



Somerville Dog Owners Group
Questionnaire for Candidates
2007 Municipal Elections

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Office for which you are seeking election: Mayor of Somerville

1. Tell us about your experiences as a Somerville resident at our municipal parks. What parks do you visit, how often, what do you do there when you visit?

Given the premium on open green space in the city, I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to make our parks and playgrounds better and safer places. Indeed, these upgrades have been a top priority of my administration. Since becoming mayor four years ago, I have overseen the renovation, construction, and restoration of over 18 parks, gardens, and playgrounds. My sons, nieces, and nephew play at Corbin McKenna Playground almost daily and I run on the community path regularly to stay fit and, most recently, train for my second marathon.

I also coach Somerville High football and spend a significant amount of time every week at both Foss Park and Dilboy Stadium (see below).

2. Somerville has just over two (2) acres of open space for every thousand residents. We are the most densely populated city in the Commonwealth. Compare that to Cambridge, the second most densely populated city in Massachusetts, where there are over eight (8) acres of open space for every thousand residents. What will you do in the upcoming term to increase the area of open space per capita in Somerville.

Due to the dense, residential nature of the city's development, creating new open spaces requires creative and innovative planning. As we seek to revitalize parts of our city that are not yet at "highest or best use," open space planning has become a critical part of this process. In Assembly Square, for example, the additional development will help unlock access to the waterfront and will result in a significantly improved network of walkways, trails, and parkland. In Union Square, we have submitted new zoning that allows the City to combine useable open spaces on redeveloped parcels. With this additional regulation, we can provide areas that maximize benefit to residents, rather than creating minute, disconnected areas of green space.

Perhaps just as important, however, is reprogramming and renovating the open spaces that we currently have within our borders.

To that end, I have made a concerted effort to take over the operation and maintenance of state-owned recreation facilities. Last fall, the City began oversight of Dilboy Stadium after a multi-million dollar rehab by the Commonwealth. We have proposed a similar scenario for the rest of the fields along Alewife Brook, as well as for Foss Park. These additional agreements would allow for significant upgrades of existing open spaces, allow for more regulated use and, most important for the purposes of this survey, provide several new opportunities for the creation of OLRA's.

3. Despite recent improvements, nonetheless families with dogs remain underserved by Somerville's open spaces, particularly in East Somerville, in West Somerville and in the Davis Square, Magoun Square and Winter Hill neighborhoods. What opportunities will you create to improve access for families with dogs to open space?

As you are aware, when I became mayor, I created the Dog Owner's Task Force to locate areas that could be used for Off Leash Recreational Areas (and improved conditions for dog owners overall). I toured many locations throughout the city and sit in on numerous meetings. Despite dealing with neighborhoods that have extremely limited green space and/or other complex issues such as historical landmarks, we have begun to significantly improve the plight of dog owners in Somerville.

I am proud to have helped create the city's first Off Leash Recreational Area at Nunziato Field. This park offers a perfect example of balancing multiple uses, as it is partially an OLRA and partially an open green space. Currently the City of Somerville is undertaking the design and/or construction of six additional parks including the the creation of three new OLRA's located at Kemp Nut Park (scheduled to be completed in November), 111 South Street (design of OLRA has begun) and 0 New Washington Street.

Additionally, I have asked Steve Winslow, our Community Path project manager, to identify a suitable location along the path or its planned extension. Finally, I have encouraged the removal of No Dogs Allowed signs at several city parks. In these parks we will be offering bag dispensers as well as fountains designed for dogs.

4. The Somerville Dog Owners Group has been delighted to see improvements in recent years in the City's Animal Control Department and in the enforcement of municipal ordinances pertaining to animals, including the leash law and the "pooper-scooper" law. What initiatives would you undertake to further improve Animal Control in Somerville?

The key to good enforcement is consistency and predictability. We are proud of April Terrio's, (Somerville's animal control officer), dedication to the city and her responsiveness to the requests of our residents. Because she cannot be at all places at all times, however, we must work hard to set expectations and then meet our commitments to enforcement. Residents that understand existing ordinances, and see them enforced, often become self-regulating.

5. Do you own a dog/dogs? Yes, I own one dog.

6. If you are a dog owner please tell us about your dog(s); if not, please share some of your experiences with dogs in the community.

Coco, our chocolate lab, was a birthday gift to my wife Nancy on October 8th 1995, back when we were still dating (not that we don't go on dates anymore). Either Nancy or I walk Coco around the neighborhood on a nightly basis. He is great with my three sons and is a beloved member of our family.

Return to:
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