerns is subject to interpretation on the part of the representatives (Pitkin, 1967). This has led to the mandate / independence controversy which can be summarized as:

> Should (must) a representative do what his constituents want, and be bound by mandates or instructions from them; or should (must) he be free to act as seems best to him in pursuit of their welfare (Pitkin, p. 145)?

The positions between the two extremes of mandate and independence fall on the continuum of:

> A highly restrictive mandate theorist might maintain that true representation occurs only when the representative acts on explicit instructions from his constituents, that any exercise of discretion is a deviation from this ideal. A more moderate position might be that he may exercise some discretion, but must consult his constituents before doing anything new or controversial, and then do as they wish or resign his post. A still less extreme position might be that the representative may act as he thinks his constituents would want, unless and until he receives instructions from them, and then he must obey. Very close to the independence position would be the argument that the representative must do as he thinks best, except insofar as he is bound by campaign promises or an election platform. At the other extreme is the idea of complete independence, that constituents have no right even to exact campaign promises; once a man is elected he must be completely free to use his own judgment. (Pitkin, p. 146)

The question in any given situation becomes where on this continuum do the elected officials and the citizens that elected them fall in their views of what constitutes representation.

From Pitkin's (1967) description of authorization, Trounstine (2010) has identified three components of democratic representation – authorization, responsiveness and accountability – that are always present in representative democratic governments. Authorization and accountability are taken care of through the election process (Pitkin;

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Trounstine), and though critical in the concept of democratic representation, make up a

small portion of the actual process of democratic representation. The responsiveness

component (and the mandate / independence controversy that is embedded in it) is the

major component that determines if citizens believe they have been represented.

Responsiveness according to Trounstine (2010) is the degree to which policy

makers take into account what their constituents want. In evaluating a representative's

degree of compliance with this definition of responsiveness one must consider the

representative's view of the mandate / independence controversy (Pitkin, 1967).

The people who favor the mandate view see the elected representative as a

"'mere' agent, a servant, a delegate, a subordinate substitute for those who sent him"

(Pitkin, p. 146) or her, and so the representative is required to be responsive to the wants

of the people who elected him or her, and must represent their wants accurately in

decision making he or she is involved in. In line with this view, Pitkin (1967) presents

what she sees as the ideal view of how responsive government should be as:

> . . . we show a government to be representative not by demonstrating its control
> over its subjects but just the reverse, by demonstrating that its subjects have
> control over what it does. Every government's actions are attributed to its
> subjects formally, legally. But in a representative government this attribution has
> substantive content: the people really do act through their government, and are not
> merely passive recipients of its actions. A representative government must not
> merely be in control, not merely promote the public interest, but must also be
> responsive to the people. The notion is closely related to the view of representing
> as a substantive activity. For in a representative government the governed must
> be capable of action and judgment, capable of initiating government activity, so
> that the government may be conceived as responding to them. As in nonpolitical
> representation, the principle need not express his wishes, or even have formulated
> any, but he must be capable of doing so; when he does, his wishes should be
> fulfilled unless there is good reason (in terms of interest) to the contrary.
> Correspondingly, a representative government requires that there be machinery
> for the expression of wishes of the represented, and that the government respond

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to these wishes unless there are good reasons to the contrary. There need not be a constant activity of responding, but there must be a constant condition of responsiveness, of potential readiness to respond. It is not that a government represents only when it is acting in response to an express popular wish; a representative government is one which is responsive to popular wishes when there are some. Hence there must be institutional arrangements for responsiveness to these wishes. Again, it is incompatible with the idea of representation for the government to frustrate or resist the people's will without good reason, to frustrate or resist it systematically or over a long period of time. We can conceive of the people as "acting through" the government even if most of the time they are unaware of what it is doing, so long as we feel that they could initiate action if they so desired. (pp. 232-233)

The people who hold the independence view would view government as a trusteeship, where the elected and appointed representatives who make up the government body are required to do what is in the best interest of the people, but are not required to consult with or respond to the people on what their wishes are (Pitkin). Independence theorists:

see the representative as a free agent, a trustee, an expert who is best left alone to do his work. They thus tend to see political questions as difficult and complex, beyond the capacities of ordinary men. In any case, they argue, a constituency is not a single unit with a ready-made will or opinion on every topic; a representative cannot simply reflect what is not there to be reflected." (Pitkin, p. 147)

Therefore, they would argue against the need for an elected representative to be responsive to the public who elected him or her.

The view of the academics in today's world leans toward a more responsive stance by government representatives and advocates a standard of encouraging involvement by the public in decision-making in government through including them in the process (Goodin &Dryzek, 2006; Leighninger, 2005). This deliberative turn (Goodin & Dryzek) has led to the political science literature advocating for increased public involvement in the deliberative processes of government and its decision making, and so,

giving the public the ability to make their wants, views and wishes better known to their government representatives. The form of democracy normally associated with this view is pluralist democracy (Barber, 2003; Mouffe, 2000)

Though there may be a push in the academic literature towards involving the public in their government decision-making processes in a way that ensures their voices are heard and that the government is responsive to their wants, how likely is it this is actually occurring? Trounstine's (2010) answer to the question is that local government is not very responsive to the public in general. According to her, local government, due to the constraints that its structure places on it, is predisposed to favor the "entrenched socioeconomic elite" (p. 413). Local government must cater to the wishes of this latter group, which is made up of the business and majority population of the community, in order to keep them happy to prevent their migration out of the community which would be detrimental to the wellbeing of the community (Trounstine). This group of elites would be labeled by Rakow et al. (2003) as the "movers" in a community they enjoy better access to the decision makers in the government and a higher likelihood of having influence in the decision making process.

In the Dog Park Master Plan process the outside group that came in after the public engagement process was completed and applied influence to significantly alter the outcome of the process would be an example of "movers" as described by Rakow et al., and the significant changes to the Dog Park Master Plan in response to the objections of the outside group would be an example of the predisposition of local government to go with the elites as described by Trounstine.

In addition to the predisposition of local government to privilege the input from the elites (Trounstine, 2010) or movers (Rakow et al., 2003), there is the belief that elected and appointed representatives do not recognize a mandate to seek input from their constituents before making a decisions. There are two primary reasons given for this belief and they both fit within the advantages of representative government identified by Pitkin (1967) that representative government does for the people what they cannot do for themselves and that it is good at ensuring the common good is attained.

The first reason, according to the literature, is there is a widely held belief by government officials that the public is not knowledgeable about the issues, factors, potential solutions to problems, and complexity involved in the decisions to be made by government (Hartz-Karp & Briand, 2009; Rayner, 2003; Senecah, 2004). This has led to the belief on the part of government officials that, due to the lack of knowledge on the part of the public, it is in the public's best interest and a more efficient to leave the decion-making to the experts within the government or outside interest groups without public input (Hartz-Karp &Briand,; Senecah; Williams and Matheny, 1995). Reinforcing this belief is the concern that yielding to the public undermines their authority as a government official (Senecah), and that the public's reasoning is unsound and may be a delaying tactic (Rayner, 2003; Senecah). This has led to governments relying on experts to make the decisions and policies and exclude citizens from the decision making process, thereby reducing the "role of citizens . . . largely to that of voting for members of elected legislators" (Hartz-Karp &Briand, p. 126). "Beyond that, there is scant

opportunity for 'the public' to participate in any meaningful sense in the policy making process" (Hartz-Karp & Briand, p. 126).

The second, and related, reason is the idea that the public needs must excluded from the decision making process to depoliticize the process (Newman, 2009). This is commensurate with the view held by some government officials that they have been selected to make decisions and do not need any outside interest, such as the public, getting involved and "messing up" the decision (Leighninger, 2005).   They believe that involving the public may mobilize antagonistic interests or even result in the process being taken over by special interest groups (Senecah, 2004). The view that it is bad to have the decision making process in government subject to political influence comes out of the progressive movement of the early twentieth century (Williams & Matheny, 1995), and continues to influence our design and evaluation of decision making processes today.

In the Dog Park Master Plan process these dynamics in representative democracy exhibited themselves in the manner in which the Parks and Recreation Department designed and conducted the meetings. The Parks and Recreation Department relied on its internal work group and staff members to develop the elements of the plan and then presented them to the External Stakeholder Committee and the public for comment. The Department attempted to depoliticize the process by making its decisions internally without public input and by trying to keep the meetings of the External Stakeholder Committee out of the public view. However, as Newman (2009) points out, it is not possible to keep politics out decision making processes that are of interest to the

public and their elected officials. In the end political pressure was applied to influence the process, resulting in a significant change in the Dog Park Master Plan as finalized.

Participatory democracy. The next form of democracy I will discuss is participatory democracy, which is related to representative democracy in the manner it is practiced. Participatory democracy and had its beginnings in the 1960s as an alternative to the liberal or pluralistic representative democracy in place in the United States (Hilmer, 2010). The democratic theorists described this new form of democracy as involving the maximum participation of citizens in their self government both in the traditionally political sectors as well as outside the political sectors (Hilmer). The scholars on participatory democracy (such as Barber, 2003; Mansbridge, 1983; and Polleta, 2002) equate this new form of democracy with the democracy present in ancient Greece, although they see it as more inclusive than what was practiced there.

This new form of democracy arose in the social movements groups of the 1960s (Polleta, 2002). In addition scholars such as Barber (2003) and Mansbridge, (1983) have advocated the replacement of representative democracy, which they refer to as thin (Barber) or adversary (Mansbridge) or liberal or pluralistic democracy, with some form of participatory democracy. It is within these two movements toward more participatory governance both in the political sectors as well as other sectors of people's lives (Hilmer) that participatory democracy has developed.

In advocating for a change in the form of democracy to participatory democracy, Barber describes his concept of "strong democracy" as:

> Strong democracy is a distinctive modern form of participatory democracy. It rests on the idea of self-governing community of citizens who are united less by

homogenous interests than by civic education and who are made capable of common purpose and mutual action by virtue of their civic attitudes and participatory institutions rather than their altruism or their good nature. Strong democracy is consonant with—indeed it depends upon—the politics of conflict, the sociology of pluralism, and the separation of public and private realms of action (Barber, 2003, 117).

Barber's (2003) conception of strong democracy as a form of participatory democracy is grounded in seeking the common good. Barber sees the focus on the common good as being the core value that all must be striving for in strong democracy. This focus on the common good would allow for the resolution of conflict through discussion and agreement among the people. Barber sees a need for rational reasoning in the resolution of the conflict and the making of decisions by the people. Decisions in strong democracy are made from the bottom up. The people would meet at a local level to discuss, deliberate and reach a consensus on an issue and from these local forums the decision-making would move upward until it reached the final political level where the decision would be implemented (Barber, 2003). There would be no elected body or body of experts to advise the people on the decision, nor would such bodies review and rule on the decision made (Barber). Barber sees strong democracy as a rule by the people and so a form of direct democracy. He also recognizes that it is an ideal as are the other types of democracy.

Mansbridge (1983) has similar version of participatory democracy that she calls unitary democracy. Though Barber (2003) is critical of unitary democracy and does not accept it as a true form of participatory democracy, I see Barber's critique of unitary democracy as too narrow. Like some of the social activists in the 1960s (Polleta, 2002),

Mansbridge developed her form of participatory democracy—unitary democracy—from

the experience of friendship.

> Drawing from the experience of friendship, a democrat could easily believe that relations between citizens ought to be like relations between friends. Friends are equals. They choose to spend time together. They share common values. They expand each other's company. So, too, in a democracy based on friendship, participants are equal in status; the cost of participation, of which some make so much do not feel heavy. . . . They share a common good, and are able, as a consequence, to make their decisions unanimously. The characteristics of unitary democracy—equal respect, face-to-face contact, common interest, and consensus—are from this perspective nothing but the natural conditions that prevail among friends (Mansbridge, p. 9).

Mansbridge, unlike Barber (2003), includes in her conception of participatory democracy

a condition that adversary democracy—her label for representative democracy—needs to

be used in those cases where the polity has conflicting interests. In cases where the polity

has common interest, participatory or unitary democracy should be used (Mansbridge).

The main complaint about participatory democracy as an ideal form of democracy

is its reliance on the public holding common interests. Mouffe (2000) and Mutz (2006)

see this principle of participatory democracy as ignoring the fact that not all people

involved in an issue will agree on the common interests involved in the issue. Mouffe

would argue that the conflict inherent in this lack of agreement about common interests

can only be resolved by some form of agonistic decision-making process. Similarly,

Mansbridge (1983) excluded situations where the polity does not share common interests

from using unitary democracy to make decisions. Mutz argues that it is not always the

case that all parties interested in and involved in a decision-making process will hold the

same interest, views, and values on the issues involved and to make doing so a condition

of reaching a decision limits the process too much. Mutz would argue that in cases where

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the parties involved in the decision-making process do not hold common interests, which she argues is more common than when they do, a deliberative democratic process and not a participatory democratic process should be used.

