

STATEMENT FROM RENOWNED DOG BEHAVIORIST VERONICA BOUTELLE

April 7, 2011

There can be no doubt that regular off leash play and exercise creates more socially appropriate behavior in dogs. Urban dog trainers spend a great deal of their time addressing behavior issues tied to a lack of regular socialization and exercise: human aggression, dog-dog aggression and reactivity on and off leash, jumping to greet strangers, excessive barking, fear and anxiety conditions, etc. Though these issues exist in San Francisco as well, they are far less common and dog professionals here generally attribute that difference in large part to the preponderance of off-leash play opportunities afforded dogs in the Bay Area.

Should these opportunities be removed we should prepare ourselves to see an increase in dog to dog and dog to human aggression incidents in the city and surrounding areas. This will happen as dogs become less practiced in meeting each other and less well exercised, and due to what is referred to as on leash "barrier frustration." It is a well-known phenomenon in the dog training industry that dogs are far more likely to display aggressive behavior toward other dogs and people when on leash. For some dogs this is a result of repeated and ongoing frustration at being unable to adequately interact with other dogs. For others it is simply a symptom of the fight-or-flight instinct. Removing a dog's ability to move away from another being when frightened or overstimulated makes an aggressive display (designed to move the other being farther away) the remaining option. This behavior is seen far more commonly in dogs that do not have off leash play opportunities than in dogs who do.

The argument that the GGNRA proposal will leave some areas off leash is a specious one. Forcing a large number of dogs into a small number of spaces will only create new problems. Though dogs need off leash time to exercise, and though dogs who have this regularly are more likely to be sociable toward their own, forced tight proximity of a large numbers of dogs is a recipe for conflict. Should the targeted areas in the GGNRA proposal be closed we should expect to see a significant rise in incidents in the remaining park areas as they become overcrowded with dogs.

Veronica Boutelle
Founder & President of dog*tec
Former Director of Behavior & Training for the San Francisco SPCA
Co-creator and Instructor for the Dog Walking Academy
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About Veronica Boutelle, MA Ed., CTC

Veronica is the former Director of Behavior & Training at the San Francisco SPCA. She has been helping dog professionals create their dream businesses since 2003.

Veronica is the author of *How to Run a Dog Business* and the co-author of *Minding Your Dog Business*, writes business columns for APDT's *Chronicle of the Dog* and the Canadian APDT's *Forum*, and is a sought-after speaker at conferences and dog training schools across the country.



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STATEMENT FROM RENOWNED DOG BEHAVIORIST IAN DUNBAR

March 31, 2011

Dogs and cats and other domestic animals are the new nature in towns and cities where old nature has already been destroyed by concrete and tarmac. If cities further restrict off-leash areas for dogs, most certainly there will be an increase in the number and severity of dog bites for which responsible legislators (GGNRA, SFBoS, City of SF) no doubt will be held legally and financially responsible.

Apart from being fun and entirely necessary for physical and mental well-being, major reasons for play are 1. For dogs to learn to inhibit the force of their weapons, specifically for dogs to learn bite inhibition towards other dogs and people and 2. For dogs to socialize with other dogs and people.

Socialized dogs like other dogs and people and so don't want to bite them. Bite inhibition (having a "soft mouth") prevents serious damage should the dog ever react when frightened, provoked, or hurt. We cannot train dogs to never react but it is easy for dogs to learn not to hurt other dogs or people when they react. And, they learn this by playing and socializing with other dogs and people. A human analogy would be: Whereas it is very difficult to teach people never to disagree, argue or lose their tempers, it is pretty easy to teach people not to punch, stab or shoot when they do so.

There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that restricting off-leash areas for dogs will be a social, public health and legal disaster for parks and cities.

Ian Dunbar, BVetMEd, PhD, MRCVS, CAAB

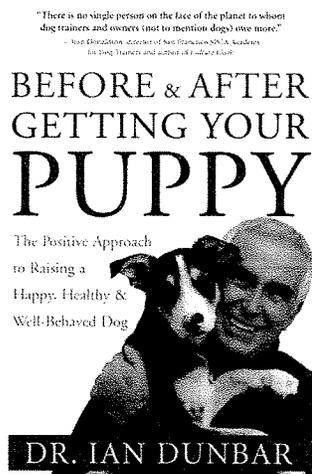
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About Ian Dunbar

Veterinarian, animal behaviorist, and dog trainer, Dr. Ian Dunbar received his veterinary degree and a Special Honors degree in Physiology & Biochemistry from the Royal Veterinary College (London University) plus a doctorate in animal behavior from the Psychology Department at UC Berkeley, where he researched the development of social hierarchies and aggression in domestic dogs.

He has authored numerous books and DVDs about puppy/dog behavior and training, including AFTER You Get Your Puppy, How To Teach A New Dog Old Tricks and the SIRIUS® Puppy Training video.

<http://www.siriuspup.com/index.htm>



March 10, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a Certified Pet Dog Consultant and Certified Pet Dog Trainer. I have been active in the dog behavior and modification arena for the last 30 years, 22 of them at the Marin Humane Society. I see approximately 500 clients individually per year, in addition to teaching workshops, seminars and classes.

I would like to address several potential issues with regard to the further restriction of off leash areas for dogs:

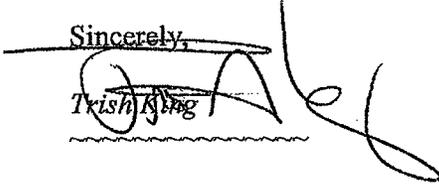
1) Do dogs need to play off leash? Dogs have certain socialization and exercise needs that cannot be met solely by on leash walking. They must have aerobic exercise, and playing in large areas can accomplish that goal. In addition, in order to be properly socialized, dogs should see and occasionally interact with other dogs.

2) Will depriving dog owners of a variety of off leash areas lead to behavior issues? It is very likely that behavior problems will increase dramatically if the amount of space dogs can use is reduced. When dogs cannot get the exercise they need, they become more destructive, vocal and occasionally aggressive. This in turn may lead to the relinquishment of more dogs to animal shelters, which are often already overly crowded with unwanted pets.

3) Can normal dog parks fill the dogs' needs? Unlike open space or beach areas, which encourage dogs and their guardians to actually move, dog parks generally discourage walking and inadvertently encourage inappropriate interactions, including territoriality, bullying and the formation of packs. The reduction of open space accessibility will directly cause the over-population of dog parks. This will lead, in my opinion, to many more aggressive incidents among dogs and their guardians.

I believe the adoption of the GGNRA restrictions will backfire on San Francisco as well as other Bay Area cities, as guardians with dogs try to find friendly places to interact. I also believe that the caretakers of parks and recreation areas have an obligation to make areas available for all types of people and their pets, and not restrict a huge portion of the taxpaying population from accessibility.

Sincerely,


Trish King

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Transcript: Comments to SF Animal Control and Welfare Commission
By Jean Donaldson, SF/SPCA
2/8/07

Donaldson: Good evening. I'm Jean Donaldson. I'm from the San Francisco SPCA. I'm here to talk about a rather narrow aspect of this issue which is the issue of safety, i.e., the contention that unrestrained dogs pose any kind of threat to the citizens of San Francisco or to each other, or that being allowed off-leash to play contributes to the likelihood of aggression of any kind.

There is not only no evidence that allowing dogs off-leash for play opportunities increases the incidence of aggression, to a person every reputable expert in the field of dog behavior in the United States is of the opinion that it is likely that off-leash access *decreases* the likelihood of aggression.

Off-leash play has not proven to be a factor in dog bites. According to both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Veterinarian Medical Association, the majority of bites take place on the guardians' property. The remaining incidents involve dogs that are either restrained, i.e., leashed, or dogs that are "at large", [that is,] unsupervised dogs that have escaped confinement.

Consider for example, the three highest profile serious dog attacks in the history of San Francisco. Those are Diane Whipple in 2001, Sean Jones in 2001, and Nicholas Faibish in 2005. In the first, the dogs were on-leash. In the second, the dogs had escaped confinement in the backyard and were at large. And in the third, the dog was confined in the guardian's home. I would add that in all these instances, the dogs were un-neutered.

