

Printed on page 3B of the Rolla Daily News, February 4, 2017 under title "Dog Park Needs More Citizen Input."

Dear Editor,

On Jan. 25 the Rolla Parks Commission met in open session and discussed (among other things) plans to put a dog park in Buehler Park. Mayor Magdits made a thoughtful presentation aimed at compromise -- holding to the idea of having a dog park there but reducing its size from that of the original plan. The present plan also calls for various much needed improvements to Buehler Park (e.g., bathroom facilities) and expanding Buehler Park to include some land currently on King's Highway. It's an ambitious project, and I am grateful for the effort.

But compromise or no, one weakness hops off the page for me: For whatever reason, no effort was made to get a readout as to how many Rolla residents would drive their dogs to Buehler Park for exercise. My guess is it won't be many. By all anecdotal accounts, dog-parks thrive when set up in residential areas for the convenience of neighborhood citizens. And Buehler Park isn't located in a residential area.

Also, although the proposed dog park is smaller than originally planned, it is still large enough to occupy most of the beautiful grassy area of Buehler Park's west side. That lovely open area is an integral part of Buehler Park's character, and its character will now be altered. There is beauty in openness, and the plan calls for a fenced-in area for the dog park.

I would now respectfully submit two requests to the City Council members before they vote on the proposal:

- 1) Please ask for a survey (even a modest one will do) to indicate how many Rolla citizens will drive their dogs to Buehler Park to run around there.
- 2) If a dog park is a must, please consider the area on Lion Club Drive, where the planned animal shelter will be built. At the Jan. 25 meeting that location was rejected for a dog park because the animal shelter won't be built for at least several years. But it's entirely possible to set up the fencing for a dog park FIRST and round out the picture with an animal shelter later. In fact, when the animal shelter is eventually built, it would be a blessing for the dogs to have a fenced-in dog-park right nearby where the staff could take them for exercise.

Sincerely,

Jerry Cohen, President
Buehler Park Preservation Committee