Though Barber (2003) and Mansbridge (1983) advocate for the use of participatory democracy as the form of democracy that should be used in political sectors of the nation, participatory democracy has only manifested itself in the governance of community organizations and organizations dedicated to social change (Hilmer, 2010; Polleta, 2002). This version of participatory democracy is less theoretical and does not envision itself replacing representative, liberal or pluralistic democracy, but rather as coexisting with it. This view of participatory democracy from a political or social movement viewpoint is captured in Mutz's (2006) description of how she sees participatory democracy in action:

> The pinnacle of participatory democracy was, to my mind, a throng of highly politically active citizens carrying signs, shouting slogans, and cheering on the political speeches of their political leaders. On days without such events, they worked together in a dingy basement stuffing envelopes for a direct, mail campaign, wrote letters to their political representatives urging support of their views, canvassed door to door, or planned fund-raising events to buy television and radio time to promote their candidates or causes (p.16).

This version of participatory democracy is what was manifested in the social movements of the 1960s (Polleta). In this manifestation, participatory democracy, like ordinary democracy, was seen as the guiding principles for how the organizations would conduct business in interfacing with the governing representative democratic body (Polleta). It was used to form and guide the internal workings of the organizations, but still allowed for the organization to have a structure, officers, and parliamentary procedures that would look more like pluralistic representative democracy (Polleta). The social activists of the

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1960s saw in participatory democracy a means to ensure that decision-making was carried on in an open and public manner, to create an acceptable, new pattern of social relations, and to empower people and encourage them to participate in their community for its betterment (Polleta). They thought of participatory democracy as a way of making social change and not as the guiding principles of how their organizations should be structured (Polleta).

Polleta (2002) captures the essence of the social movement's use of and view of participatory democracy in describing the impact that social movements have had on our world:

> As a number of political theorists have argued, participatory democratic deliberation helps people bring diverse sources of information to bear on common problems and reassess their interests and preoccupations in light of the common good. It helps nurture an engaged and active citizenry.
>
> But the experience of social movements adds something important to those conclusions. The most progressive democratic changes in this country have come, not from block clubs, PTAs, and other groups that make up civil society, but from social movements—for racial and gender equality, civil liberties, consumer protections, and workers' rights. These movements have been oppositional, disruptive and sometimes downright uncivil. They are the unruly mobs that Athenians worried about and that contemporary champions of participatory democracy have sometimes ignored altogether, counting rather on joint action of civil society and the state to bring about reform.
>
> We should be wary of such omissions. Democracy in social movements does not produce dutiful citizens. It produces people who question the conventional categories and responsibilities of citizenship—and who question the boundaries of the political, the limits of equality, and the line between the people and their representatives. Just as a movement that is democratic but without internal conflict sacrifices political creativity to stability, so a democracy without movements would foreclose critical avenues of progressive change (P. 230).

It can be argued, as would Mutz (2006), that participatory democracy, even as practiced by social movements, does not encourage diversity in information or viewpoint.

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Polleta (2002) lists this as a problem with the social movements and their implementation of participatory democracy along with exclusion or marginalization of the newcomers to the movements. However, they are the only organizations that have used a recognizable form of participatory democracy in actual practices.

It is this social movement version of participatory democracy that was present in the neighborhood activists' participation in the Dog Park Master Plan process. The neighborhood organizations acted outside the normal channels of the process, and they conducted their meetings in a manner that matched the social movements meetings. The neighborhood organization meetings were open to all and all had an opportunity to participate in their meetings. The neighborhood organization also tended to marginalize newcomers and discouraged diversity in viewpoints and opinions.

Deliberative Democracy. The last of the types of democracy I will discuss is deliberative democracy. In the 1990s deliberative democracy began to supersede participatory democracy in the discourse on democratic theory (Hilmer, 2010). Since that time there has been little written in the political science literature about participatory democracy because the emphasis turned to advocating for and studying deliberative democracy (Hilmer).

The shift towards deliberative democracy (Hilmer, 2010; Morrell, 2010) came about through two distinct deliberative turns that occurred together (Morrell). The first represented by the writings of James Fishkin focused on the need for reflective consideration in deliberations (Morrell). The second form of deliberative democracy is based on the writings of John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas, and is concerned with equal

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consideration and collective decision-making (Morrell). As my study dealt with

collective decision-making, it is the version of deliberative democracy theory based on

the writings of Rawls and Habermas put forth by James Bohman, John Dryzek, and Amy

Gutmann and Dennis Thompson that I have adhered to in my evaluation and observation

of the Dog Park Master Plan process.

All theorists of deliberative democracy define it in a similar manner. For

example, Gutmann and Thompson (2004) define deliberative democracy as:

> As a form of government in which free and equal citizens (and their
> representatives), justify decisions in a process in which they give one another
> reasons that are mutually acceptable and generally accessible, with an aim of
> reaching conclusions that are binding in the present on all citizens but open to
> challenge in the future (p. 7).

or Hilmer's (2010):

> Deliberative democratic theorists emphasize rational public deliberation among
> free and equal citizens about matters of common concern. The goal of
> deliberation is to come to an understanding of what is in the best interest of those
> deliberating – the common good or in Rousseau's famous terminology the
> "general will" of the community. Ideally, the process of deliberation transforms
> private preferences into public claims that pass or fail the test of public
> assessment (p. 51).

Others definitions related to deliberative democracy would be ones such as

Bohman's (1996) definition of public deliberation as:

> A dialogic process of exchanging reasons for the purpose of resolving
> problematic situations that cannot be settled without interpersonal coordination
> and cooperation. In this definition, deliberation is not so much a form of
> discourse argumentation as a joint, cooperative activity (p. 27).

or where Morrell (2010), in combining input from a number of sources defines

deliberation as:

> People *contemplate*(examine, seriously consider) an *object* (public policy,
> problem) by engaging in *communicative exchange* (persuasion, debate, and

discussion) that allows them to reach a *reflective* (well-reasoned, reasonable, well-informed) *decision* on the object through an *inclusive* (inclusive, respectful) process in which people are *open* to (willing to revise) the influence of others (p. 160, emphasis in original).

Hicks (2002) sees three promises underwriting deliberative democracy theories.

First, the promise of inclusion: public deliberation, because it facilitates the participation of all those governed by collective decisions in the making of those decisions, leads to reasoned agreement among citizens on the merits of legislation and, therefore, is recognized by citizens as the basis of democratic legitimacy. Second, the promise of equality: public deliberation, because it gives equal consideration to all views and affords all persons the equal opportunity of political influence, is capable of transforming both the content of citizens' preferences and their political conduct so they are compatible with the demands of justice. And, third, the promise of reason: because citizens agree to justify their political proposals on the basis of public reasons and moreover, because they agree to propose and abide by the terms of fair cooperation—to be politically reasonable— they will accept the results of public deliberation as binding and agree to abide by those results even at the costs of their own interests (Hicks, p. 224).

To some extent the above definitions all contain the principles on which deliberative democracy is based. First, the participants in the process are all equal in status, standing and influence. No one participant has more power than another. Second, the reasoning in the process is rational reasoning. Third, the participants give and take input from each other in an open and reciprocal manner. That is, the arguments and reasons given are framed in a manner that is understandable by all, the discussions on the object being deliberated are held in public and not in private, and all parties consider others input with an open mind and are willing to revise their positions and views in order to reach an agreement. Fourth, the issues, problems and policies considered are public and not private, affect the common good of the community, and do not have a clear resolution. Finally, the decisions made in the process are made by consensus of the participants.

The problem with actual implementation of deliberative democracy as a method

of decision making is "the conditions necessary for approximating deliberative ideals . . .

are unlikely to be realized in naturally occurring socials contexts" (Mutz, 2006, p. 4).

> For example, some suggest that in order to qualify, political discussion must take place among citizens of equal status who offer reasonable, carefully constructed, and morally justifiable arguments to one another in a context of mutual respect. Participants must provide reasons that speak to the needs of everybody affected. Such interactions must exclude no one, or at least provide "free and equal access to all," so that no person has more influence over the process than the next. Strategic behavior is also prohibited. In addition, all participants must be free of the kinds of materials deprivations that hinder participation, such as lack of income or education. And, according to some definitions of deliberation, this process ultimately should lead to consensus. As a result of these extensive requirements, it is difficult, and perhaps impossible, to "test a theory of deliberative democracy (Mutz, p. 4).

The requirements of participatory democracy in theory not only make it hard to test the

theory as pointed out by Mutz, but they make it unlikely that it will ever be possible to

actually implement it in actual government decision-making processes. There has been no

empirical testing of the theories or documented instances of actual decision-making

processes that have met all the requirements specified by deliberative democratic theory

(Mutz).

It is argued that deliberation is good and that through encouraging people to "hear

the other side" (Mutz, 2006, p. 61), it can lead to betterment of the democratic system.

To achieve this outcome of deliberation, however, conflict must be suppressed and

participants must withhold comments and arguments that could lead to conflict.

> "So, although exposure to differing views holds the *potential* for tremendous benefits, to realize these benefits, exposure must occur in a context where the collective project of getting along with one another in society is primary, and the elucidation of differences is secondary" (Mutz, p. 62, emphasis in original).

It is this ignoring or suppression of conflict in the decision-making process that is required for deliberation to work, together with the belief that there are conflicts that cannot be resolved in a rational, dispassionate, collaborative manner that leads Mouffe (2000) to challenge deliberative democracy and advocate for her concept of agonistic pluralism.

The inevitability of conflict in deliberative decision-making challenges the assumption underlying deliberation that all will be treated as equals in the deliberative process. The studies indicate that people, when they disagree with someone, tend to give less weight to the arguments of those who disagree with them and may question the motives of the person making the argument (Morrell, 2010; Tracy, 2010). This would challenge the requirement that one give equal weight to all other parties' arguments in the deliberations. This may lead to the following situation:

> If interlocutors do not view the basic reasons for their respective behaviors similarly, if they tend to judge those who are least like them by stronger moral standards than they judge themselves or those closest to them, and if they attribute unethical and strategic motives to those with whom they disagree, one can hardly imagine how it would be possible for them to give each other equal consideration, reach any sort of mutual understanding, or be able to reciprocally address valid claims (Morrell, p. 104).

The possibility that this may occur brings into question the validity of the assumption of equal consideration of other's arguments and the giving of public reasons in the deliberative democratic theory.

If the disagreement is strong enough "opponents not only may disagree on what counts as public reason, it may be impossible for them to see any reason given by opponents as being other than private, self-interested, and morally suspect" (Morrell, 2010, p. 105). When the opponents reach this point in the deliberations they now have

moved from seeing the other as an adversary (one who you disagree with but can work with) to seeing them as an enemy(one who is so morally evil that they must be destroyed at all cost) (Morrell; Mouffe, 2005). At this point deliberation is impossible and fails.

According to Morrell (2010) in order to change from questioning the motives of the other to seeing him or her as one that deserves equal consideration takes the interjection of empathy into the deliberations. With this comes the acceptance of emotions (Morrell; Tracy, 2010; Young, 2000) as part of the deliberative process. In accepting emotions one brings into question the requirement in deliberative democratic theory for rational reasoning. In the theory it is generally accepted that people should reason in a rational manner, meaning that their reasoning on a object of deliberation is conscious, dispassionate, literal and based on facts, and truth is transcendent and universal (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Lakoff and Johnson argue that according to research in cognitive science, people in fact reason mostly unconsciously, emotionally, using metaphors and life narratives, and truth is an embodied concept. This questioning of the validity of how people reason is accepted by Morrell and is reflected in Mouffe's (2000) challenge to rational justification:

> This is not a matter of *rational justification* but of *availability* of democratic forms of individuality and subjectivity. By privileging rationality, both the deliberative and aggregative perspectives leave aside the central element which is the crucial role played by passions and affects in securing allegiance to democratic values (p. 95).

The requirements for rational reasoning in deliberative democratic theory ignores the emotionality and passion of people in dealing with issues that affect their daily lives, which is the case in local government decision-making, and forces participants to reason in a manner that is unnatural to them.

As stated above there has been no empirical testing of any instances of deliberation that meet all the requirements of the deliberative democratic theory (Mutz, 2006). However, though no instance in which all requirements set forth by the theory on deliberative democracy has been documented in the literature, some of the principles of deliberative democracy have been used in conducting public participation events. Mutz mentions a few instances where research projects tested some of the principles of deliberative democratic theory.