There is no research demonstrating that dog parks or off-leash play contributes to any kind of aggression, including dog-dog aggression. It was brought to my attention a couple of months ago, that claims were being made that such research existed. And so I did an exhaustive literature search as well as consulting at length numerous colleagues in dog behavior in the United States. All were amazed at the suggestion in view of no such research.

Interestingly, it could very well be that the safest dogs are those that *attend* off-leash dog parks. Shyan and cohorts published a research paper in 2003 in the Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science which looked at the prevalence of interdog aggression in dog parks. Dog-dog problems turned out to be minimal and of a non-serious nature. While the paper did not consider the question of dog-to-human aggression, the obvious interpretation of this low incidence of aggression was interesting and I think very relevant. They suggested that self-selection operates strongly, i.e., people who take their time to get into their car or walk to a designated off-leash area to exercise their dog tend to not be the type who are derelict in other areas of dog guardianship, such as training, socialization or appropriate containment.

Trish King, my counterpart at the Marin Humane Society, has been publicly quoted several times as having authored research concluding off-leash play contributes to aggression. I spoke to her at length about this and we corresponded in the last couple of weeks. She has *not* performed or

published such research. She is furthermore, and I quote, “mortified”, unquote, that anyone would suggest or imply that. She believes off-leash access, if anything, prevents aggression.

Priscilla Feral, the president of Friends of Animals, *often* has also been quoted as opposing off-leash access. I spoke to her this past Monday regarding Friends of Animals’ position, and she was adamant that statements suggesting that Friends of Animals oppose off-leash access are false.

The same holds true for Kathy Santo, a nationally recognized colleague of mine. I also spoke to her this week. She followed up the conversation with me with an email, which I will now quote: “Hi Jean. I wanted to email you and clarify my stance on dogs engaging in off-leash play. I strongly believe that it is good, or more accurately *necessary* for healthy dogs to play off-leash in safe areas while supervised by their owners. An exercised, socialized dog is a happy and well-adjusted dog.”

To conclude, it is terribly important that the words of credible sources such as these not be twisted to advantage by either side in this issue. I, therefore, will put any interested Commission member in direct contact with Ms. King, Ms. Feral, Ms. Santo, or other authorities quoted so that they may get *firsthand* their positions on this issue, Thank you for your attention.

Article referred to in her statement:

“Bark Parks”—A Study on Interdog Aggression in a Limited-Control Environment
Melissa R. Shyan, Kristina A. Fortune, and Christine King
Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science, vol 6, no 1, 2003

San Francisco Animal Control and Welfare Commission

Meeting, March 10, 2011

Present: Susanna Russo, Geneva Page, Jack Aldridge, DVM, Andrea Brooks, Sally Stephens, Philip Gerrie, Pam Hemphill, Rebecca Katz, John Denny, Lisa Wayne

Transcript of Agenda Item 6

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

New business, item 6A: Discussion and possible action to send a letter to the Board of Supervisors urging them to oppose a recently announced Preferred Alternative for a new Dog Management Plan in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) because it does not consider potential negative impacts on city parks and on dog behavior caused by the severe restrictions on off-leash areas in the GGNRA, nor does it consider the potential impacts, the potential, of the potential for increased surrenders of dogs and resulting possible increase in euthanasia rates at city shelters because of these behavior problems. The GGNRA is seeking, currently seeking public comment on a 2400-page Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for a new Dog Management Plan released in January 2011. The Board of Supervisors has asked for input in how they should respond as part of the DEIS public comment period.

People have been able to walk their dogs legally off leash on less than 1% of GGNRA lands since '79; for example, Fort Funston, Ocean Beach, Crissy Field, Baker Beach, and Land's End. The Preferred Alternative identified in the DEIS will cut the area currently available for off-leash recreation in the GGNRA by nearly 90% GGNRA-wide and by roughly 75% on its lands in San Francisco.

The Commission letter will also ask the Board to oppose the "poison pill" described in the DEIS that would automatically convert off-leash areas to on leash or no dogs at all permanently and without the possibility of public comment on the changes if the GGNRA claims there is not enough compliance with the new restrictions.

I did double-check with the City Attorney as to whether or not we had any jurisdiction on this subject, and the answer was yes, except for the impact on city parks – that does not fall within our purview, which is true. So that part of the agenda item, we won't be sending a letter that would, would talk about anything about city parks, the impact on city parks. But the other impacts on dog behavior and surrender rates is, definitely falls within our purview.

The, as I said in the agenda description, the GGNRA released this 2400-page document, and just in case anyone hasn't actually seen it, this is it. And that, that's now my exercise for the day.

In '72, the GGNRA – just a little bit of background – in '72, 1972 the GGNRAs were created for the maintenance of needed recreational open space and to "expand to the maximum extent possible the outdoor recreational opportunities available to the region." In '75 San Francisco deeded pretty much all of its oceanfront property to the GGNRA, having been told by William Whelan, superintendent of the GGNRA, that they intend to preserve the general character and present use of the various parks that could be affected by the passage of Prop F. They – that's a direct quote – Prop F was basically the people of San Francisco voted on whether to give their land to the GGNRA.

In 1979, after an extensive public process, the GGNRA created a Pet Policy that allowed dogs to be walked off leash under voice control on less than 1% of its lands. They did this after determining that there would be little negative impact on natural resources or on other park visitors in those places. Courts have ruled that the '79 Pet Policy was the legal management policy regarding dogs in the GGNRA and it continues at this point, but now they want to

change that, and the DEIS identifies a Preferred Alternative that would cut currently available off-leash space by nearly 90%, 70, 75% in San Francisco, and I've passed out to the Commissioners some sample maps, and there's also some copies on the table there if anybody hasn't seen them, but I, I ask people not to remove them because I want to make sure that if people wanted to look at them, they could see them.

And as you can see if you look at the maps of Fort Funston, the – all the maps that are A, like 16-A, was it 10-A – those are the currently existing conditions, and the red is what's under voice control now. And then the Preferred Alternative shows, where there would be legal off leash is yellow; blue is on leash only, which, for example, at Fort Funston is only trails, and wherever it's grey it basically means no dogs at all. So as you can see at Fort Funston there's a significant reduction in off leash; at Crissy Field again a significant reduction – the east beach, which is right by the parking lot, would be no dogs in the Preferred Alternative, only the central beach and then about a third or half of the air field. Similarly Ocean Beach would become no dogs at all south of Stairwell 21, which is about – I think it's near the Beach Chalet south, and only off leash above there. And then Baker Beach, which is currently off leash now on the beach, would become half of it, or actually more than half of it no dogs, and the south part of the beach would be leash only. And that doesn't include GGNRA lands in Marin and in San Mateo County.

And, and as was mentioned in the agenda item, there is a poison pill in this, which basically says that if there's not enough compliance with these new restrictions, that they will automatically and permanently change to the next most restrictive level, so off leash becomes on leash, on leash becomes no dogs, and there's no period of public comment on each change. It seems likely that within a few years, there, there is likely to be very little off leash left in the GGNRA because of the poison pill.

And so, people have only been able to walk off leash in about 1% of the land, and if it's reduced by 90%, which is what this plan is proposing, then people would have access to less, to about 1/10th of 1% -- less than that, actually – of GGNRA's land for an activity that's basically enjoyed by thousands to tens of thousand people, tens of thousands of people every day.

The people with dogs are not going to go away, and the question is, where are they supposed to go? And likely thousands will end up in city parks that don't normally go there, all of which – the city parks are all significantly smaller than the currently available off-leash areas in the GGNRA. And it'll likely result in overcrowding in the city parks, especially in the legal off-leash areas, which are just a very small subset of the city's parks and are already in many cases overused and under-maintained.

The GGNRA is currently in a period of taking public comment on the DEIS and the Preferred Alternative. They want to know what people think and especially find out what issues and concerns they did not consider in, in the report. And the Board of Supervisors will be holding a hearing on the DEIS and this whole issue on April 11. And the supervisors have been asking for input on what, what the city's public comment should be.

