



Friends of Lighthouse Field



January 11, 2008

Mayor Ryan Coonerty
City of Santa Cruz
809 Center Street
Santa Cruz, CA

Dear Mayor Coonerty,

As you are aware Friends of Lighthouse Field (FOLF) has been working diligently over the past two years to preserve Lighthouse Field and Its Beach for use of dog owners who want to exercise their dogs off-leash. To that end FOLF is providing this proposal to the City of Santa Cruz in an effort to facilitate the transfer of ownership of Lighthouse Field State Beach (LFSB) from the State to the City. As time is of the essence – the State will begin to enforce the leash laws on March 15 by issuing citations to dog owners who use the LFSB for off-leash recreation – it is our hope that the efforts of FOLF as proposed here will allow the City to close the deal with the State and thereby preserve off-leash recreation.

The purpose of our proposal is to work in partnership with the City of Santa Cruz:

- to enable the City to purchase Lighthouse Field State Beach from the State
- to enact such City policies so that off-leash dog recreation will continue at LFSB during hours that are not more restricted than those currently available - prior to 10am and after 4pm every day of the week
- to preserve the beauty and undeveloped nature of the LFSB
- to promote responsible stewardship of the park for people with and without dogs
- to raise funds that will facilitate the accomplishment of these purposes

FOLF, in close collaboration with the City, is prepared to develop the following activities in order to achieve our purposes:

1. Re-position FOLF as the vehicle for tax-deductible financial contributions. Options include forming FOLF into to a tax exempt charitable public benefit corporation, utilizing Friends of Parks and Recreation (FOPAR) to pass donations through FOLF to the City or other alternatives that may be suggested.
2. Pursue initial public and private grants to contribute towards the cost of acquisition in order to “front load” our support as much as possible. It is not yet possible to quantify the amount, but we are very hopeful about the prospects for this project.
3. Develop fundraising and volunteer activities that will result in cash and in-kind revenues to the City of a minimum of \$20,000 per year for a period of 30 years. Develop activities that promote responsible off-leash dog recreation, an active and engaged community of park users and a safe and delightful park environment.
4. Promotion of City policies that facilitate the purposes set forth in this proposal.
5. Engage the community at large to support FOLF with financial and in-kind contributions that help sustain its operations.

6. Pursue other activities that promote our purposes and position Santa Cruz as a “Dog Friendly City.”

Through our work we propose to provide the City a total of \$600,000 toward the acquisition of LFSB. We are currently evaluating the feasibility of a fundraising campaign to raise \$60,000 over the next 12 months as the first installment to the \$600,000 we propose to raise over 30 years.

FOLF has been an active organization for over five years. During that time we have been an information center for people who support LFSB and off-leash dog recreation. We raised over \$20,000 in cash contributions during the past year. We have a dedicated and active board of directors with entrepreneurial experience and expertise in fundraising, marketing, public relations, nonprofit administration, and grass roots organizing. A number of our board members have significant fundraising experience with other public service organizations. Through our research we have discovered “Huntington Dog Beach” (see www.dogbeach.org), a very successful model of what FOLF will be working to achieve through this proposal.

We are very pleased to have the opportunity to work with the City on this effort, and believe that this partnership will be a great benefit to the City of Santa Cruz as a whole. These benefits include:

Meeting a significant public need: The off-leash recreation facility offered by Lighthouse Field and Its Beach is irreplaceable, and it meets a heartfelt daily quality of life requirement for thousands of local residents. One way or another, the City has found ways to devote millions of dollars for recreational facilities to serve much smaller constituencies. It is reasonable to devote public funds for a need shared by about 40% of local households.

Public safety and environmental benefits: The continued presence of a supportive community (drawn by the “magnet” of off-leash recreation) clearly reduces the potential for abusive activities (illegal camping, trash dumping, drinking parties, drug use and dealing, and so on) that would otherwise occur at this park. This impacts not only the park itself but also the surrounding neighborhoods.

Local control: State Parks is incapable of properly managing and maintaining this urban park – a park that sits in one of the most central and visible spots in Santa Cruz. Already the park is deteriorating (State workers no longer clear camp sites as the City did, City police no longer intervene to control large drinking parties, maintenance is minimal, etc.) After March 15, the State will commence active enforcement to attempt to drive the current user community out of the park, and all of these problems will get *much* worse.

Economic benefit: About 4 out of every 10 tourists have a dog. Many travel with their canine companions. A few years ago we provided an economic analysis showing that Carmel’s dog-friendly policies directly added at least \$7,000,000 per year to the local economy, in a very small town. If LFSB is lost, Santa Cruz will clearly become one of the most dog-*unfriendly* places in the State. The potential economic impact is large.

We are pleased to provide this proposal for your consideration and look forward to working with you and the other council members to preserve and protect a treasured local resource.

Sincerely yours,

Betsy Firebaugh
Chair, Board of Directors
Friends of Lighthouse Field

Cc: City Council
Assemblyman John Laird