Outside of experimental or model events, the literature (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Hartz-Karp & Briand, 2009; Leighninger, 2005; McCoy & Scully, 2002) indicates that some governments have formed citizen committees, task forces and work groups in which deliberative principles were utilized. In such groups the citizens deliberate on an issue, project, or policy being considered by the government and provide advice and input on it as part of the decision-making process conducted by the government. In convening such groups the government is using the principles of deliberative democracy to facilitate the gathering of input from the people in order to fulfill the pluralistic view of representative democracy, and so hybridizes the two forms of democracy.

The deliberative groups formed by governments to involve citizens in the decision-making process normally take the form of mini-publics (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006). As such they are designed as representative samples of the public intended to ensure representative input by the public affected by the decision-making process (Goodin & Dryzek). Though such mini-publics may sometimes actually make the decision, it is more likely that they serve an advisory capacity (Goodin & Dryzek). They

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may also serve to inform the public debate, to test the acceptability of a decision considered by the government, legitimize a decision of the government, or assist in building confidence in or a constituency for the decision (Goodin & Dryzek). In all of these cases, except for actually making the decision, the mini-publics are being used as means of gathering input in furtherance of the mandate in pluralistic representative democracy to gather such input; they are not evidence of true adherence to the principles of deliberative democratic theory. The Dog Park Master Plan process' External Stakeholder Committee was an example of such a mini-public.

What types or forms of democracy were present in the Dog Park Master Plan process? In the preceding sections I have discussed four types or forms of democracy. Though I believe Tracy's conceptualization of ordinary democracy (2007a; 2010) provides a valuable tool for analyzing the interaction between government and the people in local government bodies, I do not consider it a type or form of democracy. To me it is more of a categorization of the communication phenomenon that goes on in the interaction between the people and their local governing body or bodies. Ordinary democracy was certainly present in the Dog Park Master Plan process, but it is not the type or types of democracy that guided and influenced the process. It does not explain, but only describes what happened in the process.

The type of democracy that was dominant in the Dog park Master Plan process, and is the type of democracy that ordinary democracy (Tracy, 2007a;2010) is grounded in, is representative democracy. The City and County of Denver as a local, representative government operates under the principles of representative democracy from a practical

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point of view. The Dog Park Master Plan process was designed, though maybe not

conducted, as a means of gathering input from the public as to their wishes so their

representatives could know of and abide by their wishes. This goal would place it

towards the mandate end of the continuum of responsiveness in the representative

democracy ideal and would be an example of pluralist language (Williams & Matheny,

1995). Though the decisions in the process were to be made by the Parks and Recreation

Department as the people's representative, the parties interested in the outcome of the

process were afforded an opportunity to give their input and influence the decision.

The other type of democracy present in the process was participatory democracy.

The form it took in the process was the form utilized by social movements in their efforts

to have a say and influence a representative democratic system. This type of democracy

was displayed in the actions of the neighborhood activists. They demanded a say in the

decisions to be made in the process, and when they believed they were ignored they

applied political pressure to get their way. They became the shakers (Rakow et al, 2003)

in the process and played this role so successfully that they ultimately moved to being

movers (Rakow et al.). They defeated the recommendations of the Parks and Recreation

Department and effectively ended the move to increase the number and types of areas

dedicated to dogs in the Denver Park System.

Deliberative democracy in the form described in the literature did not exist in the

Dog Park Master Plan process I observed. Though the design of the process may have

drawn from the concept of mini-publics (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006) in the formation of the

External Stakeholder Committee, the actual process followed by the Committee did not

meet the test of mini-publics contained in the literature. I observed no instances where anything resembling deliberation occurred.

Public Participation

The application of the principles of the various forms and types of democracy and how people enact them in their interaction with their government is manifested in public participation. Public participation is the practical manifestation of how the participants in decision-making and policy development in government perform their ideals of democracy (McComas, 2001; 2003a; 2003b; Tracy, 2010; Tracy and Dimock, 2004). The study of public participation is more focused on empirical observation than on theory and philosophy.

Public participation is differentiated from public deliberation as being focused on public meetings, task forces, citizen committees, and work groups, and not the decentralized and more idealized concepts of public deliberation (Tracy & Dimock, 2004). In fact most deliberative scholars would label public participation events as "a deliberative wasteland seriously endangering the accomplishment of democracy (Tracy & Dimock, p. 151). This may be true, but public participation is how people actually participate in the decision-making and policy development events of their government.

The idea of requiring participation by the public in decision-making and policy development by the government came into being in the 1960s with the Federal Government's adoption of urban renewal and socioeconomic programs (McComas, 2003b). These programs required the process for policy development within the programs to be open and available to a wide and diverse population and mandated

participation by all levels of the social and economic spectrum of the population (McComas, 2003b).

Public participation is linked primarily to representative democracy. It describes how the public should and does interface with their government operating under the principles of representative democracy. From an ideal perspective the language utilized in the process is the pluralist language described by Williams and Matheny (1995). This viewpoint would see the public participation as successful if all interests have had an opportunity to the influence the decision-making or policy development process by the government. Though the public may agree with the pluralist language viewpoint on successful public participation, a significant portion of the public would take a communitarian language (Williams & Matheny) viewpoint based on participatory democracy. According to this viewpoint, the public would demand direct participation in the decision-making and policy development (Williams & Matheny). This type of public participation would utilize the principles of participatory democracy and deliberative democracy as guides to how the interaction of the public and the government would occur.

> In its ideal Innes & Booher (2004) see public participation as follows:
>
> The proposal here is that participation must be collaborative and it should incorporate not only citizens, but also organized interest, profit making and non-profit organizations, planners and public administrators in a common framework where all are interacting and influencing one another and all are acting independently in the world as well. This is not one-way communication from citizens to government or government to citizens. It is a multi-dimensional model where communication, learning and action are joined together and where the polity, interests and citizenry co-evolve.
>
> The central contention is that effective participation methods involve collaboration, dialogue and interaction. They are inclusive. They are not

reactive, but focused on anticipating and defining future actions. They are self-organizing, both in content and membership. They challenge the status quo and ask hard questions about things otherwise taken for granted. They seek agreement or at least build shared knowledge and heuristics for collaborative actions (Innes & Booher, 2003). This framework is not based on mechanistic imagery or citizens pushing on government, but on the complete system imagery of a fluid network of interacting agents, gathering information from each other and the environment and acting autonomously based on their needs, understandings, and shared heuristics (Axelrod & Cohen, 1999; Kelly, 1997). This system can be adaptive instead of stalemated. It can build societal capacity and produce innovative responses to seemingly intractable problems. It can move us beyond the current dilemmas of practice and scholarship (p. 422).

Innes and Booher see a number of purposes that justify participation as described above:

One is for decision makers to find out what the public's preferences are so these can play a part in their decisions. A second is to improve decisions by incorporating citizens' local knowledge into the calculus. Both purposes are increasingly important as government gets larger and more distant from its constituencies. Public participation has a third purpose of advancing fairness and justice. There are systematic reasons why the needs and preferences of many groups, particularly the least advantaged, are not recognized through the normal information sources and analytical procedures. These needs may only come on the radar screen during an open participation process. A fourth purpose is that the public participation is about getting legitimacy for public decisions. If a planner can say "We held a dozen public hearings and reviewed hundreds of comments and everyone who wanted to had a chance to say their piece", then whatever is decided is at least in theory democratic and legitimate. Last, but not least, participation is something planners and public officials do because the law requires it. . . . A sixth and seventh purpose for participation can be to build civil society and to create an adaptive self-organizing polity capable of addressing wicked problems (pp. 422-423).

This can be supplemented by the description by McComas (2001) of the ideal of

participation that is strived for but never achieved, as one

which seeks to maximize opportunities for citizen participation and input. Forino (1990) describes four tenets of a participatory model that approaches such an ideal: (1) it allows for the direct participation of amateurs and nonexperts in the decision-making process; (2) it gives citizens shared authority with officials in the decisions; (3) it encourages face-to-face interaction between officials and the public over an extended period of time; and (4) it provides citizens with an opportunity to participate on an equal basis with officials and experts (p. 39).

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Rowe and Frewer (2005) would agree with the above definitions of public

participation in the ideal. In line with such ideal and general definitions of public

participation, Rowe and Fewer developed a general definition of public participation that

they believe all could agree on as: "the practice of involving members of the public in

agenda-setting, decision-making, and policy forming activities of organizations /

institutions responsible for policy development" (P. 253). According to them:

> This definition enables the distinction of participation in situations from
> nonparticipation situations associated with the more traditional model of
> governance in which elected policy makers, generally with the help of nominated
> experts, are left to set policy without further public reference.

> This definition of participation is, however, arguably too broad, leaving room for
> variable interpretation, because the public may be *involved* (in policy formation
> etc.) in a number of different ways or at a number of *levels*—as has been noted by
> others (e.g. Arnstein, 1969; Nelkin and Poliak, 1979; Wiedemann and Fenners,
> 1993; Smith, Neil, and Prystupa, 1997). In some cases, the public may
> "participate" by being the passive recipients of information from the regulators or
> governing bodies concerned; in other cases public input may be sought, as in the
> solicitation of public opinion through questionnaires; and in still other cases, there
> may be active participation of public representation on an advisory committee.
> There are important conceptual differences among these different situations that
> render it inappropriate to describe them all using a simple term—be that public
> *participation*, public *involvement*, or whatever (p. 253-254, emphasis in original).

To resolve this perceived problem, Rowe ad Frewer propose:

> . . . using three different descriptors to differentiate initiatives that have in the past
> been referred to as public participation, based on the *flow of information* between
> participants and sponsors. These are *public communication, public consultation,
> and public participation. . . .* These concepts in combination are referred to as
> *public engagement*, and the methods intended to enable this as *engagement
> mechanisms* (generically) or *engagement initiatives or exercises* (specifically) (p.
> 254, emphasis in original).

In public communication information is conveyed from the government to the

public (Rowe & Frewer, 2005). To Rowe and Frewer in public communication:

Information flow is one-way: there is no involvement of the public per se in the sense that public feedback is not required or specifically sought. When the public attempts to provide information, there are no mechanisms specified a priori to deal with this at any level beyond perhaps, simply recording the information (p. 255).

In public consultation information is passed from the public to the government, in a manner prescribed by the government (Rowe & Frewer, 2005). The flow is one-way, there is no dialogue between the government and the public, and it is believed the information obtained from the public reflects the public's views and opinions (Rowe & Frewer).

In public participation information is conveyed both from and to the government and the public (Rowe & Frewer, 2005). The process consists of a dialogue between the parties, which may involve both government and public representatives or only public representatives (Rowe & Frewer). The response to the government from such a process consists of more than simple, raw opinions and views, but instead is the consensus opinions and views of the group (Rowe & Frewer). This concept of public engagement is what is envisioned in the ideals of public participation described above, even though public participant practitioners would view mechanisms enabling all three of the concepts as public participation.

In reviewing the literature on public engagement mechanisms Rowe and Frewer (2005) found there are a large number of mechanisms listed as ways of eliciting participation by the public in government decision making and policy development. Using variables that differentiate the various mechanisms from each other, and identifying the information flow present in the mechanism, Rowe and Frewer developed

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a typology of mechanisms that categorizes the mechanisms as public communication, public consultation or public participation.

Of the large number of public engagement mechanisms (Rowe & Frewer, 2005) that were available for use, only three were used in the Dog Park Master Plan process. The City Park Alliance chose to hold a public meeting with questions, answers and comments (a combination a public hearing and a public meeting with questions and answers). The Parks and Recreation Department chose to hold a public open house to meet their requirement for a public meeting. The Department also chose to use the focus group mechanism by convening the External Stakeholder Committee.

Public Meetings. One mechanism, and probably the most common one of public participation, is a public meeting. Public meetings may take many forms (McComas, 2003b; Tracy & Dimock, 2004), but they all share the characteristic of being open to any member of the public (McComas, 2003a; 2003b; Tracy & Dimock).

Rowe and Frewer (2005) classify public meetings--public hearings and public meetings with questions and answers--as a public communication mechanism. According to Rowe and Frewer:

> These mechanisms rely on the public coming to the information rather than vice versa. As such, the involved public is largely self-selected and biased in terms of those most proactive and interested. Information is communicated face-to-face by [the government] to those involved and is variable, depending to some degree (often small) on what participants ask. Public hearings are often required when some major government program is about to be implemented or prior to the passage of legislation; public meetings may be initiated by local authorities or convened in response to citizen concerns (p. 278).

