



somerville dog owners group
% michele biscoe
16 preston road
somerville, ma 02143

12 November 2010

Board of Aldermen
c/o John Long, City Clerk
93 Highland Avenue
Somerville, MA 02143

RE: NUNZIATO OLRA LOCKED AT 8 AM

Dear Members of the Board of Aldermen,

I am writing on behalf of the Somerville Dog Owners Group in support of the people who have been affected by the new policy of locking the gates of the off-leash recreational area at Nunziato Field over night. At the end of this letter I append a list of complaints that we have received from people who have arrived at the dog park after it opens at 8:00 am only to find it locked.

These are working men and women who have to make plans and have to keep a schedule to uphold their responsibilities to others including employers, co-workers, clients and families. When the OLRA is not open at 8:00, it constrains their ability to uphold their responsibilities to those who depend on them.

Moreover, these are people who really appreciate the work that the DPW does to maintain the park. I am concerned that the policy of locking the gates to the ORLA is unfairly pitting park users against city employees. Indeed, these people do not blame the DPW employees for the gates being locked: it is the policy of the gates being locked at 8 AM that is the problem.

I appreciate that all activity in parks between the hours of 10:00 pm and 8:00 am is illegal: People who violate the law should be punished to the full extent of the law. I am puzzled as to why the City has instead chosen a policy that punishes responsible residents who are abiding by the law.

A Somerville dog owner has painstakingly reviewed all police incidents in parks or playgrounds as reported by the Somerville Journal in 2010. **Not one incident occurred in Nunziato Field.**

- Seven incidents including *an assault at 6:50 am* occurred in the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation's Foss Park
- Five incidents including *an assault at 12:49 am* occurred in Statue Park
- Two incidents including *an armed robbery at 10:24 p.m.* occurred in Lincoln Park
- Two incidents occurred in Kenney Park
- *An assault occurred at 12:43 am* in Dickerman Playground
- An assault occurred at Perkins Street Park
- Central St Playground, Davis Square Park, Lexington Park, North Street Park and Playground were all the sites of police reports

None of these parks is closed and locked to law abiding citizens at 8:00 am.

promoting responsible dog ownership, safe and legal options for off-leash recreation and the equitable distribution of open space in Somerville, MA.

Thank you for your kind attention in helping to ensure that the off-leash recreational area at Nunziato Field is open for the collective enjoyment of law-abiding Somerville dog owners every morning at 8:00.

Sincerely yours,

Michele Biscoe

ADDENDUM: COMPLAINTS DIRECTED TO THE SOMERVILLE DOG OWNERS GROUP ABOUT THE GATES TO THE NUNZIATO OLRA BEING LOCKED

- The Somerville Dog Owners Group (som|dog) first began receiving complaints in early October from people who had arrived at the OLRA after 8:00 am only to find the gates locked on Tuesday, October 5, and on Wednesday, October 6.
- On Saturday, October 9, we received reports from people that the gates were locked at 8:20 am. People were beginning to get frustrated as there was no answer at the number they had been told to call if the gates were locked. Some of these people had travel plans for the long Columbus Day weekend and had to delay their departures so that they could exercise their dogs before getting on the road.
- Again on Friday, October 15, we received reports the gates remained locked after 8:00 am.
- On Thursday, November 4, som|dog was cc'd on an e-mail from a resident that was addressed to Mayor Curtatone, Alderman Tom Taylor and Carlene Campbell, Director of Community Outreach and the City's liaison to the Dog Owners Task Force. The resident had waited in the rain for thirty minutes before he had to leave to go to work—without having had the opportunity to exercise his dog. Another dog owner happened to be walking by the OLRA at 9:10 that morning when the gates were just being unlocked.
- On Veterans' Day, November 11, the park was only opened at 9:20. I received a picture date-stamped at 8:30 am and sent to the Mayor the Ward Three Alderman and the Director of Community Outreach showing five people with their dogs outside the locked gates waiting to get in. They had called 311 only to be told by the operator "Today is a holiday."

I would like to reemphasize that the Somerville Dog Owners Group feels that this is NOT a "human-resources problem". The fault lies not with our conscientious and overburdened DPW employees, but rather in a policy that puts unreasonable and onerous demands on them.