

Somerville Dog Owners Group
Questionnaire for Candidates for 2005 Municipal Elections

Name: Dennis Sullivan

Office for which you are seeking election: Alderman at Large (incumbent)

1. How many times a month do you visit Somerville parks and/or playgrounds? Please list the parks you visit, and, for each park, the number of times per week and the reason(s) you visit.

I visit Florence Street playground almost daily as it is right across the street from my house. I walk through to check on trash removal, cleanliness, and who is utilizing the park from a public safety standpoint. I also visit numerous parks, such as Trum Field and Lincoln Park to watch kids from the neighborhood play in Babe Ruth/high school games. I was recently at Lincoln Park and spoke with a number of dog owners using the little league diamond as a dog run in a responsible manner. It was a welcome sight to see – approximately 15 dogs playing in an open space under the watchful eyes of their owners. As an Alderman, I recognize this need.

2. Somerville City Ordinance, 12-51, “Dogs in Parks and Playgrounds,” leaves it to the discretion of the Commissioner of Public Works to post “No Dogs Allowed Signs at city parks. Do you know of any parks under the jurisdiction of the City that are *not* posted “No Dogs Allowed”? If so, which ones?

To the best of my knowledge I do not know of any parks who have posted this. As an Alderman, I have worked to change this. For instance, there are two dog runs planned in the City and I will work to open more in the future. My goal is to have a dog run in walking distance to every resident. I look forward to working with SomDog to make this happen. SomDog has been one of the most enjoyable groups that I have had the pleasure to work with.

3. If elected in November, what will you do in the upcoming term to improve the equitable distribution of open space in order to serve the many and diverse needs of Somerville residents?

I will continue to advocate for new uses of open space. Recently I spoke in support of a senior tranquility park which would include a dog run on Walnut Street. Despite the overwhelming objections from the residents for a dog run at this location, I spoke in favor several times of the dog run. I expressed the benefits of a dog run which includes added security of dog owners utilizing the park and looking out for it.

4. In 2005, the City Clerk mailed out a brochure about responsible dog ownership along with dog license renewal applications. 2005 was also the fifth year that the Animal Control Department and the Health Department participated in the state-wide Annual

Rabies Vaccination Day. What else do you think the City of Somerville can do to promote responsible dog ownership?

We have to communicate our expectations of what it means to be a responsible dog owner. The SomDog membership exemplifies the term “responsible dog owner” and you are role models to all of the other dog owners in the City. One roadblock in advocating for the dog run at Walnut Street were senior citizens stating that they see dog owners not cleaning up after their dogs, dogs without leashes, and aggressive dog behavior encouraged by the owner. In some cases, I have also seen this type of behavior. This stereotype has to be smashed. A few bad apples can not continue to ruin the whole barrel! The City has to do a better job of enforcing these types of infractions.

5. Do you own a dog/dogs?

I owned a dog, Teddy, for 15 years. She was a collie mix, which brought much joy to the entire Sullivan household. She passed away of natural causes in approximately 1986.

If you answered “no” to question 5, please skip to question 6.

5a. Please provide your dog(s) name(s) and describe a typical day in the life of your dog(s).

5b. How many times per week does your dog get a leash walk off his territory (i.e. off your property)?

5c. How many times per week does your dog get to play off-leash with other dogs (not including dogs in the same household)?

6. In your opinion, what is the place of dogs in our families and communities?

Dogs often become a member of the family. In addition there are many dogs that assist blind people, give companionship and comfort to those in need, and perform important security measures. In short, dogs rock!

Return to: Somerville Dog Owners Group
P.O. Box 63
Somerville, MA 02143

somdog@somervilledog.com