Other authors (such as McComas, 2003a; Senecah, 2004; Tracy & Dimock, 2004) frame their concept of public meetings based on what they see as the most prominent

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type of public meeting, the public hearing. This type of public meeting combines the

various types of meetings delineated in the Rowe and Frewer system into what these

authors refer to as a public hearing which involves an audience seated before a panel of

experts and/or officials in some sort of meeting hall, auditorium, or municipal board

room (McComas, 2003a; 2003b). Normally there is a presentation by a government

official or expert followed by questions, comments, and testimony by the public on the

issue under consideration or the presentation at the hearing (McComas, 2003a; 2003b;

Senecah, 2004). Public hearings continue to be popular with government officials

because they provide "a familiar structure, and the logistics are manageable to ensure

maximum control along with maximum detachment from the public . . ." (Senecah, p.

27).

> According to Tracy and Dimock (2004) public meetings:
>
> often involve two groups: (a)Those people responsible for developing and
> framing the issue, listening to the public, and making the final decision, and (b)
> those ordinary citizens who are sufficiently motivated to turn out at a meeting to
> enact their identity as a public. These two groups are by no means equal. The
> former have professional expertise and/or political legitimacy, and it is they who
> will be praised and blamed for the content of a decision, as well as the process
> through which it was made. The latter, in contrast, have expressive rights about a
> meeting's issue, with the accompanying moral expectation that their expression
> will be heard and treated seriously (p. 154).

The inclusion of input from the public and the expectation by the public that their

input would be given consideration, would appear to be in conflict with the classification

of public hearings as a public communication mechanism in the Rowe and Frewer (2005)

typology. In public communication category the information flow is from the

government to the public and there is no intention of information flowing from the public

to the government. To see public hearings as a venue to gather and record public input

for use in the decision-making process would in Rowe and Frewer's typology would classify it a public consultation mechanism. Innes and Booher (2004) consider the public hearing process ". . . to be formulistic, one-way communication from members of the public to the agency or elected official" (p. 423). However, in light of the complaint that the experts and officials do not give sufficient weight to the public's comments in public hearings and do not take them seriously (Tracy & Dimock, 2004), Rowe and Frewer's classification of public hearings as being designed and conducted to convey information to the public and not to gather information from the public may be more accurate than the description in other literature.

Another type of meeting, less common than public hearings but normally held along with them (McComas, Trumbo & Besley, 2007), is the open house meeting. In this type of meeting the public circulate among poster displays and there are government officials or experts available to take comments and answer questions (McComas, 2003a; 2003b; McComas, Trumbo & Besley, 2007). This type of meeting is much less formal and more interactive than a public hearing and allows for more discussions between participants and the government (McComas, 2003a; McComas, Trumbo & Besley, 2007). This type of meeting is also looked at as a means of reducing citizen impact and preventing grandstanding by participants (McComas, 2003b).

Rowe and Frewer (2005) consider open houses to be a public communication mechanism, but as a separate type of public communication mechanism from public hearings and public meetings. Rowe and Frewer would see open houses not as a form of meeting, but rather as staffed information distribution centers at which the public stops to

ask questions and review displays on a project or policy. The information provided to the public at an open house in Rowe and Frewer's view is limited to what the government wishes to provide. As with the public hearings and public meetings, Rowe and Frewer would see open house meetings as mechanisms designed to provide information to the public and not to gather information from the public.

No matter whether we are considering public meetings or open houses, the literature (Innes & Booher2004; McComas, 2001; 2003a; 2003b; Tracy & Dimock, 2004) indicates that in many if not most cases the perception of the public is that such meetings are of no value, as the government does not intend to consider any of the information the public submits at the meeting. This perception is consistent with Rowe and Frewer's classification of both public meetings and open houses as public communication mechanisms, which are designed and conducted only to convey information to the public. This would put them in the category of either co-optative (the decision has been made but we will let you vent so you can't complain later), or as ritualistic (we are holding the meeting because the rules say we have to even though we have made the decision) (McComas, 2003a). "Rather than using public meetings as interactive forums, critics argue that agencies typically hold public meetings to announce and defend their policies, and the public comes to vent. As McComas (2001) quotes Kremmis (1990), "Very little hearing occurs in most public hearings" (p. 38).

Frustrated by the uselessness of the public meeting process , many governments gave up on the idea of seeking meaningful participation by the public and fell back on the view that they had been elected to make decisions and so why confuse the situation by

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consulting with the public (Leighninger). As a result the public was excluded from having any influence on the decision-making process.

In the Dog Park Master Plan process the public meetings held were both of the types discussed above. The Parks and Recreation Department conducted two open houses, but did not link them to public hearings as the literature would indicate would be the normal occurrence. The Department consciously chose the open house format for their meetings to accomplish a purpose stated in the literature: to prevent grandstanding by the aggressive participants that normally dominate their public meetings. The meeting held by the City Park Alliance, and participated in by the Parks and Recreation Department, would best be classified as a public meeting with questions and answers (Rowe & Frewer, 2005) even though it did allow for comments during the meeting and input on comment sheets before and after the meeting.

All three of the meetings had a ritualistic nature to them. The Parks and Recreation Department had made up its mind on the Dog Park Master Plan elements and they were just selling them to the public. They held their open house meetings to sell the Plan and be able to say they met the requirement to hold a meeting and obtain public input. In the case of the City Park Alliance meeting, the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks who were behind the meeting wanted to demonstrate their power and show they were representing the public's position, whether they were or not. The meeting gave the impression they were playing the "game" by the rules and not working in secret to defeat the Plan. Anecdotal information indicates to me that nobody believed the meetings were going to have any impact on the final decision as all sides in the issue had already made

up their minds. The meetings were held to put on a show and follow the established ritual.

  Deliberative groups. In the 1990s democratic theory took a turn towards a deliberative form of democracy (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Hilmer, 2010; Morrell, 2010) and away from participatory or pluralistic democracy (Hilmer). In response to this theoretical and philosophical turn, in the 1990s the focus on how to structure public participation forums changed from the public meeting concept to a deliberative group or team emphasis (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Hartz-Karp & Briand, 2009; Leighninger, 2005). This emphasis was reflected in the emergence of the governments' use of citizen study groups, citizen juries, consensus conferences, and planning cells (Goodin & Dryzek; Hartz-Karp & Briand). Rowe and Frewer (2005) include such groups in their system as public participation mechanisms.

  These deliberative bodies were grouped together under the category of mini-publics in the mid to late 2000s (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Setätä, 2011). A mini-public is a group of citizens representing the whole demos gathered together to deliberate on policy issues (Setätä). Mini-publics are envisioned as a means of involving the public in the decision-making and policy development process of the government without having to involve the entire public (Goodin & Dryzek; Setätä).   The use of mini-publics is conceived as being part of the representative democratic process, while depending on the principle of deliberative democracy (Goodin & Dryzek; Setätä).

  Though mini-publics are based on the principles of deliberative democracy they do not meet the ideal of deliberative democracy and do not abide by all of its principles

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(Setätä). Like many actual applications of idealistic concepts mini-publics may be deliberative in nature, but they are a hybrid, consisting of a combination of deliberative principles applied within the representative democratic reality.

Mini-publics are composed of a portion of the public for an issue and are supposed to be designed to represent the public. Having a group that represents the public enables the government to access the opinions, views and concerns of the entire public without having to involve the entire public, which would result in a deliberative process with a group size that is unmanageable.   To accomplish this requires that "conscious efforts are made to guarantee the representativeness of participants" (Setätä, 2011, p. 203). As a mini-public cannot truly and completely reflect the views and opinions of the entire public it must be the objective of the selection process to have the considered judgment and the diverse voices of the public members reflected in the membership of the mini-public (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Setätä).

Typically, the selection of the members of a mini-public is made from a group of citizens who accept an invitation sent to a random sample of the public (Setätä, 2011). Ideally a mini-public would be made up non-partisan, lay citizens randomly selected and not exclusively of citizens who self-select or are selected based on their partisanship (Goodin and Dryzek).

Though a mini-public may occasionally be a formal part of the decision-making process, they normally only provide input into the representative democratic decision-making process (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Setätä, 2011). Besides the unlikely function of being the decision making body, Dryzek and Goodin list six ways a mini-public may be

used in the government decision-making process—providing recommendations to the process, providing a conduit to inform the public debate, shaping policy by being a means of market testing of policies and decisions, helping to legitimize policy, helping to build confidence in or a constituency for policy, and serving as a means of popular oversight of the process. Many of the functions of mini-publics listed place them in the Rowe and Frewer (2005) categories of public communication (a means of distributing information to the public) and public consultation (a means of gathering information from the public) mechanisms, which are both one-way communication concepts not involving dialogue and deliberation.

The common complaint about public participation in general that it takes too long, is too unpredictable and can be messy, is leveled at deliberative groups such as mini-publics also. This is an inherent condition of any process that involves a diverse and independent group of people who are asked to provide input to a governing body. They are conditions that must be accepted in order to have participation by the public as is required by our view of democracy and the rights of the public to have a say in their governmental processes.

The main complaint from researchers and the public about how governments use mini-publics is that they do not accept or follow the recommendations of the mini-public (Crosby, Kelly & Schaefer, 1986; Hartz-Karp & Brian, 2009; Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Leighninger, 2005; Setätä, 2011). Another problem area arises when the public perceives that the government is not genuinely trying to gather public input, but is instead just trying to sell its predetermined decision on the issue presented to the group (Goodin

& Dryzek). Goodin and Dryzek argue that, due to the deliberative nature of a mini-public, it is more resistant to being used as a means of co-opting the public. I would disagree. In cases where the government has no intention of accepting input from the mini-public or is using it as means to sell a decision, I don't think in real world conditions the mini-public would be as resistant to serving a co-optative purpose as Goodin and Dryzek argue. In fact even Goodin and Dryzek acknowledge:

> Skepticism here can draw on long experience with public inquiries whose conclusion is preordained, or whose impacts are minimal if they depart from the script. Publics can be doubtful that macro-political actors will take any notice of what mini-publics conclude, particularly if they come to a "wrong" conclusion (p. 233).

Like all other forms of public participation or public engagement mini-publics can be used to preclude meaningful public participation and suppresses the voice of the public in the decision-making process.

Based on my analysis I concluded that the External Stakeholder Committee was designed to be a mini-public. Its purpose of being a "sounding board" and its use to comment on the internally developed elements of the Dog Park Master Plan would classify it as serving the market testing function described by Goodin and Dryzek (2006) for mini-publics. By its design it was to be a group that represented the public affected by the Dog Park Master Plan. As such it would fall in the Rowe and Frewer (2005) mechanism classification of public consultation of focus group.

Though the External Stakeholder Committee may have been designed to be a mini-public, its implementation did not meet the principles of such a deliberative group. Its members were selected from the partisans on the issue and were not a cross section of the City population or the parties affected by the Dog Park Master Plan. The Committee

was not allowed to deliberate in a free and open manner on the elements because the City staff leading the meetings controlled the process to prevent this. The input of the members of the Committee was ignored on a regular basis, and in fact the work of the Committee was ultimately discarded by the Parks and Recreation Department to meet political pressure from outside groups. If the Committee brought up issues or concerns that the Parks and Recreation Department did not wish to be part of the Plan discussions, the issues and concerns were dismissed. The Department in essence labeled them as the "wrong answer" to their questions. The evidence from the meetings of the Committee, detailed in Chapter Three, and the interviews with Committee members, detailed in Chapter Six, would indicate the outcome of the Committee process was preordained. So, the External Stakeholder Committee process fell far short of meeting the ideals of mini-publics as deliberative public participation bodies and the ideals of public participation themselves.

Review of public participation in the process. What I was looking at in my research was a public participation process. It had both public meetings and a deliberative group. Though both types of public participation forums looked good and should; ideally have been designed to provide a meaningful opportunity for the public to participate in the development of the Dog Park Master Plan, they were in fact conducted and structured to prevent any meaningful public participation.

The public meetings held were ritualistic. Though the Parks and Recreation Department chose the open house format for their two meetings with the stated purpose of enabling meaningful participation by the public, the decision on the elements of the

Dog Park Master Plan had already been decided in their mind. It appears the meetings were in fact conducted because the Parks and Recreation Department was required to hold public meetings and gather input from the public on the Dog Park Master Plan even though they had no intention of giving the public input any weight in their decision. It is not possible to prove this as the Dog Park Master Plan process was terminated prior to completion when outside interests applied pressure and forced a decision on the elements of the Plan. I believe the decision on the elements of the Plan had been made before the meetings were held, and so the meetings were held for the sole purpose of complying with the requirement that a public meeting be held.