And because this document is so incredibly massive, I think it's extremely unrealistic to have expected this commission of all volunteer people to have actually read the document and studied it in enough detail to comment on the pros or cons of the various alternatives that are presented in the DEIS. There are those of us that are actually wading through all of it, but I think that's just unrealistic for, you know, to expect you guys to have done that. However, there were three, there were two areas that were not addressed in the DEIS that really should have been that will have major impacts on animal welfare. One is the impact on dog behavior of the loss of such a significant amount of off-leash space, in part because people may not be able to exercise their dogs adequately and also in part because of behavior issues that may come up because of overcrowding in some of the city parks. And also, if you have more problem behaviors in dogs, you're likely to have more dogs being surrendered because of behavior problems at the city shelters, and as we spent two years or more listening to, that's, that's an issue that is of great concern in the city. We want to keep the numbers of animals in shelters – we want to reduce that and keep them from going in there in the first place.

I've invited a few speakers to address this issue. Dr. Jennifer Scarlett is co-director of the San Francisco SPCA.

COMMISSIONER GERRIE:

I wonder if we could have a discussion first before we start with the speakers? I have a statement prepared that might set a different tone than you said, so it'll just take a few minutes to read.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

We can discuss after the speakers, I mean, I don't...

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

We seem to always start with invited speakers when we announce agenda items.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Yeah, yeah.

COMMISSIONER GERRIE:

Okay.

DR. JENNIFER SCARLETT, CO-DIRECTOR, SAN FRANCISCO SPCA:

Thanks for having me tonight.

The San Francisco SPCA is strongly against the draft proposal that is put out by the GGNRA. The reason for that is, one, the briefings that I've had on the document, which there are a lot of specialists going through at this time – and they have not been able to finish the document either – show that this document is horribly flawed and may go down as one of the worst NEPA acts ever.

One of the things that they don't take under consideration is the impact on the environment, the local environment being San Francisco. One of the things that is budding in anthropology – and this is going to seem a little bit off, but it'll come around in a second – is this idea that, about something called alloparenting. And we know that as humans what sets us apart is making tools and language, but that's also seen in other species. But the one thing that may truly set us off in human behavior is actually our animalness, and that is the volunteering to take care of another species. And whether or not we agree with this budding theory, what is known is that having animals in our lives is ancient and natural. And the GGNR, RA recognized this in 1979, and the city recognized this. Tens of thousands of people use this space with their dogs every day for solitude as well as for socialization. They go back and visit time and time again. As a dog owner, I go there every week and I see the same community of people. And I would venture to say that most of the people that, in this room that are supporting the San Francisco SPCA position and Eco-Dog position against these draft proposals are the responsible dog owners who keep their dogs under voice and sight control and respect those sensitive areas.

But these aren't people who just use this area, we're a community of people who also cherish this area. And we recognize that there are specifically sensitive areas within the park that we want to be respectful of. But as the Fish & Game person – I think his name was O'Brien – said so well, the very nature of our presence and the fact that there are almost 7 billion people on this planet, probably have a lot more to do with these areas being devastated than people simply and respectfully walking with their dogs.

As a veterinarian, I know the impact that exercise can have, not only on the behavior of the dog, but the trainability of the dog. One of the reasons why dog ownership outpaces children in San Francisco – I almost said child ownership, but that wasn't quite correct (laughs), having a child – is because of the quality of life that we have here. San Francisco is not like New York City, nor do we want to be like New York City, where there are small enclosed gravel little areas that are incredibly crowded. Or Houston, that we've been compared to, that has, I think, two enclosed areas in the entire city. We don't want to be like those other cities. The quality of life of having a dog here in San Francisco is like none other major urban environment, and it's because of our relationship to the GGNRA.

When we, as a, as a clinician, when I would have a new dog owner come in expressing dismay about the trainability of that animal, or also telling me information that, about anxiety and building anxiety disorders – one of the first things that I would prescribe is exercise. And it's true in humans as well. It's the first step in decreasing anxiety and making animals more easy to manage.

The other thing is, running around is just plain fun. And you get to socialize. And it's part of being a dog; it's also part of being a human.

The GGNRA is crucial in us to – for the San Francisco SPCA to continue our mission of adopting out every possible treatable, healthy animal that comes into our shelter system. We know that it is crucial for animals to have this exercise, we know it's crucial to maintain this quality of life, and it is my hope that this commission will go to our Board of Supervisors with recommendations that they re-look at this proposal and include the community in that proposal.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Thank you. Any questions, or...[applause from audience]

Actually, I would ask people not to applaud because if you don't happen to agree, sometimes people are very intimidated by that. And also, I forgot to say that because I'm very much advocating on this item, that I've asked the Vice Chair to take over chairing the meeting for this item. Forgot to mention that, sorry.

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

Okay, so, who's our, does anyone have any questions of Dr. Scarlett?

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

No, okay. So our next invited speaker..

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Yeah, I have, I had invited Trish King, who is a, a, behaviorist at Marin Humane, and she actually hurt her back and was not able to come, but she did send a letter, which is, again, the Commissioners – you have it in your packet and there is copies on the, in there. I'll just briefly say, she says:

“Do dogs need to play off leash? Dogs have certain socialization and exercise needs that cannot be met solely by on-leash walking. They must have aerobic exercise, and playing in large areas can accomplish that goal. In addition, in order to be properly socialized, dogs should see and occasionally interact with other dogs.

“Will depriving dog owners of a variety of off-leash areas lead to behavior issues? It is very likely that behavior problems will increase dramatically if the amount of space dogs can use is reduced. When dogs cannot get the exercise they need, they become more destructive, vocal and occasionally aggressive. This in turn may lead to the relinquishment of more dogs to animal shelters, which are often already overly crowded with unwanted pets.

“Can normal dog parks fill the dogs' needs? Unlike open space or beach areas, which encourage dogs and their guardians to actually move, dog parks generally discourage walking and inadvertently encourage inappropriate interactions, including territoriality, bullying and the formation of packs. The reduction of open space accessibility will directly cause the over-population of dog parks. This will lead, in my opinion, to many more aggressive incidents among dogs and their guardians.

"I believe the adoption of the GGNRA restrictions will backfire in San Francisco as well as other Bay Area cities, as guardians with dogs try to find friendly places to interact. I also believe that the caretakers of parks and recreation areas have an obligation to make areas available for all types of people and their pets, and not restrict a huge portion of the taxpaying population from accessibility."

And in 2007, Jean Donaldson came – who at the time was head of the dog trainer, training programs at the SPCA – and spoke about aggression and off leash, and again there's copies in what the commissioners got as well as on the table. I'll just read a couple of highlights from that.

She said there's not only no evidence that allowing dogs off leash for play opportunities increases the incidence of aggression, to a person every reputable expert in the field of dog behavior in the United States is of the opinion that it is likely that off-leash access decreases the likelihood of aggression. Off-leash play has not proven to be a factor in dog bites. There's no research demonstrating that dog parks or off-leash play contributes to any kind of aggression, including dog-dog aggression. Interestingly, it could very well be that the safest dogs are those that attend off-leash dog parks. Self selection operates strongly – i.e., people who take their time to get into their car or walk to a designated off-leash area to exercise their dog tend to not be the type who are derelict in other areas of dog guardianship such as dog training, socialization or appropriate containment. Kathy Santo, a nationally recognized colleague of mine [sent her an email and said] "I strongly believe that it is good or more accurately necessary for healthy dogs to play off leash in safe areas while supervised by their owners. An exercised, socialized dog is a happy, well adjusted dog."

The next speaker is Sherri Franklin, who is the head of Muttville Rescue.

SHERRI FRANKLIN, MUTTVILLE RESCUE:

Hi, I'm really glad you're bringing this to the Commission. I used to sit back there, too. I was on the Commission for six years, and this issue came up during the time I was on the Commission.

One of the things that I wanted to say about the hearings that were held while I was on the Commission, and we were encouraged at that time to go to Fort Mason and, and speak to the GGNRA at that time about off leash, and 80% of the comments that were derived from those meetings were, were pro off-leash, and during that time they said they would, the reason that they were asking for those comments were because they were going to use them to use them to build their plan. And obviously they used none of the comments that were, that were heard at that time, so it's pretty upsetting to me.

