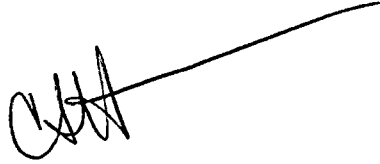


TOWN OF OCEAN VIEW
DELAWARE

May 7, 2026

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Carol S. Houck, Town Manager



SUBJECT: Consideration of Creation of a Dog Park – Outreach and Information – Recommendation

Background

Attached please find correspondence related to interest in the Town of Ocean View developing a “fenced dog park”.

As such, the topic has come up on a few other occasions but had not been fully considered or vetted. This recent inquiry suggested the possibility for placement of a fenced dog park at John West Park, by fencing in our walking trail.

Outreach and Research

Having some personal experience utilizing fenced dog parks and good knowledge of John West Park I share below the following:

Planning a fenced dog park(s) will require a good deal of consideration and awareness. Its not as easy as putting up a fence. We must consider, location so as not to disturb neighboring properties (noise from barking, time of use concerns, proper cleaning and oversight to limit odors, rules of use, impact on turf, elimination of area to be used for anything else, etc.) For these reasons, establishing a fenced dog park at John West Park would be detrimental to our current uses of the park, including the walking trail area, and its close proximity to residential properties. The small trail is used by those walking dogs on leash as well as those using exercise units or just to enjoy the park. We have had our own issues at times with persons not picking up after their pets.

New Castle County Parks and Recreation

Contact to New Castle County, Delaware in regard to its Dog Park(s) resulted in a better understanding of the responsibility we would be accepting.

They have some issues at parks with the maintenance of the mulch used when developed – other parks they have with grass turf require less maintenance, but the level of use impacts their ability to maintain grass.

Dog parks require maintenance and oversight, water access, and good consideration of the turf.

Highly recommended that two areas be created for small and large dogs.

Recommend signage for dogs requiring vaccination – but not monitored.

As dog parks are not staffed full time, there are times when users don't pick up after their pets, persons don't pay attention to size of dog areas, fights occur (between dogs and/or owners). Not all reported.

Millsboro

I have not received a final call back, but my initial contact resulted in an underlying theme that it's not as easy as it seems.

Lewes Dog Park

Lewes Dog Park is off leash and a private, non-profit requiring membership. (see information from its website attached).

Exercise at Oglebay Institute - Ocean View's Public Works Facility Maintenance Manager Matt Martin

Matt happened to attend the highly regarded Oglebay Institute Park Leadership Program recently during which the attendees had to break up into groups and discuss a conflict that occurs in a park or green area and come up with a resolution.

His group chose the conflict of operating dog parks. As such, he learned that there are common issues. He was representing Ocean View, but others were representing cities like Chicago, Fargo, St. Luis, much bigger cities than ours, but with multiple dog parks and a lot of experience.

Some of the parks that they oversaw used QR codes with rules and waivers that needed to be signed. All parks required vaccinations. Some included Dog Breed Restrictions and Town Dog licenses. Some of the specific rules they enforced were capacity limits, time limits, maximum dog per handler limits. Some of the park locations also had a small dog area and a large dog area. Some of the areas were so populated reservations were needed.

Interestingly, all who had dog parks were against them, urged caution in developing them. Mostly because of liability issues and lack of ability to enforce rules.

The suggestion was made to have buffers between the dog parks and other areas of a park, or neighboring properties, due to complaints.

The need for proper drainage and routine maintenance for sanitation issues was stressed.

Personal experience

I too have a dog that when young needed a place to run. I therefore took him to 3 different dog parks in Northern DE (Town of Middletown, Glasgow Regional Park, and Iron Hill Park) for the better part of a year. They were all a bit different but all off leash. Middletown was the largest and a great expanse of open field such that you lost sight of your dog. Glasgow was the smallest with exercise items for dogs, and Iron Hill Park was set in a wooded setting with large and small dog fenced areas. While Champ seemed to love them and passed out on the way home, I stopped going to them after repeated experiences with dog fights, people fights (with the police called), small dogs in large dog area conflicts, uncontrolled dogs, poor maintenance or adherence to rules. It just got to the point that I never knew what was going to happen, so I resorted to trail walks or neighborhood walks on leash.