The public meeting sponsored by the City Park Alliance was held to defeat rather than shape the Dog Park Master Plan proposed by the Department. There was no intention on anyone's part to take the input from the meeting into consideration in shaping the Plan. The decisions by both the Parks and Recreation Department and the group seeking defeat of the Plan concerning the Plan had already been made The meeting was a ritualistic event to project power and to project the illusion of following the rules of the public participation process as conducted in the City and County of Denver.

The External Stakeholder Committee was created as a mini-public to serve the function of market testing (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006). However, the Parks and Recreation Department ignored most of the input from the Committee. In addition, the Committee was not structured to represent all the views and opinions of the public concerning the issues involved in the problems the Dog Park Master Plan was supposed to address.

Though never stated as a purpose of the Committee, the Department attempted to use the Committee to legitimize its decision on the Plan (Goodin & Dryzek). The Department in the public meetings and in the final Plan stated a number of times that the Committee concurred with certain Plan elements. However, the success of this use of the Committee is questionable as:

> Mini-publics will not necessarily promote legitimacy in the eyes of skeptical publics, who may suppose the real aim is to 'sell' a policy rather than genuinely to listen to public views on the matter. . . (Goodin & Dryzek, p. 233).

In the case of the Dog Park Master Plan the public was skeptical and probably did not believe the Parks and Recreation Department when it said the Committee concurred on the Plan elements. Though designed to look like a mini-public, the External Stakeholder Committee did not fulfill the functions of a mini-public in practice.

The Concept of Having Voice in Decision-Making

Fundamental to the concept of public participation is the belief that in order to have meaningful participation in the decision-making process one has to have had voice in the decision made. This principle of public participation brings into the discussion the concept of "having voice." What does having voice in a decision-making process mean? To answer this question we must consider three concepts. The first is the meaning of the term "having voice" as it applies in decision-making. The second is the concept of representation and speaking for others. The third is the concept of procedural justice.

The term "having voice" in decision-making. We use the terms "voice" and "having voice" in a number of different contexts and so apply a number of meanings to the terms. In the context of the Dog Park Master Plan process study the meaning for the terms comes out of organizational communication and of course public participation. In

both cases the concept of voice is linked to achieving a democratic process and

participating in a meaningful way (Cheney, 1995; Cheney et al., 1998; Tracy & Dimock,

2004).

Coming at this connection between democracy, participation and voice from an

organizational communication viewpoint, Cheney et al. (1998) characterize democracy as

> referring to those principles and practices designed to engage and 'represent' (in
> the multiple sense of the term) as many relevant individuals and groups as
> possible in the formulation, execution, and modification of work-related activities
> (p. 39).

Cheney et al. link the three concepts—democracy, participation and voice—together

when they say:

> Democracy extends simple participation in the workplace by ensuring that the
> individual has a voice, may express an opinion that means something and has the
> potential for making a difference' in the larger organizational context (p. 65).

One has agency and is a force to be reckoned with (Stohl & Cheney, 2001). Bringing

these principles into the civic engagement area, McCoy and Scully (2002) say:

> Civic engagement implies meaningful connections among citizens and among
> citizens, issues, institutions, and the political system. It implies voice and agency,
> a feeling of power and effectiveness, with real opportunities to have a say. It
> implies active participation, with real opportunities to make a difference (p.118).

The principle here is that the communication that occurs in organizational

democracy is dialogic, and it values and recognizes the voices of its members and their

context and life experiences (Cheney et al., Townsend, 2009). The organization

recognizes that the context of the person who is participating in the democratic process

may be disadvantaged by the skills, knowledge and background, and the organization

makes allowances for this to allow for full participation by all (Cheney et al.).

Just because one was allowed to participate in the decision-making process does not guarantee one had voice. Not all participation processes allow for voice and not all participation processes allow for the democratic dialogue that Cheney et al call for (Stohl & Cheney, 2001). This can be seen in the following quote from Rakow et al. (2003) in discussing the differences in the level of participation by two groups in a decision-making process:

> They differed in their respective abilities to be heard, to be included at the table when public policy was discussed, and to be counted when public decisions were made. One group of community residents was able to control definitions of reality by denying a class of community residents equal standing in presenting their competing definitions of the disaster, its causes and consequences. While both groups "talked," only one group had "voice (p. 38).

Senecah (2004) in writing about public participation on environmental issues echoes Cheney et al. (1998) by calling for a more open and dialogic process of involving people in organizational decision-making. Though the organization she focuses on is the government and Cheney et al. focused on the corporate or workplace organizational setting, their views on the right of people to participate in a meaningful, democratic manner in the organizational decision-making that affects them is the same. As Senecah says:

> Most stakeholders agree that much of this public involvement is not effective, not in terms of being productive or meaningful. An often-heard accusation is that the public had no voice. Therefore, whereas government agencies, NGOs, and industry have recognized, some reluctantly, that publics are entitled to real and meaningful (effective) participation, . . .(p. 19)

To provide a practical theory rubric to describe effective voice in people's participation in environmental and other decision-making processes, Senecah (2004) developed what she refers to as the theory of the Trinity of Voice. This theory is based

on Schutz's theory of fundamental interpersonal relations orientation and holds that the

key to an effective participation process is building trust to enhance community,

cohesiveness and capacity in the process participants (Senecah).   Senecah lists three

components—access, standing and influence—in the theory which must be present in

order for there to be adequate and meaningful voice in a public participation process.

Senecah (2004) describes access as:

Access refers to opportunity, potential and safety. In its simplest form, it means that I have access to sufficient and appropriate opportunities to express my choices and opinions, but it is more than this. It means that I have the opportunity to access sufficient and appropriate support, for instance, education, information, so that I can understand the process in an informed active capacity, not as a reactionary. These opportunities may be direct, indirect, or vicarious (e.g., via local-access cable channels). It means that I am in a space that holds the potential for me to be heard (p. 23).

Senecah goes on to list a set of minimal grammars that can be used to determine if

adequate access is present:

At a minimum, it seems that access should be characterized by: an attitude of collaboration, convenient times, convenient places, readily available information and education, diverse opportunities to access information and education, technical assistance to gain a basic grasp of the issues and choices, adequate and widely disseminated notice, early public involvement, and ongoing opportunities for involvement (p. 23-24).

Senecah (2004) describes standing as: "This is standing not in the legal sense. It

is the civic legitimacy, the respect, esteem, and the consideration that all stakeholders'

perspectives should be given" (p. 24). Standing is interrelated with access and is

dependent on access to enable it to occur (Senecah). According to Senecah the grammars

that should be present in any participation process that would indicate one has had

standing are:

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Opportunities for dialogue and deliberation; active listening; courtesy, or an absence of discounting verbal and nonverbal behavior; early and ongoing voice; clear parameters of expectations for authority of participation (e.g., how outcomes of participation will be accorded standing in the decision-making process); clear parameters of investment (e.g., how long will a task force be active?); collaborative room arrangements (e.g., attention to non-intimidating proxemics); reflection of genuine empathy for the concerns of the other perspectives, dialogue, debate, and feedback (p. 24).

The final component of having voice in a process is influence and is an outgrowth

of access and standing (Senecah, 2004). According to Senecah:

By influence, I do not exclusively mean that I was successful at convincing, strong-arming or manipulating others to achieve what I think is the ideal outcome, my position. Influence is not just getting my way, although at times I may. It means that my ideas have been respectfully considered along with those of other stakeholders and my representative or I was part of the process that, for example, determined decision criteria and measured alternatives against it. My idea may or may not be incorporated in whole, but access and standing have allowed an open consideration of what's at stake for everyone as priorities are set and solutions explored (p. 25).

A minimal list of grammars that would characterize influence in a decision-

making process would be

meaningful decision space, transparent process that considers all alternatives, opportunities to meaningfully scope alternatives, opportunities to inform the decision criteria, and thoughtful response to stakeholder concerns and ideas (Senecah, p. 25).

The concept of voice and participation put forth by Senecah (2004) draws heavily

on the idealistic view of public participation. The concept of voice put forth by Senecah

would fall within Rowe and Frewer's (2005) category of public participation, and follows

the principles of communitarian language (Williams & Matheny, 1995).

Because it is idealistic Senecah's view of adequate and meaningful voice in a

process would not normally be achieved in the typical public hearing held by a

government. Senecah seems to recognize this as she describes application of the Trinity

of Voice (TOV) to a generic public hearing in the following way:

> Applying TOV, one could ask the degree to which stakeholders had access. Yes, they had access to a process site and they had an opportunity to participate individually. They could submit written comments or register their opinion in person. They were most likely safeguarded as they spoke. Their words were recorded, transcribed, and would be entered into the historic written and perhaps video record of this event. They had access to a space where the potential existed to have standing. Did they have standing, that is, civic legitimacy? To what degree were their words honored, that is, given due consideration and reflection, really listened to? If we accept the anecdotal as well as the empirical evidence, very few participants, whether administrators, developers, or citizens, feel that anybody was really listening at most public hearings. Citizens often comment that that's why they act dramatic, loud, obnoxious, emotional, and even threatening—they know that no one is really listening and they are trying to shake them into paying attention to make them realize that they are serious about these issues. They are creating their own standing by creating media events, bolstering their organization, appealing to other citizens to join them, and trying to intimidate officials into thinking of further repercussions. . . . To what degree do they have influence? With few exceptions, not much if any. . . . The citizens had very little influence. How could they? They had no standing (pp. 30-31).

In her research (McComas, 2003b) found that similar conditions of access were provided,

but no standing or influence were present in public hearings.

Having voice in a decision-making process is not solely controlled by forces and

parties within the process (Cheney et al., 1998). The rights and practices allowed of

participants in the process are dependent on the rights and practices allowed of the public

outside the process, and forces outside the process may be brought to bear on the process

to enforce the views and values of society on what is allowable in the process (Cheney et

al.).

Voice and representation. Having a direct voice in a decision-making or policy

development process may not always be possible. As was discussed in the section on

public participation, sometimes one is represented in the process. In such cases one has

someone speaking for them in the process. This injection of representation into having

voice in a process brings into the discussion a number of issues related to the

communicative principles of representation and speaking for others.

In representative democracy, representation means your representative is

authorized by you, responsive to your wishes, and accountable to you for their actions

(Trounstine, 2010). These principles could be applied to representation in public

participation, as public participation is part of and grows out of representative democratic

actions of the government. However, a better concept of representation comes out of the

writings of Alcoff (1991) and Young (2000).

Alcoff (1991) is concerned with representation as it involves speaking for others.

Her concerns with representing another involve the issues of authorization to represent,

and being accountable and responsible to represent. She believes it must be clear that one

is authorized to represent another and that this authorization cannot be implied or

inferred. It is not possible to have self-authorization. For Alcoff, in order to represent

another you must be accountable and responsible to them to represent their views,

opinions, and values in a discussion as faithfully and accurately as you can. In order to

represent someone in a decision-making or policy development process in Alcoff's view,

you must be authorized by them and you must be responsible to ensure that their views,

opinions, and values are introduced into the process in an accurate and faithful manner.

Young (2000) has similar views on what constitutes representing someone, but

comes at the issue from the deliberative democracy viewpoint. Young also emphasizes

that one must be authorized to represent someone. She also has similar views on the

responsibility to convey the views, opinions and values of those you represent:

> What do I mean when I say that I feel represented in the political process? There are many possible answers to this question, but three stand out for me as important. First, I feel represented when someone is looking after the interests I take as mine and share with some others. Secondly, it is important to me that the principles, values and priorities that I think should guide political decisions are voiced in discussion. Finally, I feel represented when at least some of those discussing and voting on policies understand and express the kind of social experience I have because of my social group position and the history of social group relations (p. 134).

Young adds a different view of accountability, one coming out of deliberation. In

Young's view a representative is accountable to convey back to those he or she represents

the decision that was made in the process and to justify it to them. Therefore, in my

opinion, Young's view of representation is that it involves being authorized, accountable

and responsible to those you represent.

Both Alcoff (1991) and Young (2000) as well as others (such as McCoy and

Scully, 2002) recognize that it is not truly possible to speak for others as a representative.

We are not able to assume another's identity (Alcoff) and we will never be able to

accurately and completely convey another's views, opinions, and values (Alcoff; Young).

According to McCoy and Scully in public participation "no one's voice can take the place

of—or fully represent—someone else's voice. Neither can anyone experience

engagement on behalf of someone else" (p. 129). For this reason it is better to have all

affected parties involved in the process and, if this is not possible, one must recognize

that the parties not involved in the process have less voice and we are not obtaining a true

representation of the voice of the public.