You're, you're, you've heard all the studies, so I'm not even going to get into that. You know what you need to, dogs need off-leash areas. Dogs that never socialize with other dogs very easily are more likely to become dog aggressive. As a rescue organization, I go through shelters all the time looking at dogs, and the ones that I turn away are usually the dog-aggressive dogs, because they're really hard to place, and if we don't have the opportunity to walk our dogs and people don't have the opportunity to socialize their dogs in an area that's not totally fenced in and small and crowded, you're gonna see a lot more dog aggression. You're also gonna see dogs jumping up on people on the street, so I mean it shouldn't just be about the dog-loving community, it should really – we should reach out to every community. People with children – they don't want to have dogs that are going crazy wild on the street, you know, with their leashes because they haven't been exercised properly. So it, we really need this.

My fear as a rescuer and always getting way, way too many requests to rescue dogs, is that going through those kennels, it's already really sad, and to, if, if we don't have the opportunity and owners or guardians of dogs don't have the opportunity to actually exercise and socialize their dogs, we're gonna see a lot more in the shelter. And I know every rescue in this city is running on capacity. We're all overloaded with dogs right now and I'd hate to see anything that would make those numbers go up a lot more, and I know they will.

So, I also wanted to say that Fort Funston was also voted the best place to walk your dog in Sunset Magazine. I mean it's a jewel for dog walkers, so we'd hate to lose that. Thanks.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Thank you. Cerena Zutis? If I mispronounced your name, I apologize. Is she here? Okay.

CERENA ZUTIS, PROFESSIONAL DOG TRAINER:

Hello. My voice is so loud, do we really need it? Hello.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Actually we do. The minutes are based on a recording.

CERENA ZUTIS:

Okay. Hi. Hello, hello. My name is Cerena Zutis and I've been a dog trainer for 22 years and a certified behavior counselor for dogs. And – sorry, I just, I didn't know I was going to be really speaking until this morning.

So, exercise and dogs. Dogs absolutely need exercise. It has many, many health benefits. And the off-leash exercise gives them the opportunity to socialize appropriately. Dealing with behavior cases continually, I can say – I need to do the numbers, but most of my behavior cases are because of inadequate socialization or improper socialization, and the cure for many is exercise. And so, lack of exercise plays a huge, huge part of a dog with behavior problems being able to, you know – I'm losing my words here, I'm a little nervous – being able to get well. Okay.

Fort Funston is a really important part of the Bay Area, so I, not only are the dogs getting exercise, but the people are getting exercise. And people getting exercise has many health benefits. We all know that. Walking your dog, petting your dog, stroking a dog decreases blood pressure. There's many, many benefits to owning a dog. It gets people out. So, but the same problem with lack of exercise – if you can't exercise your dog, that also causes stress, alright, so owning a dog is great, but if you can't adequately exercise your dog or take care of your dog, that causes stress. I have fibromyalgia, and I'm sure it didn't help that the stress, it wasn't helped by the fact that I had to give up one of my dogs. Unfortunately I live in San Mateo County, which is extremely dog-unfriendly, which is why Sweeney Ridge is so important to me. And one of my dogs became injured and needed a different type of exercise, and I didn't have the time to exercise my other dog, even though I arranged for him to be picked up and hiked, because there were no off-leash opportunities. The one we did have was taken – there were two, Pulgas Ridge, but you can't use it when the foxtails are out, and then there is, was a beautiful area up next to 280, but they closed the Dish, the Stanford Dish, so all those people – we're talking about getting puppies in small areas – all those people went to, many of them went to the Arastradero Open Space Preserve, and so they became much less dog-friendly, and they went over to the open space off 280. Guess what? The local people got really tired of it and they shut it to everyone. Too many dogs in one space, right? So that does happen. You have dogs in smaller and smaller areas, the local communities aren't used to it – there's why are all these dogs here? And, you know, even if they're well behaved dogs, some people don't want them in their communities. So the more you disperse the dogs, the better it is for the community.

And talking about Fort Funston being a community. In our local park, we used to all get together, have this great sense of community, and they took that away from us. Now we barely know our neighbors. A few years ago, when we did have that community, sense of community, I was running with some friends from out of town with them, quite a few years ago, if we were running, but they said, "Where do you live, Maybury?" because everyone's going "Hi! Hi!" and that sense of community also makes a community stronger. I mean it's wonderful to walk in here and see all of these faces I know because Fort Funston is a sense of community.

Talking about not being able to exercise your dogs – that has an impact on people's, people's stress level. It's not only not being able to get outside to exercise, but the fact that they can't exercise their dog, they can't take adequate care, they worry about it, and of course worry, stress leads to health problems. So by not being able to adequately exercise their dogs, not only is it good for you, but it can actually cause some stress problems. I mean, just thinking about this whole thing has me and many other people pretty stressed out about it.

But, and so I use Fort Funston because I can't use San Mateo County, which San Francisco should be happy about because another benefit is, my tax dollars are spent in San Francisco. They're spent in Berkeley because I go to Point Isabel. They're spent in the central coast because they're dog-friendly. They're spent in San, Mendocino County. So, having – people with pets have, generally have quite a bit of disposable income and I would think that you'd want it spent as much as possible in your own community, which gets a little bit afield, but that's to take into consideration.

What else do I have about it? Yeah, and I can definitely say that lack of exercise – when I'm working – lack of exercise with dogs, they, and I'm sure you've heard this – a tired dog is a happy dog. But it's not just because they're tired, because they've had that wonderful release of hormones that's just keeping them calm and happy.

So, I know this wasn't very well organized, but I can say, please keep the open areas, please keep Sweeney Ridge. Some of the arguments are just ridiculous – you know, dogs compacting the soil. Human feet compact the soil. And I think it's a shame because it happens over and over again that a few people who aren't doing the right thing impact everyone and takes away something valuable, something we all value.

So, anyway, thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Thank you. Kim Durney from Grateful Dog Rescue?

KIM DURNEY, GRATEFUL DOG RESCUE:

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to speak. I don't know why I'm standing up here to speak because everything I was going to say has just been said [laughs], so this reflects the views of the volunteers of Grateful Dogs Rescue. So I'm going to go ahead and say it anyway, although everything has already been said, but it'll reiterate how important some of these issues are to us.

We have numerous issues with the National Park Service's Preferred Alternative for the GGNRA, but I will leave most of those to the other people to address and instead tell you how we think the proposed changes will affect Grateful Dogs Rescue and other rescue groups. One of the basic requirements of responsible dog ownership is to ensure our dogs' physical, mental, and emotional well being by providing them with adequate off-leash exercise and socialization with other dogs. As a side note, there's a whole lot of truth to the old adage, a tired dog is a good dog. Now, my recollection was "it's a good dog," not "it's a happy dog," but same idea.

For many years, thousands of responsible dog owners in San Francisco have taken advantage of Fort Funston and Crissy Field, and the other areas within San Francisco, to provide these opportunities for our dogs, and partly as a result we are lucky to have a very low rate of dog-related problems, behavior problems, compared to other cities. Currently 99% of the GGNRA's total land is off limits to off-leash dogs. Under the GGNRA's proposed alternative, that remaining 1% currently available for our use will be further reduced by 90%. In San Francisco, the already limited parts of Fort Funston and Crissy Field still available to us would be reduced by an additional 75%. In what universe does that constitute shared use of public recreational area for the large percentage of San Francisco residents who are by far the most frequent users of these areas? Some of them are out there every single day.

It is hard to find evidence that the National Park Service gave even a moment's thought to the negative consequences that their proposal would have on the city of San Francisco, its residents and its parks, and I seriously doubt if its negative impact on the welfare of our dogs would even register on their radar screen.

Without adequate off-leash access to Fort Funston and Crissy Field, thousands of responsible dog owners would be faced with two equally unacceptable choices: deprive our dogs of the exercise they need or use the city's already limited supply of parks that do allow off-leash dogs.

Such a dramatic loss of off-leash space would inevitably result in an increase in problem dog behaviors as people find it increasingly hard to provide their dogs with the exercise they need. Active dogs simply cannot get enough exercise with leash walks, and overcrowded parks with too many dogs within too little space could result in both

increased altercations between dogs and ugly interactions with other park users without dogs. When dogs are not adequately exercised and socialized and problem behaviors do develop, some frustrated owners will simply give up and surrender their dogs to animal shelters. In San Francisco, that would be the already overburdened Animal Care & Control, which is already being forced to deal with an increasing numbers of dogs left homeless in recent years because of the lousy economy, and more dogs coming into Animal Care & Control translates into increased pressure on equally overburdened dog rescue groups like Grateful Dogs Rescue, and we simply do not have the resources to take in more dogs than we already do.