Recommendation

With all the information we have been able to gather so far, and consideration of the current locations we own, I would suggest we tread carefully in regard to developing a dog park. I don't recall it coming up much or at all when we completed our last Comprehensive Plan Update in 2020. The next update will not be until 2030 so a bit in the outyears still.

I would recommend that no consideration be given to the development of a fenced dog park at John West Park as it doesn't meet many of the needs identified and would hinder our flexible use of our spaces for events etc. The Lewes private option might be the best option, but I have not myself experienced it, nor am I currently aware of a group interested in working on a private venture or a location suitable.

If we were to identify a proper location we could consider it in the future but currently, I don't have any in mind. Berzins Natural Area is not suited for it however it will allow for leashed dogs on the trail and provide mutt stations. John West will continue to offer the trail and mutt stations.

Looking for direction.

Carol Houck

From: Edward Burchette <edwardburchette@icloud.com>
Sent: Monday, March 30, 2026 12:49 PM
To: Carol Houck
Subject: Re: Fenced Dog Park

Thank you, Carol for taking the time to read my email. From what I can see, I see a potential opportunity for a fenced dog park in OV in FY 28. Let's hope it will absolutely occur one day soon! Eddie Burchette

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 30, 2026, at 12:35 PM, Carol Houck <chouck@oceanviewde.gov> wrote:

Hello and thank you for your outreach, Mr. Burchette. This topic has come up on a few occasions, but never formally, and we have not evaluated its appropriateness for John West Park.

At this time however, I think it would be best for me to do some research and then possibly sit down and discuss further, prior to placing the topic on a council agenda. It would be a discussion suitable for our budget process, and as our FY27 Budget has already been proposed, held a public workshop, received feedback and been introduced as an ordinance, we would be looking to FY28 for the discussion to take place (Jan/Feb 2027).

I can tell you that there are a lot of costs and considerations regarding dog parks. I will begin to put some effort forth to get some updated information, then I'll reach out to discuss, keeping the Mayor and Council informed as well. Does that sound good?

Carol

<image001.jpg>

Carol Houck
Town Manager

TOWN OF OCEAN VIEW
201 Central Avenue - 2nd Floor, Ocean View, DE 19970
Office 302.539.9797 ext. 104 **Cell** 302.354.4564
Web oceanviewde.gov **Email** chouck@oceanviewde.gov

From: Edward Burchette <edwardburchette@icloud.com>
Sent: Saturday, March 28, 2026 10:06 AM
To: Carol Houck <chouck@oceanviewde.gov>
Subject: Fenced Dog Park

Hi Carol,

As you know, there is not one fenced dog park available in Ocean View. I have a beagle that needs running around for an exercise and to mingle with other dogs. I am sure this has brought to your attention in the past. I, like many others, would like to see such a park be finally established. As you know, there is one already at the John West Park, but is not fenced. I do not anticipate, if approved by the Town of OV, it would cost a lot to have a fence installed at the current one (or at least a section of the park). I would like to ask that the suggestion be brought to the town board for a consideration and have a vote on it. I think it is about time to have a fenced dog park.

When is the next town meeting? I am hoping that the discussion would take place soon, and once it has been determined that the such suggestion would take place, I would like to attend that meeting. If so, I would need an ASL interpreter at the meeting as I would like to hear your opinions.

Thank you very much for your time on this matter, and please let me know me know what you think before the board takes over it.

Eddie Burchette
Ocean View since 2016
Sent from my iPad



[HOME](#)

[ABOUT](#)

[MEMBERSHIP](#)

[CONTACT](#)

What is Lewes Unleashed?



Let's go to the park!

Lewes Unleashed is an organization of dog lovers who saw the need for a dog park in Lewes, Delaware. The dog park became a reality in 2016, and the organization is committed to maintaining and operating the park for the benefit of our members and their dogs.

A dog park is a contained area where dogs are allowed off-leash with their owners so they may interact with other dogs and dog owners. Dog parks help dogs become friendly and social, reducing aggression and promoting good health. Nationally, dog parks are one of the most used areas among public spaces. Dog parks also promote a sense of community among dog owners and other dog park users.

A dog park for Lewes regional area!

The dog park opened its gates in August 2016. Currently, Lewes Unleashed has over 1,300 member families with approximately 700 living in the Lewes zip code. The park is an unqualified success with a bright future, and we will continue to improve and enhance its amenities. Thank you everyone for your support.