Satisfaction and procedural justice.   Studies (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Innes & Booher, 2004; Leighninger, 2005; McComas, 2003a; 2003b; Senecah, 2004) indicate that people, in many if not most cases, are not satisfied with their experience in public participation events and do not believe the decisions reached by the government based on such events are valid. They believe their voices were ignored or suppressed in the process. The rationale behind this belief is the concept of procedural justice.

"Research in procedural justice is grounded in the belief that process matters—at times even more than the outcomes" (McComas, Trumbo & Besley, 2007, p. 530). The concept of procedural justice holds that if people believe a decision-making process was fair and they had a fair opportunity to have their say in the process, they will be satisfied with the decision reached in the process (Tyler & Blader, 2000). This belief leads to the belief that the decision reached is legitimate (Tyler & Blader), which is an aim of public deliberation (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004) and a function of the deliberative group form of public participation (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006). Having voice—the ability to have ones say and some influence over the process (McComas, Trumbo & Besley)—is an important component of procedural justice. "The opportunity to voice one's views conveys to a group member that he or she is respected and that what he or she has to say is valued" (Tyler & Blader, p. 105).

Without voice in the process a person will not accept the decision reached as being legitimate. In order to have voice one must have had access, standing and influence on the process, whether this is directly by participating in the process or through a representative providing a conduit for your voice. Without this, along with a

fair and neutral process (Tyler & Blader (2000), one will not accept the decision reached and so will not be satisfied with the decision reached. Therefore, not having voice is a main cause of dissatisfaction with public participation processes. However, McComas, Trumbo and Besley (2007) found:

> When attendees believed that citizens had some control or voice at public meetings, they were more satisfied with the meetings, felt more connected to other community members after the meeting, were more willing to accept meeting outcomes or recommendations, and were more willing to attend future public meetings . . . (p. 544).

Voice in the Dog Park Master Plan process. Did the participants in the Dog Park Master Plan process have voice in the process? We can apply the components of voice—access, standing and influence--developed by Senecah (2004) to answer the question. The participants were provided access to the process, though their access to the actual decision-making forum was limited insofar as they had to rely on the Parks and Recreation Department staff to relay their input from the meetings of the External Stakeholder Committee meetings and the public meetings back to the decision-making forum. This arrangement brings into the process all the concerns and negatives of representation and speaking for others. The participants were not afforded standing. There was no respect or consideration given to their input, and there were no real opportunities for dialogue or deliberation on issues related to dogs in parks and dog parks. The Parks and Recreation staff ignored and discounted the input of the External Stakeholder Committee members on a regular basis. With limited access and no standing, it was not possible for the participants to have any influence on the decision reached. This was compounded further when the process was abandoned due to pressure from a group or groups outside the process. The participants had no voice in the process

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by the standards in the literature for voice to be present. This led, as would be predicted

by the concept of procedural justice, to dissatisfaction with the process and a feeling that

the decision reached was not legitimate.

Influence of Groups Outside the Process

Though I was studying the Dog Park Master Plan process, the final results of the

process were influenced to a great extent by one or more outside groups who intervened

and caused the process to be side-tracked and imposed a decision on the elements of the

Plan from outside the process. Therefore, the influence of outside groups on decision-

making must be considered in the analysis of the Dog Park Master Plan process.

The literature does address the issue of special interests outside the decision-

making process at times taking over or significantly influencing the process. Harnik

(2010), in advocating for following a collaborative process in designing parks in urban

areas, says that ideally the process will deliver support for a collaborative design process,

but he says:

> Unfortunately, there is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip. Powerful players, whether
> elected, appointed, or self-appointed can opaquely insert themselves in the
> process, skewing or short-circuiting it entirely (p. 46).

Senecah (2004) comments that government officials who conduct public participation

processes "fear that the process will be taken over by special interest" (p. 16). Pitkin

(1967) warns that in representative democracy one of the concerns that must be kept in

mind at all times is the possibility that special interests may take over the political

process and act in a manner that is not in the best interest of the public.

Powerful interest groups with the ability to gain access to the decision makers

through other than the public participation process can in effect overrule or prevent the

input of the public at large (Rakow et al., 2003). Their objective is to intimidate the decision makers into going with their desired decision by applying their power (Swindell, 2000). Hartz-Karp and Brian (2009) capture the effect that a powerful group using power to gain extra influence in the decision-making process can have on a public participation process:

> Citizens possessing extra-ordinary influence (stemming from extra ordinary status or resources) may be admitted to the decision-making arena. Ordinary citizens, however, are excluded not only from decision-making but also from access to information that might provoke them to action. The community is frequently cajoled to "have a say" but then finds that participation is not linked to influence over decision-making (p. 137).

Through such lobbying based on applying power to influence the decision makers instead of going through the public participation process outside groups can prevent or overrule the will of the people from being enacted (Crosby, Kelly & Schaefer, 1986).

The reason why citizens would work outside a public participation process such as the Dog Park Master Plan process arises from not believing the system represents your views on a matter (Innes & Booher, 2004). If people believe they have not been afforded an opportunity to have voice they may go outside the organization to seek other venues to have their voice on the matter (Cheney et al., 1998). When people believe they have been denied paths to express themselves and have their views considered, they will seek other paths to get their way (Rakow et al, 2003). When people feel wronged in a public participation process, whether that is true or not, they will shift from the preferred public participation process to another process because they believe it no longer is representing and valuing their views (Rakow et al.)

In the Dog Park Master Plan process the grouping of people I have identified as the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks believed that the process as structured was not developing a Plan that reflected and complied with their wishes and views on the issue of dogs and dog parks in the City's parks. Therefore, they first tried to apply pressure to the Parks and Recreation Department through attending the External Stakeholder Committee meetings, the Department's public meetings, and organizing and holding the meeting sponsored by the City Park Alliance. When this did not result in the changes to the Plan they desired, they applied pressure to the elected and appointed officials in the City government; this assault on the Dog Park Master Plan process was successful in short-circuiting the process. By exercising the power they held they forced the Plan to be changed to reflect their views instead of it reflecting the Plan elements developed in the Dog Master Plan process as carried out by the Parks and Recreation Department. The literature would say this was to be expected because as a powerful interest group—the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks—was dissatisfied with the process, and so, went outside it to gain what they desired.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

When I started the research project I had a simple goal in mind. I wanted to observe and understand what happened in the Dog Park Master Plan process. The goal turned out to be not so simple. As Goodall (1994) would predict about my research on the process, it took longer than I expected and it didn't take the path I expected it would.

In this chapter I will provide my conclusions on the Dog Park Master Plan process. I will describe and explain the process based on my observations and my review of the literature. This will be guided by two of the research questions for my research:

1. How did the process of engaging the public unfold in Denver's pursuit of a master plan for accommodating dogs in the City's parks?

2. What are the dynamics that shaped the process and affected its outcome?

The "truth" about the process I will present will be the truth as I saw it (Goodall, 1994). The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the limitations of my research and a call for future research.

A Description and Explanation of the Process

The Dog Park Master Plan process began in the spring of 2009. Its purpose was to develop a plan for accommodating dogs in the City's parks. The process was to involve the public and so was a public participation process. As a public participation process it was designed to be conducted to provide the Parks and Recreation Department

input on the public's wishes and desires in accordance with the procedures of the representative democratic system under which the City operates.

The survey. The process kicked off in the spring of 2009 when the Parks and Recreation Department issued an invitation for members of the public to complete a survey instrument which asked for their opinion on a number of issues related to dogs in parks and the dog parks in Denver, as well as asking if they would be willing to participate as members of citizen committees to be formed as part of the process. The participation by the public in the survey was very good in the opinion of the Parks and Recreation Department staff involved in the Dog Park Master Plan process. The results from the survey showing the opinions of the public on dogs in parks and dog parks were compiled and posted in the summer of 2009 to the Parks and Recreation Department web site. The listing of the people who indicated in the survey they would be willing to serve on a citizen committee to assist in developing the Dog Park Master Plan was used by the Department as the pool of people from which 15 of the 21 members of the External Stakeholder Committee were chosen. These were the only uses of the results of the survey results in the process.

Development of the Plan. Having completed the survey, the Parks and Recreation Department moved on to the development of the Dog Park Master Plan in May 2009. The development of the Plan was done by an internal work group, and a mini-public (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Setätä, 2011) or citizen committee—the External Stakeholder Committee—was formed to act as a reviewer and commenter on the Plan elements as they were developed by the internal work group. As my research was

focused on public participation and not the internal decision-making process of the Parks and Recreation Department, except where it impacted public participation, my engagement with the process began with the first of the External Stakeholder Committee meetings on June 10, 2009, and focused only on the External Stakeholder Committee in this phase of the process.

The External Stakeholder Committee consisted of 21 people chosen to represent the public at large (15 members) and three interest groups: Inter Neighborhood Cooperation (three members), the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (two members) and the Denver City Council (one member). Though the Parks and Recreation Department intended the membership of the Committee to represent the public for dog parks in the City parks, they failed to achieve this. The selection of members of the committee was biased in nature. They set aside six of the 21 member slots for interest groups and their selection of the members of the public at large was heavily weighted to people who had dogs as part of their families and were pro dogs in parks. The selection process failed to ensure that all parties affected by the Plan would have voice in the process and that the membership of the Committee was truly representative of the public involved in the dogs in parks and dog parks issues.

The purpose of the External Stakeholder Committee from the Parks and Recreation Department point of view was to act as a representative group of citizens who would act as proxy for the public and provide comments on the Plan elements as they were developed by the internal work group. The Department's view of the purpose of the Committee would classify it as a test marketing mini-public (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006).

The Department was using the Committee as a means of determining what would sell with the public and so allow them to tailor the Plan elements before presenting the Plan to the whole public. The Parks and Recreation Department saw the focus of the Dog Park Master Plan as the creation of additional areas within the City parks where people could exercise and play with their dogs off leash.

The Parks and Recreation Department's view of the purpose of the Committee and the focus of the Plan may not have been consistent with the one held by the Committee members. From my observations of the Committee process and interviews with Committee members, it appears the Committee members held the view, influenced in part by the information the Department provided in the recruitment of the Committee members, that the purpose of the Committee was to help in the development of the Plan and not to just comment on the Plan developed. The Committee members saw a broader focus to the Plan. They saw the plan as addressing how the City should deal with all issues of having dogs use the parks as well as people. These disconnects between the Committee and the Department caused problems in the Committee process.

As the External Stakeholder Committee's seven meetings unfolded over the six month period from June through November 2009, the Parks and Recreation Department followed the process of presenting the Plan elements they had already developed to the Committee and allowing the Committee to comment on the elements. The Committee members agreed with some of the elements either completely or partially, and raised various objections to some elements. The Department, perceiving themselves as the experts, discounted or ignored most of the objections to the Plan elements raised by the

Committee.   If the Committee members raised issues related to but outside the elements presented by the Department, the discussions were brought back to the issue the Department wished to discuss and their comments and input were dismissed.

The actions of the Parks and Recreation Department were those of people who considered themselves experts on an issue and hence the ones who had the right answer. They therefore considered the input from the Committee in opposition to the elements they had developed as incorrect, and so it, could be ignored, discounted, and / or dismissed. This led the Committee members to feel they did not have voice in the Dog Park Master Plan process. As the Committee members grew more concerned they did not have voice in the process more and more of them quit attending the Committee meetings. The Department made no public note of this and went forth with the meetings even though only about a third of the Committee members were present at the last few meetings. The Department's actions confirmed the complaint of people who engage in public participation that public participation is a waste of time because the Government does not hear and consider the public's input, and events such as meetings and citizen committees are held just to be able to say the public was consulted.

The Department's actions also worked against the ability of the Committee to serve the function of being a "test market" for the Plan. Ignoring, discounting, and / or dismissing the input from the Committee, the Department destroyed the ability of the Committee to act as a test of the acceptability of the Plan to the public. As a result the Plan that came out of the Committee process was a product of the Parks and Recreation

Department internal process and reflected none of the discussions in the External

Stakeholder Committee meetings.

In all of the External Stakeholder Committee meetings there were non-Committee

members present. In the first four these were predominantly City staff who had an

interest in the Dog Park Master Plan or the process to develop it. In addition to these

City staff I attended all the meetings and one of the Committee members had his wife

attend the meetings after the second Committee meeting. This pattern changed in the

fifth Committee meeting in early October. Starting with that meeting and continuing

through the sixth and seventh meetings of the Committee, people associated with the

grouping of people I have labeled the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks started to

attend the meeting. In fact, in the last meeting of the Committee in November 2009, the

Protectors and Defenders of the Parks contingent outnumbered the Committee members

in attendance. My observation was that the attendance at the Committee meetings was

the beginning of the effort by the Protectors and Defender of the Parks to apply pressure

to defeat the Plan.