At the same time that the supply of unwanted dogs would increase, the demand for these dogs could drop even more than it already has as prospective adopters realize that the current recreational options for their dogs are becoming more limited. So more dogs plus fewer adoptions equals more dogs being killed for no other reason than there are too many of them.

For many years San Francisco has not had to deal with the problem faced by other municipalities of killing healthy surplus dogs, but that day could be coming. So if the National Park Service in developing it's so-called Preferred Alternative, has not considered the various negative impacts that their proposal could have on the city of San Francisco, then it'll be up to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to make sure they do, and the Board of Supervisors is looking to the Animal Welfare Commission for direction. Please make sure they get the right message.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Thank you. Beverly Ulbrich?

BEVERLY ULBRICH, PROFESSIONAL DOG TRAINER:

Hi, thanks for inviting me as well. And I agree with what everybody else said, too, so it's kind of the same thing. I have some similar comments, but maybe a couple of new points as well.

I've been a dog behaviorist here in the city now for eight years and I obviously am also very interested in keeping off-leash recreation open for our dogs here. Dogs, like all animals, including humans, need unconfined space to recreate and without proper exercise and socialization, dogs are likely to have potentially dangerous behavior problems. Small restricted spaces can cause all species to become frustrated, have arguments, fights, get injured, and even spread disease. It's never a good thing to confine a species to small areas where they're literally on top of each other. So if we're forced to go into smaller parks – obviously that's what I'm referring to here – and we do not want the Bay Area dogs to become more unhealthy or aggressive.

The GGNRA dogs are by definition and by law well trained since they have to be under voice control. And that's one of the things I really like about, about the GGNRA, and the fact that they are, do have those laws in place for off-leash, and that means that the dogs are forced and, and, and to listen to – not forced, they're trained to listen to their owners and pay attention, whereas dogs in fenced-in dog parks do not have to interact or listen to their owners, or exercise with their owners as, as other people have discussed, and the lack of off-leash training and practice can lead to, also lead to issues with dogs with their, when their leashes are dropped, their collars are broken, they escape from their front doors or out of gates, they literally run away and not pay be able to pay attention to their owners. We love to have this off-leash land to have the practice and, and, and have the dogs under control so we don't have potentially causing them harm to themselves if they do get off leash or escape in the city.

So, I, I believe that we need off-leash recreation areas in order to provide the proper exercise and training for our dogs, ensure good behavior, and make sure that we have a safe environment for the Bay Area dogs.

Thanks.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Thank you. And, and finally Rahma Barclay? Are you here? I guess not, okay.

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

Okay, so is that the final invited speaker?

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

That was the, the final, yeah, invited speaker, yeah. Yeah. So I think that, that the, the the reasoning, or the thought behind this agenda item was not to take a position necessarily as to what is the best alternative for off leash in the GGNRA because that's beyond the scope, unless you've actually read through this thing, you can't do that – but was to say that because they did not look into the impacts on dog behavior and the impacts on increased surrenders, and and negative behavior problems, that sort of thing – that is something they should have, and because they didn't do that, therefore calling on the Board of Supervisors to oppose the Preferred Alternative because that hasn't been, it wasn't addressed when that was developed. And so that's the, the, what I'm asking the commission is to send a letter to the Board to, to just say basically that point, that because this is an issue that wasn't considered and should have been, that that they can't accept the Preferred Alternative until, until it is, until it is discussed, or is studied. So that's, that's my, the motion that I would make.

COMMISSIONER GERRIE:

I have a few things to say. It seems like this is not the Animal Control and Welfare Commission tonight, this is the dog commission. We didn't hear anyone from the GGNRA or anyone having a different point of view to balance that, it was just all on one side, and so I'm a little nervous talking because I feel, I don't know, I haven't heard anybody speak against this. And I have a few things to say maybe to balance things out here.

The purpose of the dog, draft Dog Management Plan, is to provide a clear enforceable policy to determine the manner and extent of dog use in appropriate areas of the park, and it would promote these following objectives: to preserve and protect natural and cultural resources and natural processes; to provide a variety of visitor experience; improve visitor and employee safety; reduce user conflicts; and maintain park resources and values for future generations.

And there's, and to dismiss it out of hand just because it's focused on dogs or, is not taking all these things into consideration, I find. I, I'm going to read the rest of my statement here: I am deeply disturbed by this agenda item. First off, already there's a process in place for the public to voice their opinions on this issue and even despite the City Attorney's saying that it's in our purview, I disagree. We are an advisory body to the Board of Supervisors and they have no jurisdiction over federal lands. Even if a supervisor requested us to review the matter, it is not our job.

Second, the language used in the agenda item itself I find inflammatory and biased towards dogs. It creates fear in dog owners of worst case scenarios of dogs having to be euthanized because of behavior problems due to not being able to run free in federal parks. Where is a study to back these claims? Many parts of this agenda item are biased and without merit, in my opinion. It is impossible to reach a consensus on this issue because we have very many different, we have different fundamental moral views. Some people feel it is their right to run their dogs without restrictions and the government has no right to tell them otherwise. Others see that other groups in the parks, wildlife have the right to enjoy the park as well without dogs running free. The Park Service has worked for years to produce over 2000 pages to come up with these recommendations and I cannot and will not suppose that listening to a discussion tonight will change my mind to support this draft, draft dog management plan, even though the Preferred Alternative recommendations still allow the GGNRA to be out of compliance with the rest of the National Park system that does not allow any off-leash dogs.

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

I have a statement also.

The GGNRA is federal land and not under the stewardship of San Francisco. Our National Parks are for people from all over the United States, not just San Francisco. The farm family from Nebraska has as much right to be

there as the family that lives on 48th Avenue. The National Park system is paid for by our federal income taxes and is mandated to protect our natural resources for future generations.

We are an animal commission representing all animals, not just one. The GGNRA provides places to roost, feed, and live for many animals. These animals have no house to go home too, nor can they use the rest of the entire area of San Francisco as they are dependent on the seaside habitat. They have no owners to speak up for them. The GGNRA is their home and they face dwindling habitat everywhere. As a commission, we need to be a voice for these animals.

There is a process in place for public comment for how people feel about the Dog Management Plan. There is a very complete 2000-page or 1700-page report discussing the issue, a report that took a long time to compile and cost tax dollars. It should not be treated as a lightweight document of no consequence. Comment may be given at public meetings or in writing. This commission is not the appropriate venue for this discussion.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

I think that, first off, the GGNRA was invited. I talked to Howard this morning, and they opted not to come.

When you say "This is a dog commission," Philip, frankly I think that in the previous item you could have said, "This was a bird commission" because Darling was not invited to give their side of the story, that sort of thing. We, I specifically did not want to discuss the relative merits of where, where dogs should be on leash or off leash, is Alternative A better than Alternative B better than Alternative C, because again, unless you've actually read through this document, you're not going to be able to, to, to say, make an informed decision on that. I specifically did not have that as part of this discussion. I think that the one thing that, right now the GGNRA is in a period of taking public comment. That's what this, what I'm proposing. The, the Board of Supervisors are likely to take a position one way or the other about the, the Preferred Alternative, and so, and therefore, you know, there's, it's entirely within our purview to say that, that there's a, a fairly significant aspect of this whole issue – which is the potentially negative impact on dogs – that was not mentioned anywhere in the 2000-page document and should be, and should have been, because it's an important consideration. And, and because it wasn't, I don't think you can, you can say that their, their conclusions as to what's a Preferred Alternative – they're not, they're not using, they're not basing it on all the information that they need to have. That's what basically the agenda item that I was asking was for.

I think that it's, it's a, the GGNRA is federal land, although it's, you know, I think it must be the only National Recreation Area that is actually, parts of which lie within a city of 800,000 people in San Francisco. It is not, it's a, it's an urban recreation area, and it was created for that reason, and that's been in its enabling legislation from the beginning – that recreation, it's, it has, recreation is important. Obviously you have to balance. And the discussion is about where the balance level is, is, is a valid one, and that's one that should be taking place, that's what is happening with all the discussions that people are making, the public comment they're making.