POWERED BY



Dog parks are for dogs AND people.



Behind The Scenes: Lewes Unleashed Dog Park

Cape Gazette



Watch on



[HOME](#)

[ABOUT](#)

[MEMBERSHIP](#)

[CONTACT](#)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN JOINING LEWES UNLEASHED

**MEMBERSHIPS COST \$75 PER HOUSEHOLD. ALL MEMBERSHIPS
EXPIRE ON SEPTEMBER 1, 2026. WE CANNOT PRO-RATE A
MEMBERSHIP FEE.**

**TO JOIN, YOU WILL NEED TO UPLOAD PROOF OF YOUR DOG'S CURRENT RABIES
VACCINATION, A PHOTO OF YOUR DOG(S) AND A PHOTO OF THE DOG
OWNER(S).**

**ONCE YOU UPLOAD THESE ITEMS AND INPUT YOUR PROFILE INFORMATION, WE
WILL VERIFY THE ENTRIES AND EMAIL INSTRUCTIONS FOR MAKING YOUR \$75
PAYMENT, ALONG WITH INFORMATION ON USING YOUR NEW KEYFOB.**

READY TO CONTINUE?

[CLICK HERE TO JOIN](#)



[HOME](#)

[ABOUT](#)

[MEMBERSHIP](#)

[CONTACT](#)

LEWES UNLEASHED (LUA) DOG PARK RULES

This dog park is for members only. All members and dogs are required to act as good citizens while visiting the park. A violation of the rules or aggressive behavior by a member or a member's dog can result in immediate suspension or revocation of membership.

- **Park hours are from dawn to dusk. Access to the park after hours is not permitted.**
- **The park is divided into four separately fenced areas: a small area on the right as you enter for use by small, shy and elderly dogs, a larger general dog area, an agility training area and an events area reserved for use by Lewes Unleashed.**
- **Use of the dog park is at your own risk. Each member is solely responsible for his and his dogs' actions and assumes all liability for damages suffered by any person or dog injured by the member's dogs while at the park. Members agree to release and hold harmless both LUA and the City of Lewes for any injury to any dog or person while using this park.**

- **All users must be registered members to use the dog park. Members must be prepared to show their dogs' immunization record/vet info as requested. The keyfob is for the personal use of the immediate family of the member and is not to be loaned or given to anyone else. Giving the keyfob to a third party is grounds for automatic forfeiture of membership.**
- **For the protection of children and dogs, children under the age of 9 are not allowed inside the dog park. Children 9 and older must be closely supervised.**
- **Dogs must be licensed, have rabies and all other vaccinations as required by the State of Delaware Health Department (or reciprocating authority). All dogs should be healthy, and free of contagious diseases and parasites. Dogs must be vaccinated against rabies, distemper, parvovirus and other vaccinations required by the county or municipality in which the dogs reside and regularly examined and treated for parasites.**
- **Dogs less than 6 months of age, unneutered male dogs, non-spayed female dogs, aggressive, unruly, fearful and under-socialized dogs are not permitted.**
- **Dogs showing aggression toward people or other dogs must be leashed and immediately removed from the park. Dogs who exhibit a history of aggressive behavior will not be permitted to enter.**
- **All dogs must be under control of an adult with a limit of 2 dogs per**

- **A member must not leave his dog unattended. Dogs must be in view of and under voice command of their member at all times.**
- **Members are responsible to ensure their dogs do not dig holes or cause damage to park plants or property.**
- **This park is a carry-out park. The member is responsible for having a disposal bag in his possession. All waste must be bagged and disposed of properly in the marked receptacles at the park entrance.**
- **Dogs are to remain leashed outside of the dog park, as well as when entering and exiting the dog park. Dogs must be unleashed in the bullpen before entering the dog park and must remain unleashed while inside the dog park. A member must keep the leash in his possession at all times while using the dog park.**
- **No dog may be tethered on the fence. No animals other than dogs are allowed in the park.**
- **Excessive barking will not be tolerated.**
- **No food, including dog treats, is permitted except in the agility area during training.**
- **No smoking or alcohol is permitted.**

- **Only flying disc and tennis ball type of toys are permitted. No whistles are allowed.**
- **The park may not be utilized for any commercial or private use or gain which includes, but is not limited to, professional dog walkers, trainers and groomers. No activities or events of any type are to be conducted without the prior written approval of LUA.**