With the conclusion of the seventh and last meeting of the External Stakeholder

Committee on November 10, 2009 the Parks and Recreation Department had gained all

they wished from the Committee and were ready to draft the final version of the Plan to

be presented to the public. By my observations the Department had completed its

drafting of the Plan by this last External Stakeholder Committee meeting. Though they

said they were going to consider input and make changes to the Plan in the time between

the last Committee meeting and the public meetings to be held in early 2010, I saw no

changes in the Plan presented to the Committee at its last meeting and the Plan presented

to the public at the three meetings open to the public in January and February 2010.

Public Meetings on the Plan. There were three meetings open to the public held

on the Dog Park Master Plan. The Parks and Recreation Department held two meetings

in January 2010, which were structured in an open house format. In these meetings the

Department provided information on the Dog Park Master Plan it had developed in 2009

to the public through graphic and text displays—posters—and having City staff available

to answer questions and provide clarification. The third meeting was held in early

February 2010 and was held by the City Park Alliance. This meeting was structured as a

presentation by the Parks and Recreation Department on the Dog Park Master Plan it had

developed followed by a period for questions and answers and a period for comments. At

all three meetings the public was afforded the opportunity to provide comments on the

Dog Park Master Plan by completing and turning in a comment sheet to the Parks and

Recreation Department staff at the meetings.

The open house and meeting with questions and answers types of public

engagement events are considered to be informational meetings (McComas, 2003b; 2007;

Rowe & Frewer, 2005). In an informational meeting the intent is to provide information

to the public, and so, the information flow is one-way from the government to the public.

The Parks and Recreation Department deviated from the general nature of informational

meetings by introducing the potential for gathering information from the public through

the public comment sheets. However, as I believe the Department was holding the public

meetings because they view them as something they had to do, they saw the meetings as

ritualistic. In addition, they saw themselves as experts and so would discount any input

from the public that disagreed with their views. Therefore, I believe the inclusion of the

public comment sheets in the meetings was a hollow and ritualistic action.

The meeting held by the City Park Alliance served another purpose beyond the

espoused purpose of affording the public an opportunity to learn about and comment on

the Dog Park Master Plan. The Protectors and Defenders of the Parks looked at the

meeting, and in my opinion organized the meeting through the City Park Alliance as a

front, as an opportunity to show their power and attempt to intimidate the City into

significantly modifying the Plan to match their wishes. The meeting, and the comments

and show of force by the number of their adherents that attended the meeting, was their

way of making a public show to the City of the power they wielded and so to intimidate

the City officials into ending their support of the Plan as drafted by the Department.

The final plan. On March 15, 2010 the Parks and Recreation Department invited

the External Stakeholder Committee members along with the members of the internal

work group to a presentation of the final recommended Dog Park Master Plan. Ten of

the 21 Committee members attended the meeting. Contrary to what the Committee had

been told at their last meeting in November and the public had been told at the three

meetings open to the public, this gathering of the Committee members was not to review

and comment on the final recommended Plan, but was just a presentation of the Plan to

inform the Committee members of what the final Plan elements were.

The presentation of the elements of the Dog Park Master Plan to the External

Stakeholder Committee members, and the other attendees at the meeting, revealed

significant changes from the Plan discussed at the Committee's meetings and three public forums. Though the elements of the Plan on existing facilities, fees and enforcement, and partnerships were essentially what had been presented to the Committee in its meetings and at the public meetings, the elements on new facilities had significantly changed. The element for having unfenced, off-leash areas had been removed in its entirety, and the elements on new, fenced dog parks had been changed to eliminate any mention of specific sites for such areas. When asked why the changes on new facilities had been made, the Parks and Recreation Department staff conducting the presentation replied there had been organized opposition to the unfenced, off-leash areas and new, fenced dog parks, and they had never intended to list specific sites for any dog parks in the Plan. These revelations came as a surprise to the Committee members, since they had spent much of their time in the Committee meetings discussing these two elements. Based on their reaction at the meeting and in the interviews conducted with six of them in May and June 2010, I believe the Committee members feel they wasted their time and efforts in participating as a member of the Committee.

A final Dog Park Master Plan was finally adopted by the Manger of Parks and Recreation in April 2011. It contained the elements as presented in March 2010 to the External Stakeholder Committee members who attended the presentation.   The Plan contains very few specifics, mostly concerning existing dog park improvements. The new fees and tagging requirements contained in the Plan have not been implemented, and there has been no obvious action on further planning of new dog parks for which a partnership with a developer did not already exist. There is every appearance that the

Parks and Recreation Department had no intention of ever making any meaningful use of the Plan. As many people based on past experience would predict, the ritualistic requirement to complete the Plan has been met, and so, the Plan will be "placed on the shelf" with all the other ritualistic plans. The City's Parks and Recreation Department will record the Plan was done.

The intervention of the outside group, which I label the Protectors and Defenders of the Parks, short-circuited the Dog Park Master Plan process, and so, it never completed. A small but powerful group, dissatisfied with what they perceived to be the probable outcome of the process, opaquely inserted themselves into the decision-making process of the City and through intimidation forced the Plan to be modified to meet their wishes. This action suppressed the voice of the people and compromised the principles on which public participation is based.

The process as a whole. My study of the Dog Park Master Plan process suggests it was doomed from the beginning. First, the Parks and Recreation Department took such a narrow focus for the Dog Park Master Plan—dog parks and not dogs in parks—that they were not going to solve the problems they said the Plan was to address. They then compounded this by forming a partisan citizen committee—the External Stakeholder Committee—, and so, failed to ensure that a broad-based, representative mini-public was formed to advise them on the Plan elements they developed.

The Parks and Recreation Department saw themselves as the experts on the issues to be addressed by the Plan, and so, did not include the public in the development of the Plan elements. They saw the role of the public as being the beneficiaries of their great

plan, and not their partners in developing the Plan. In this role as the "experts" and

decision-makers they did not look to the Committee members as people who had

valuable information and insights that would make the Plan better, but only as a sample

of the public on whom they could test the Plan and determine the best way to sell the Plan

to the Public. This view led the Department to conduct the External Stakeholder

Committee meetings in a way that discounted, ignored or dismissed the input from the

Committee members.   They suppressed the voice of the Committee. The Department

then held ritualistic public meetings to fulfill the perceived requirement to hold public

meetings and not to fulfill their obligation to allow for the public to have a voice in the

Plan development.

The Parks and Recreation Department failed to recognize the signs—attendance at

the last three Committee meetings and holding of the meeting by the City Park

Alliance—that an outside interest group was dissatisfied with the Plan as developed in

the process and was getting organized to defeat the Plan. The Department failed to take

action to either counter the outside group or include its views and opinions into the

process. Because the outside group felt ignored and powerless in the process, they were

able to lean on City Officials outside the public process to successfully defeat the Plan as

developed by the Department. This short-circuiting of the process effectively excluded

the voice of participants with views and opinions other than those held by the outside

group from the final decision-making on the Plan.

The outcome of the process resulted in the participants in the Dog Park Master

Plan process being dissatisfied with the process and seeing the process as being unfair

and their voices ignored. Therefore, they do not consider the outcome of the process to

be legitimate. Their dissatisfaction with their experience in the process leads them to feel

they wasted their time, and that the process was fixed. The City or the powerful few got

their way and the rest of the public got ignored. The participants see the process as just

another ritualistic process the government conducted because that is what the "rules of

the game" say should be done. As such, it is another example of a process that looks

democratic and inclusive of the public participation, but is in reality the usual, closed

process in which the decision is preordained.

Limitations of the Study

I have identified four limitations that impact my research findings. The first of

these is the study was a qualitative, narrative ethnographic study.   As Goodall (1994)

says about narrative ethnography:

> This method also invites writers to deal with the various and changing meanings
> that people associate with situations and makes no claim to generalizability,
> replicability, or infallibility. It is a situation-specific, author specific, fallible
> method. It asks more questions that it pretends to answer, and its chief product is
> a perspective understanding of the truth created by and constituted in a transient
> rhetoric (p. 151).

The "truth" that is portrayed in the study is the truth as seen by me. It is not the only

truth, but one truth that can be extracted from the events that occurred in the Dog Park

Master Plan process. The study looked at only the Dog Park Master Plan process and so

is situation-specific, and, as Goodall would say, I ended up with more questions that I

started with or answered as part of the study. What I have developed in the study is the

description and explanation of one event and so my findings are not generalizable to the

local government decision-making phenomenon as a whole.

The second limitation is the Dog Park Master Plan process was not allowed to be completed as planned by the Parks and Recreation Department. The observations I made on the conduct of the process by the Parks and Recreation Department are based on my belief that the Department's actions and conduct would have continued the same if the process had completed. That is I believe the Department would have not allowed any meaningful influence by the External Stakeholder Committee members or the public at large in the elements included in the final Dog Park Master Plan as they had been doing throughout the process up to and including the public meetings in January and February 2010. It is possible, though I do not think it probable; the Department would have changed to allow the public to have meaningful voice in the contents of the final Dog Park Master Plan if the process had not been short-circuited by the outside interest group. Therefore, my research findings are limited to the extent that I did not observe a completed process, and so I do not know for a fact to what the extent the influence of the public would have been on the final Plan.

The third limitation I have identified is the space I occupied in the Dog Park Master Plan process.   I was not a participant in the process, but was an observer of the process. I was not invited to study the process. I did not have an interest in the subject—dogs parks and dogs in parks--on which the process focused, but instead I had an interest in the process itself. Though I was allowed to attend the External Stakeholder Committee meetings and the public meetings, I was not allowed to participate in them. Neither the Parks and Recreation Department or any of the participants in the process sought me out to hold discussions on the process, nor did I seek them out to discuss the process until

after all phases of the process other than writing and approval of the final plan were completed. This occupying of the space of a detached observer in the process may have resulted in my not knowing information that would have influenced my research observations and findings.

The fourth, and final, limitation I have identified on my research findings is I limited myself to only observation of the process meetings involving members of the public. I did not attend, or obtain the notes and minutes of, the internal work group meetings or the Parks and Recreation Department internal meetings concerning the Dog Park Master Plan. This was intentional on my part. I was studying the participation by the public in the Dog Park Master Plan process and was not concerned with the process followed by the Parks and Recreation Department in their internal deliberations on the Plan. My lack of knowledge of what was discussed on the Department's internal meetings on the Plan may have biased my observations and findings on the Department's motives and intentions on how they conducted the process of involving the public in the development of the Dog Park Master Plan. This may have resulted in my portraying an incorrect picture of the process.

Call for Future Research

One way to mitigate the limitations of my study would be to combine it with other published studies in public participation. However, there appears to be a lack of research on public participation in the communication studies field. McComas (2001; 2003a; 2003b) along with Trumbo and Besley (2007) has studied satisfaction with participation in meetings and procedural justice in environmental public participation. Tracy and

Dimock (2004) studied public meetings as places where people come together to talk and decide on matters of importance to them. Tracy (2007a; 2007b; 2010) and Tracy and Durfy (2007) looked at public participation in school board meetings. Townsend (2009) has studied the New England town meeting form of direct democracy. Others, according to Tracy and Dimock, have studied public meetings, but have studied them as examples of groups or teams. There also is the research on deliberative democracy in the context of the national forum movement. Though, all of this research is good and valuable, it only covers a small portion of the complex and ever expanding phenomenon of public participation in the United States, much less the world. This vast gap in the study of public participation is commented on by Tracy (2010; Tracy and Dimock (2004); McComas (2001; 2003a; 2003b); and McComas, Trumbo and Besley (2007). My study adds to the array of literature on public participation, but like others only covers a small portion of the phenomenon.

With the deliberative turn (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Hilmer, 2010; Morrell, 2010) there has been extensive study of deliberative groups or mini-publics in the decision-making process of the government (such as Goodin & Dryzek; Hart-Karp & Briand, 2009; Innes & Booher, 2004; Leighninger, 2005; McCoy & Scully, 2002; Setätä, 2011). These studies have a political science focus and provide valuable information, but they do not address the communication dynamics present in a deliberative body involved in the decision-making process of a government. Though, as mentioned above, there has been research conducted on the public forum form of deliberative bodies from a communication studies point of view, there has not been any study of actual deliberative

bodies involved in decision-making process of a government. In the studies conducted, the public forum form of deliberative bodies is a created or experimental venue designed to demonstrate the principles of public deliberation and so is an artificial entity.