However, the, one of the things that the GGNRA has said repeatedly at all of their meetings is that they really especially want to know what issues did they *not* look at. That's what they really want to hear. And then, as part of the whole NEPA process, they, if areas are identified that they haven't looked at, then they have to go back and they have to look at them and incorporate them into their final alternatives, the final idea that comes out of this. And that's what basically the purpose of this agenda item is, is to make the point that, that this is an important aspect, the issue of impact on dog behavior, which is an animal welfare issue, obviously, as well as the impact on shelters. That's a huge – that has a lot to do with what this city, I mean the fact that we spent two and a half years talking about that issue, is, is, is important. It's important to the city, it's important to the people that live here. And I think that it's, it's, it's, the Board, I think, would like to know what are the issues that aren't, that they didn't look at, that the GGNRA didn't look at, so that they can, when they submit their public comment, they can make sure that they hear those questions and comments.

COMMISSIONER ALDRIDGE:

Well, I might want to weigh in with a couple of random points. I don't have any position established on this, but a couple of things come to mind as I listen to different things. One thing that I, seems clear to me is that because we're an Animal Control and Welfare Commission and our purview is all of the animals, doesn't preclude us from

taking a position or advocating for one single animal. I don't think there's anything that, that, that means that we can't talk about birds or we can't talk about dogs, and we, everything that we talk about that has an impact on that species has to also consider all the other species. We should – we should consider that and everyone should as they're drafting these rules, but the fact that we are very concerned about dogs and that dogs play a big part in the animal welfare of this city, to me means that it's perfectly within our purview to address this issue.

I think the history of this entire issue is very important. It's been alluded to a few times, and I've been around for a long time. I remember in the early days of, of this discussion – I was a resident of San Francisco and I was employed at the San Francisco SPCA, where Richard Avanzino and the Board of Directors and a lot of people that were very concerned and could see the impact of what was happening when these lands were deeded to the federal government, started an exhaustive investigation of this entire issue and brought a lot of pressure to bear to make sure that the results of this hand-over of lands to the federal government didn't result in something that was undesirable in the future. This was a unique federal recreation area, and it had some unique rules, specifically allowing – one of them was allowing off-leash use of dogs under control, which is different than, as it's been pointed out, any other ones in the United States.

My personal feelings on this are that that particular granting by the federal government that did the deal back there has been kind of a thorn in their side ever since and that this, sooner or later they're going to try to eliminate that completely because it doesn't fall into the policies of all the other parks and recreation areas under the federal government's control. But that has a little bit to do with my own personal philosophy of what the federal government likes to do and how they like to do things and my own little disappointment back in those days when we felt it necessary for the protection of the environment that we're talking about, to make this deal with the federal government.

So it may be, you know, that the 9, the 12th hour, not the 11th hour but the 12th hour on this whole issue, and this may be an exercise in futility, but to any extent that we could, that people who care about the ramifications of this thing, could get the Board of Supervisors to speak up about it, to make sure that every last stone has been unturned, I think it's an effort that we owe as an Animal Control and Welfare Commission.

COMMISSIONER KATZ:

Can I weigh in here? I think, I'd like to speak to a few points that were made here, starting with – I do appreciate that you brought up the other animals. I think that there was some disappointment recently at a town hall meeting, volunteers asked what ACC's position would be about how this would affect the welfare of dogs in San Francisco, and I said we have a duty to consider the welfare of all animals – wildlife, dogs, and so forth.

That said, I have to say that when Sally talks about the impact on dogs not being considered, it's more than that. There's a lot of impacts that haven't been considered in this plan. The plan – I would disagree that it's a complete plan. My understanding is that there are a lot of areas of study that haven't been addressed, that there are a lot of issues that haven't been addressed – enforcement mechanisms that haven't been utilized up until this point – and that we do have a responsibility as a city that has this property within our boundaries to look at whether it works for this city.

You know, as I said, as an animal control and, Animal Care and Control, we were concerned about the welfare of all animals and whether there is room for multi-use or multi-habitability in this plan, and as a city, we're looking at the impact that this could have. So I do want to say that all the city agencies that are impacted and the city as a family is getting together to look at this and see what pressure should be brought to bear and to advise the Board of Supervisors on that as well. I think the Board of Supervisors, at least certain members, are very interested in this. And the land was transferred to the federal government if it wasn't being used in a certain way, in a certain manner, that the city would look at that, and that's what happened 10 years ago. The Board of Supervisors weighed in and I think Sherri Franklin talked about how she was involved here at that time, and the city was very concerned about it. And we remain concerned about this plan. And it's not just, as far as we're concerned, it's not just about the protection of dogs, but it, it crosses a lot of things, but it's not a complete – we don't feel like we have the complete picture here. There hasn't been full consideration of the impact on parks. There hasn't been a full consideration of the impact on, on dogs and on animal welfare in the city. There hasn't been a, a complete, a completed process here

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...depends on having a 75% compliance rate or else it goes to on leash only or then it goes to no dogs whatsoever, is such a tremendous threshold and it almost feels like a setup for failure. And that's very concerning. And I note Sally termed it the "poison pill," the compliance rate, whatever you want to call it, it's concerning to me, and what the rationale for that is concerning to me. But I think that, I don't know if you already mentioned this and I'm sorry if you did – the initial comment period was supposed to end on April 14 and it has been extended to May 29. I think we have an opportunity as a city, as a city family, to let the GGNRA know that we're concerned that there is not a complete picture here.

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

Are there additional comments? Or we can go to public comment?

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

I just really am sorry that all the animals are not in this picture. I think the GGNRA is trying really hard to look at all the animals, and I think people need to look at that report if they want to care about more than just one animal. Everything seems to be about one animal. Our resources, our natural resources – and those are wildlife – and we know that the dog laws that exist are not ever obeyed. Any park that I go into [vocalization from audience] – wait, wait wait – so, obedience has been a problem, in terms of having – it's not a poison pill, it's a compliance. And I think that certainly we need some compliance standards because you go out where there are leash laws in the city, and there are no dogs on leash. And I don't know how other than having a compliance standard you could ever enforce that, and...

COMMISSIONER KATZ:

Can I just, can I just – one more time, I just want to say that we do, as an agency we do have concerns about wildlife and I also think – that's when I mentioned there hasn't been a full impact study because pushing dogs to other areas and into the city parks may have an impact on wildlife there, too. So when I say there hasn't been a full range of impact, I'm talking about *this* impact that was mentioned here in the agenda, and I'm talking about impact on wildlife in the city parks, and I'm talking about a lot of areas of impact that aren't just about dogs. And I, and I think when I mentioned that there wasn't enforcement used up to this point, that's also what I'm speaking to. You're right that there has been, and I think – I'm sorry, I don't remember which speaker said, but it's a case where you have people who aren't considerate of, of picking up after their dog or ensuring that their dogs don't run into unauthorized areas and so forth – it's the irresponsible people who may make it harder for the rest of us. That said, there are enforcement mechanisms, there are compliance mechanisms that don't necessarily require such drastic measures, so.

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

Why has compliance been such a problem, from the dog community?

COMMISSIONER KATZ:

My understanding from the GGNRA is that the the U.S., and I think actually, I don't want to put you out there, John, but I think he can speak to this, too – the U.S. Park Police have felt that they couldn't enforce or didn't know how to enforce some of the laws that were at their disposal. So that's an issue. San Francisco – in San Francisco, in the city parks, when you talk about dog compliance, there has been a balance struck and a real effort made to strike a balance between off-leash areas and multi-use purposes and so forth, so I just think that's the attempt..

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

I just wanted to speak to something you said, I think just because there are a lot of people that are potentially here speaking in favor of, you know, talking more about the impacts or sending a letter about the impacts of, on what the dog behavior could be doesn't mean that they don't care about the other animals in the park, it just means that they

[audience applause], it just means that people, there's a lot of people passionate about this issue. And I don't think that's mutually exclusive.

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

But with our crowding, increasingly crowded situation and with less and less habitat, there is no way that more dogs can't cause wildlife problems. And wildlife does not have a voice. There are a lot of dog voices here, but you know I'm not hearing anyone say I'd like to look at this report, which took years to work out, and see what they looked at and what they were concerned about. And I'm not comfortable listening to another couple of hours of people saying I want to exercise my dog. I, you know, maybe we could do a show of hands on that.

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

Well, we always allow public comment – that's part of how our meetings run and we've spent an hour and a half listening to seagulls, so we're trying to – which is important, I'm not saying that as a dismissive thing, but we're here to give everybody, you know, their voice, and that's our purpose of this commission – to be providing that and I think...

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

I fully understand that, but it would be nice if testimony were not repetitive, if people could try to say things that are unique in some way.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

You can't tell people what they can or cannot say.

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

Okay.

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

But, and I think, but also I think speaking to your point of the impacts on the environment, I think it's also some – while that may not be included, that's not in our purview, but I think that's also some of the concerns that people have raised is, when people get out of certain areas and then they pile into smaller areas, that has another impact on the environment with – and that's within our city – such as, let's say, if, you know, people then all of a sudden going to Bernal because that's a place where they feel they can go as opposed to going to Fort Funston, and that has a greater impact there. So if people are squeezed out of one area, then they're going to try to find another area to go, and I think that is part of our concerns.

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

Well, but the best resource area is the one they choose? You know, I don't know. It's a very complicated topic and I think the impacts are hypothetical at this point. We're also getting more and more dogs in the city numerically..

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

And that's a bad thing?

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

...and it will be hard to separate that effect from other effects.

COMMISSIONER GERRIE:

And you can see how divisive this issue is just on our commission. I want to say something, sort of positive in a way about Fort Funston. I petitioned there – I gathered signatures for Prop 2 a couple of years ago, and I find them the most delightful, easy to get signatures for animal, farm animals. But also I remember that I had to get the county that they were registered to vote in, and it was more like, less than half were from San Francisco. Many were from San Mateo. So the people at Fort Funston at least are not, less than half are San Francisco residents. And another thing – I talked to the ranger there that was, I'd run into him because he was doing the rounds, and the ranger, he had to spend all of his time picking up, cleaning out the cans of dog crap – that's all he did; that's all he did. I talked to him, and I don't want to argue with you, I'm just saying what I talked to him about. And the other thing he picks up is dead, other animal carcasses that the dogs have killed that he finds around [vocalization from audience]

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

Everyone's going to have a, okay...

COMMISSIONER GERRIE:

Please, I'm not, I'm not...

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

Can everyone please, one second...

COMMISSIONER GERRIE:

So I have a perspective and I have a right to speak and I have a right not to be, not to be talked back to, you know. So this, this is, you know, we, we – so it's important to respect our rights. I didn't say anything, you know, when everyone else was talking about that, so I think it's important to keep that in perspective.

So again, the GGNRA is not making, is not – they're concerned about the GGNRA, their lands, and what is best to maintain those lands, what is, what is reasonable. And, and we're just, we have – we're, we're a big city and we're right next to, also this plan is not just SF, it's also Marin County – there's 21 different sites that they address. And so again I don't think that this is the place for it and I think we're gonna just waste our time in being divisive. I don't know what other people feel on the Commission here, but I am definitely not going to be supportive of it and I, I was contemplating earlier, I, you know, I don't know if I have the patience to actually sit, sit through this. I don't know that I have to, if there's any law that says I have to stay to the, stay to the end if it's going to be more of this, so, I don't know.

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

I think we all – I just want everyone to again please respect all of the speakers in the room. And everyone's going to have a chance for public comment, probably pretty soon. And I just forgot what I was going to say, saying that, so I'm going to – do you have a comment?

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Just to point out that the whole NEPA process, they look at the – it's an environmental impact statement report, but the environment that they are required to look at includes the natural environment, justifiably so; it includes the cultural environment – especially historical things; it also is supposed to include social environment and effects on local communities and surrounding communities, especially in a situation like this, where we're, you know, it's, I mean it's within the city jurisdiction.

COMMISSIONER KATZ:

Yeah, and just adding to that, I think, Philip, what you said – Commissioner Gerrie spoke to that, about the fact that you were polling people, how many people come from out of county, how many of these people will be driven into the city and what effect it could have on wildlife here. There are so many questions that aren't answered in this

report that it's worth, you know, seeking clarification of that, and I don't think it becomes a one-animal issue by any stretch, but it definitely means that we may not have a complete picture here.

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

And again, also, I, it is a divisive issue and I think people are very passionate about it on both sides, but also when some issues come up here, there's not always a unanimous vote and I think we all put items on the agenda and then it's up to every commissioner to either vote for or against it. And some items have a unanimous vote and some don't, and it really goes with how the vote is at the end.

COMMISSIONER ALDRIDGE:

I think we all have to be here for the vote, if we're going to weigh in on it, so probably anybody who feels strongly about it should wait 'til we have a vote on a motion and sit through all the public comment.

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

I think, I think most of our animal issues have been unanimous. I know I've written a lot of letters and most of them have been unanimous because I've written in the letter "unanimous," so..

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

But not every, not every one, and it's okay for us to not have a unanimous vote also..

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

Yeah, sure.

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

..that's why we have an odd number of us, I think [laughs]. I would like to move to public comment?

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Yeah, I mean, basically the, the, I will be putting forth a motion to, as the agenda item said – just to let people know, if that informs your public comment as well.

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

So I'm gonna do 2 minutes for public comment.

KEITH McALLISTER:

Good evening, Commissioners. My name is Keith McAllister and I'd like to address your natural and proper concern for the welfare of those animals who are *not* dogs in the GGNRA.

I'll just take a small slice of that by telling you that dogs have no impact on the bank swallows at Fort Funston. The draft Management Plan claims that preserving off-leash recreation at Fort Funston would have "minor to moderate adverse impacts on the bank swallows" because "continuing impacts from dogs and/or humans would include digging at or collapsing burrows, flushing birds from nests, and causing active sloughing and landslides." In fact there is no evidence at all that any of these things happen at Fort Funston. The GGNRA report, Bank Swallow Monitoring 1993 to 2006 documents that monitors observed a very few dogs in the closed area around the bank swallows – in fact, a total of three in the years 2001 to 2006. That's all the evidence there is. The presence of dogs. And yet the GGNRA makes that a continuing impact. Note that still no one has seen a dog collapse a bank swallow burrow, flush a swallow, or cause a landslide in the colony. It is significant that these impacts have not been observed because people have been out there looking for them. The GGNRA researcher closely monitored the

colony from '94 to '95 and wrote an official report for the GGNRA. She observed that there were dogs present and noticed, and noted that they did not disturb the swallows. She also listed a number of things the GGNRA could do to protect the bank swallow colony but didn't mention the dogs.

We should not be surprised that dogs have no impact on the bank swallows. The book Bank Swallow by Barrett Garrison, identified as the bank swallow expert by the GGNRA, says "Bank swallows appear relatively insensitive to moderate levels of human induced disturbance..."

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Time. You can finish your sentence if you want [laughs], but then..

KEITH McALLISTER:

Speculation of what might happen, which runs counter to years of experience with what actually *does* happen, is not science, and such speculation should not be used to eliminate recreational dog walking in the GGNRA.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Time.

KEITH McALLISTER:

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Thank you.

ANDREA BUFFA:

My name is Andrea Buffa and I live in the Sunnyside neighborhood in San Francisco. I'm an environmentalist and I have two Australian cattle dogs that I walk at Fort Funston.

I urge you to support the resolution that's been proposed. I think not only is it appropriate for this commission, I think it's required of you – this is the Animal Welfare Commission and this is gonna have the most dramatic impact on animals in San Francisco of anything that I've seen in a really long time.

I'd also like to say that I read a good part of the environmental impact statement and I'm slightly offended at the idea that those of us who are advocating against it didn't actually read it. I want to say that at Fort Funston, because I'm an environmentalist – I worked for Global Exchange, I worked with Rain Forest Action Network, I work for the Apollo Alliance – I was looking to see if there were serious environmental concerns. At Fort Funston there are no federally endangered or threatened species, and yet – there are no federally endangered or threatened species at Fort Funston, and if you look at the DEIS, you'll see that's the case – and yet they are proposing to eliminate off-leash dog walking for the vast majority of that space. So I think in terms of concern for other animals at Fort Funston, that's not the issue. The bank swallows are state-listed, and as the previous person mentioned, they're on the cliffs and dogs haven't been documented to bother, bother the bank swallows.