From the above analysis, it seems evident that much more research from a communication studies point of view is required and justified. In addition, it would be valuable if research could extend and confirm the applicability of such concepts as the Trinity of Voice (Senecah, 2004) and Ordinary Democracy (Tracy, 2010) to decision-making process such as the one I studied. It also would be valuable to conduct additional studies of the applicability and usefulness of the applying the principles of deliberative democracy to citizen groups.

Besides the study of public participation in government decision-making processes themselves, a fertile, but under studied area would be the dynamics involved in neighborhood and community groups as part of the civil society and public sphere. This would involve both the study of such groups in their civil society function as overseer of the government as an outside group, but would also involve the study of the groups as participants in the government decision-making process.

With the increasing desire of the public to be involved in decision-making by their government, and the advocating of the sue of deliberative processes in decision-making by the political scientist, it is believed that there will be more not less public involvement in government decision making. Therefore, it is important that the communication studies discipline be ready to meet the demand for assistance and guidance that will come with the increasing public involvement in government decision

making. This will require more and broader study of public participation by the

discipline, both as public participation practices and procedures currently exists and how

they may evolve in the future.

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Appendix A: Chronology of Dog Park Master Plan Public Engagement Events

Mid March 2009   Issuance of Press Release from Denver Parks and Recreation Announcing kick off of Dog Park Master Plan process and the availability of the on line survey (Email of March 16, 2009 from INC)

June 10, 2009   First Meeting of External Stakeholder Committee at Rude Recreation Center in a multi-purpose room

July 15, 2009   Second Meeting of External Stakeholder Committee at Webb Building held in a meeting room

August 18, 2009   Third Meeting of External Stakeholder Committee held at the REI store meeting room

September 22, 2009   Fourth Meeting of External Stakeholder Committee held at the Webb Building in a meeting room

October 14, 2009   Fifth Meeting of External Stakeholder Committee held at the Webb Building in a meeting room

October 28, 2009   Sixth Meeting of External Stakeholder Committee held at the Webb Building in a meeting room

November 10, 2009   Seventh and Final Meeting of External Stakeholder Committee held at the Webb Building in a meeting room

January 16, 2010   First Public Open House on Plan held at the Berkley Recreation Center in the gym

January 30, 2010   Second Public Open House on the Plan held at the Cook Park Recreation Center in the multi-purpose room

February 8, 2010   Kick off Meeting for the Dog Park Partnership group held at the Webb Building in a large meeting room

February 9, 2010   Public meeting sponsored by the City Park Alliance and attended by the Parks and Recreation staff on the Plan held at the Museum of Nature and Science in the auditorium

March 15, 2010   Meeting of both the Internal Working Group and the External Stakeholder Committee at which the Parks and Recreation Department briefed the attendees on the final recommendations to

be included in the Dog Park Master Plan held at the Webb
Building in a large m meeting room

October 14, 2010   Briefing of final Dog Park Master Plan elements to the Parks and
Recreation Advisory Board

April 2011   Issuance of Dog Park Master Plan

Appendix B: Denver Parks and Recreation Dog Park Survey

(Note: The following is a recreation of the Denver Parks and Recreation Dog Park

Survey. The original survey was posted on the Department web site and a copy of it in

suitable form to be included in this document could not be obtained. Therefore, the

survey has been recreated for inclusion here.)

Thank you for participating in the Denver Parks and Recreation Dog Park and Dog Off-Leash survey. The responses to these questions will help us to create a dog park system for the City and County of Denver. The survey takes approximately 15 minutes. All information will be confidential and will only be used for the Planning and Development of the Dog Park Master Plan.

1. What is your age group?
    a. 12-19
    b. 20-24
    c. 25-44
    d. 45-64
    e. 65+

2. Do you have children under the age of 12 in your household?
    a. Yes
    b. No

3. What is your zip code?

4. Are you aware that DPR has designated fenced and unfenced Dog parks?
    a. Yes
    b. No

5. If you answered yes to question four (4), which of the Denver Dog Parks do you visit (check all that apply)?
    a. Barnum Dog Park
    b. Berkley Dog park
    c. Stapleton Dog park
    d. Fuller Dog park
    e. Kennedy Dog park
    f. Green Valley Dog park

6. If you are aware of Denver's Dog parks and Off-Leash Dog areas, how often do you visit the dog parks?
    a. More than once a week
    b. A few times a month
    c. Once a month
    d. A few times a year
    e. Never

7. How would you rate your experience at a designated Denver dog park?

    1 Poor   2   3   4   5 Excellent

    Comments

8. If you have visited a dog park outside the City of Denver, how would you rate your experience in comparison to Denver Dog Parks?
    a. Better
    b. Same
    c. Worse

    Comments

9. Is dog waste in Denver parks an important issue that needs to be addressed?
    a. Yes
    b. Somewhat
    c. No

10. Are you aware that dog waste in natural areas and parks can spread disease to wildlife and encourage the growth of non-native plants?
    a. Yes
    b. Non

11. How do you feel when you see dogs off-leash in Denver Parks (in non-designated off-leash areas)? Please elaborate in space provided if necessary.
    a. I enjoy seeing dogs off-leash
    b. Indifferent
    c. Concerned or angry
    d. Scared for my own or others safety

    Comments

12. Have you experienced a conflict of use with an off-leash dog (Examples of conflict of use include: you were playing Frisbee and an off-leash dog ran up and joined/interfered with your game; a dog joined your picnic and you could not find the dog's owner; or a dog ran in front of your bike while you were cycling on the path and you had to swerve out of the way to avoid hitting it)?
    a. Yes
    b. No

13. If you answered yes to question number twelve (12), please specify in which park(s) this occurred.

14. Are you concerned about a specific location where dogs run illegally off-leash?
    a. Yes
    b. No

15. If you answered yes to question number fourteen (14), please specify the location.

16. Do you support additional designated Off-leash dog areas in Denver parks?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Unsure

17. If you answered yes to question number sixteen (16), please recommend up to three Denver Parks and Recreation parks or other locations where you would like to see new off-leash parks.

18. Do you support enclosed or un-enclosed dog park areas?
    a. Enclosed
    b. Un-enclosed
    c. Both types of off-leash areas are needed
    d. Neither, I do not support dog parks

19. Would you be willing to pay a user-fee for additional dog off-leash areas?
    a. Yes
    b. No

20. If you are willing to pay for additional off-leash areas, or dog parks that are limited to those paying a "user fee", how much would you be willing to pay per year?
    a. $1 - $25
    b. $26 - $50
    c. $51 - $100
    d. $100+

21. Would you be willing to pay if part of the funds would go to Dog Park Maintenance or Charitable Dog related issues?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Maybe

22. Do you feel that overall, most dog owners are responsible with voice and sight control of their dog and pick up after it. Please elaborate, if desired.
    a. Yes
    b. No

    Comments:

23. Do you feel there needs to be visual cues that designate responsible dog control (for example, something showing the dog is sociable and trained to respond to an owners commands. This could be a tag for dog park use.)
    a. Yes
    b. No

These next series of questions are designed to better understand the demographics of those taking this survey.

24. Do you own a dog? If no, please go to question 36.
    a. Yes
    b. No

25. How many dogs do you have?
    a. 1
    b. 2
    c. 3 or more

26. Do you visit Denver Parks with your dog?
    a. Yes
    b. No

27. If so, how often do you visit?
    a. Monthly
    b. Daily
    c. Weekly
    d. 2-3 times per week

28. What days are you most likely to take your dog to Denver Parks?
    a. Weekends
    b. Weekdays
    c. Everyday

29. What times are you most likely to take your dog to Denver Parks (mark all that apply)?
    a. 5 a.m. – 9 a.m.
    b. 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
    c. 4 p.m. – 9 p.m.

30. Why do you visit Denver Parks with your dog (mark all that apply)?
    a. To walk (daily exercise)
    b. To take your dog out 9you do not have a yard or your yard is too small)
    c. For association with other dogs
    d. For human socialization, while the dogs play
    e. To play fetch or games with the dog that you cannot play at home
    f. You go to the park with your children and bring the dog along
    g. Other

31. Do you run your dog off leash in non-designated areas within Denver Parks?
    a. Yes

b. No
32. Have you ever received a ticket for having your dog off leash in a non-designated area?
    a. Yes
    b. No

33. Would a higher fine for dogs off-leash be a deterrent for you in keeping your dog on a leash?
    a. Yes
    b. No

34. Do you feel that the dog waste bag receptacles are reasonable restocked and available?
    a. Yes
    b. No

35. Do you bring plastic bags to restock the dispensers?
    a. Yes
    b. No

36. Do you feel the enforcement of off-leash dogs and dog waste is adequate?
    a. Yes
    b. No

37. If you answered no to the above question, which of the following would you recommend (please select all that apply).
    a. Increased fines
    b. Increased enforcement staffing
    c. Volunteers / Education outreach
    d. Other: _____

38. Denver has a leash law, which we are not looking to eliminate. Knowing this, what types of policies would you like to see for current and future Denver Dog Parks? (mark all that apply)
    a. Fenced Dog Parks
    b. Unfenced permanent Dog Parks
    c. Unfenced Dog Areas only at certain hours in current portions of existing Denver Parks (for example – 6 p.m. to close & open to 9 a.m.), for designated off leash activity (Exact times and Parks would have to be determined)
    d. Tag showing proof of voice and sight control of dog
    e. No Dog parks in Denver Park land (the city should look for other land to develop

f.　Other: _____

39. The City of Denver Parks and Recreation department is looking for volunteers to
   be part of this Dog Park master planning effort. We are creating an advisory
   committee, ideally comprised of a cross-section of citizen's representing a
   diversity of expertise and viewpoints. Would you be interested in being part of
   this committee?

If yes, please explain briefly your opinion of dog issues in Denver and why you
would like to be included on the advisory committee.

   a. Yes
   b. Non

   Comments:

40. Would you be interested in being part of an Off-leash Advocacy Group or
   Stewardship Committee?
   a. Yes
   b. No

41. Would you be interested in volunteering for upkeep in the dog parks? This
   would include monitoring dog park conditions, educational and training
   opportunities, monitoring the bulletin boards, clean up (raking and shoveling in
   the dog park, assuring there are adequate amounts of dog waste bags, etc.). Park
   ground maintenance would still be provided; however, this does not include
   clearing up after dogs.
   a. Yes
   b. No

42. Would you be interested in leading fundraising efforts for improvements to your
   local dog park, or for the creation of new dog parks in your community?
   a. Yes
   b. No

43. Please answer the questions below if you are interested in being notified off
   future meetings and updates on the Dog park master Plan.

By entering my personal information, I consent to receive email communications
from the survey author's organization based on the information collected.

First name _____
Last Name _____
Home Phone _____

302

Email Address _____
Address 1 _____
Address 2 _____
City   _____
State / Province _____
Postal Code   _____

44. Please share your ethnic or cultural background (optional)
   a. Hispanic or Latino
   b. African American
   c. Caucasian
   d. Asian
   e. Other _____

FINISH

Interview Script

Demographic Information Questions:

>A. Were you appointed to the Committee as an At Large member, an INC member, a Parks and Recreation Advisory Board member, or the City Council member; or are you a Parks and Recreation Department staff member?

>B. What part of Denver do you live in?

Main Question 1: Tell me about why you became involved in the Dog Park Master Planning and Policy Recommendation External Stakeholders Committee?

>**Follow Up or Probing Questions**:

>A. What did you hope to accomplish by being involved in the Committee?

>B. What did you see as the role or the responsibility of the committee?

>C. What was it supposed to accomplish in your opinion?

>D. In your opinion did the committee accomplish what it was supposed to accomplish?

>E. Did you accomplish what you hoped to accomplish in the committee?

>F. Why is this effort important to you?

Main Question 2: Tell me about your experience as a member of the Committee?

>**Follow Up and Probing Questions:**

>A. Tell me about your ability to voice your opinions and views in the Committee discussions?

>B. Do you believe you were respected and listened to in the Committee discussions and why do you feel that way?

>C. Tell me about how the members of the committee treated each other. Do you think they were respectful to each other?

D. Tell me how satisfying it was to be a member of the Committee?

E. Tell me about how collaborative and cohesive the Committee was?

Main Question 3: Tell me about the impact you believe you had on the results of the Committee process?

Follow Up and Probing Questions:

A. Do you think you made a difference in the outcome of the Committee process and why do you feel that way?

B. What do you see as your contributions to the Committee discussions and/or outcome?

C. Do you believe that the City heard and incorporated your contributions into the results of the process?

Main Question 4: Tell me about what impact you believe the External Stakeholders Committee had in the final Dog Park Master Plan recommendation?