In terms of the issue of compliance, probably some other people will talk about this, but when you actually look at the GGNRA data – 7% of complaints are against dogs, 93% of complaints are against human beings.

So I think this proposal is gonna have a seriously harmful impact for animals – that is, dogs – in San Francisco Bay Area and those of us who agree with this do not not care about other animals; we do, we've read the proposal, and we don't think this proposal has, has legitimate environmental concerns, but it's actually a pretext to get rid of most of the recreational users at the park, and I think it's important for the city and this commission to go on record against the proposal.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Thank you.

ILANA MINKOFF:

Hi, my name is Ilana Minkoff, and this is my service animal, Lucy, who was adopted from Animal Care and Control. And her welfare of being adopted by me is because I knew that I had plenty of places to take her off leash and run around. I was diagnosed with cancer four years ago. I was exhausted all the time for about two years. The only reason I had to get out of the house was because of my dog, because I had to get in my car and drive to the beach and make sure she got exercise. I couldn't keep up with her, but it forced me to walk down the beach, it forced me to get exercise, and it allows her to sit in this room for the last two and a half hours quietly, because we had an hour of play time – unleashed – out at the beach today. That is the *only* reason she is this mellow. Because when I got her from Animal Care and Control, she had behavior problems. And running off leash, when she finally figured out she had to come back, saved her life because I couldn't have kept going if she was the way she was, without that off-leash run time.

That's all I have to say. Thank you.

ARNITA BOWMAN:

I'm Arnita Bowman. I'm actually from San Mateo, San Bruno, so I'm one of those San Mateo people that comes up here, I'm one of those San Mateo people that come up here, it's like, I'm out there every day in the Golden Gate National Rec – and most of the time we're in San Mateo County at Sweeney Ridge, but we come up to Funston because that's the place we can go, that there's off-leash recreation.

I actually find it interesting we are talking about this being a national park, because it's a national park, but I would say one of my big concerns for San Francisco is that if it goes through, as far as what they're planning for San Mateo County, you're gonna have a tremendous more number of people from San Mateo County coming to San Francisco and being in the parks because basically everything is on leash there currently; they're cutting it like 70%, something like that. In San Mateo County, with the poison pill, it's guaranteed that more than 25% of people are gonna have their dogs off leash, so they're gonna shut more down, which just means more people are gonna be coming to San Francisco to go to the parks.

And I guess I'm a little offended 'cause I've spent the last month looking at the 2400 pages. I don't know how much time you guys have spent with the 2400 pages, but it's a tremendous document and I'm a former senior auditor with KPMG; I actually audited the City of San Francisco. And I'm quite appalled at the lack of standards that are in that document. I mean, if you, if you go through it page by page, there's very little that's actually measured. And I actually consider myself an environmentalist, and I think if you're really truly concerned about the animals, there should be some measurement of what is the impact on the animals, what is happening to the animals. And I don't see that in the document at all – I'd be, really I think what needs to be done is that they need to use sound land management practices to manage, to see what is actually happening because there's very little, I mean the only measurements that are in there are the, the bite incidents, the attacks, the off leash, and there's one other thing – I can't think what it is – that's all that's really in there, and then there's the research on the snowy plover, which is really questionable, from what I understand.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Time.

JAN SCOTT:

Hello, my name is Jan Scott, and I've been wracking my brains trying to think of what I could say that would be unique. I'm not sure I'm going to succeed on that one. I'm a senior citizen and I've lived in San Francisco for 45 years, walked almost daily on our beautiful beaches.

COMMISSIONER GERRIE:

Can you speak closer to the mic, please?

JAN SCOTT:

I'm sorry?

COMMISSIONER GERRIE:

Closer to the mic; you can't be heard.

JAN SCOTT:

Oh, I'm sorry. Okay. Oh there, that's better. And I'm on my fifth dog that I've exercised off leash in those areas, and this is my current one – I don't know if you can see that picture. He's a big, he's a big hound dog.

It's pretty impossible to not, to really get a dog adequate exercise on leash. You can't even play fetch with a, with an on-leash dog, you know, they have to be off leash at least a little bit. I am totally a believer in being on voice, in voice control. Your dog has to be on voice control. Of my five dogs, I've had two that always had to be on leash because I couldn't train them well enough. The other three can be off leash. I really strongly, strongly urge you to adopt the proposal of not, you know, not approving the GGNRA plan.

I think it's – an example I could give about the effect it might have on other wildlife, is – I live near Stern Grove, and I don't know if you know it or not, but Stern Grove is a place where a lot of bird watchers go 'cause they have quite a few, I guess, unusual birds there. And, you know, if there's more dogs that come there – it's very close to, to Ocean Beach and to Fort Funston – it's very likely people'll all go there. Well, you know, what about the birds there? It's a small park, small off-leash area. You know, the dogs have to be on leash going past the bird area, but even a lot of dogs on leash – that's gonna be bad for those, those dogs, so you know, there's a specific example.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Time.

JAN SCOTT:

Thank you.

VICKI TIERNAN:

Good evening, Commissioners. My name is Vicki Tiernan and I want to emphasize the scope of this. As it stands currently, the off-leash community has access to less than 1% of the GGNRA's 78,000, 80,000 acres. This proposal would drastically cut that back by 90%. Certainly the Park Service has a, has a mandate to balance a lot of competing things, and they do. As, as of right now, the balance precludes the off-leash community from 99% of the land, and that is available to people who visit from other states as well, if they don't want to be around dogs.

If the community – I want to also reiterate what a couple of commissioners and a couple of speakers have said – that, considering the effects on wildlife, you have to consider the effects of, of the influx of people and dogs into the city parks and the wildlife, the impacts that that'll have on city park wildlife.

I think that even given the disagreements among the committee, one thing that is clear is that some impacts here have not been considered, and that's what the Park Service is asking, is actually asking the people of San Francisco to do, is to, is to consider the things that they haven't considered. And that is certainly one of them.

So I support a resolution to the Board asking them to oppose the proposed alternative.
Thank you.

SAMIR GHOSH:

Hi. My name is Samir Ghosh. I am not a professional environmentalist or lobbyist of any type. I'm just a, a computer engineer, MBA, a local citizen, and I was pretty surprised myself when I looked through the report as to, there's really no data that I see, substantive, around, that shows that dogs are really the major, major problem.

Also – so first of all I also want to thank you for being open-minded and everybody considering all issues. The other thing that I'm also surprised at is, from what I can tell, dog owners tend to be more animal-friendly; this point has been made, but I don't see it as being one or the other. And then also I wanted to remind people that, since this is national lands, that we should be contacting our Congress representatives on either side.

And then there was an issue about compliance, why is there an issue around compliance. Well I think, you know, DPT sets speed limits based on 80 percentiles. They expect certain people are going to be speeding. I don't think you're gonna expect 100% compliance. But part of that problem, too, is that we're already very limited in, in space, and I think as you further limit it, one of the problems that I haven't heard yet is people will start going to other on-leash places and breaking the rules there and going off leash, and I think that's another impact.

Thank you.

BRUCE WOLFE:

Good evening, Commissioners. My name is Bruce Wolfe. And I really just want to appreciate all of you sticking around and staying and listening to us because it is your responsibility as commissioners to do that. I sit, also sit on a commission here in the city. It's very important to the people that we serve, and I really appreciate that you do stick around and listen to us speak, no matter how hard it might be at times.

I'm on page 726. It's kind of hard going, but I'm plugging, plugging through it. I have a service dog. He's now 14 years old. He's retired, but he's been with me for 11 years and the years that he was working, he was always on leash, always on harness with me because I have a physical disability. So having his time to be able to get all that stuff off of him and being able to get some exercise and run around someplace is extremely important for the health of that dog so that he can continue to help me. And he was a rescue from, starting with ACC through SFPCA. And I got him when he was four and a half. So he's been a wonderful friend to me.

The, whether it's the GGNRA land or it's San Francisco land, it's still the same land, okay? It still has the same issues. It doesn't matter. And that's what the GGNRA has to pay attention to. They are required to pay attention to any impacts or effects they may have on a neighboring municipality, and that's what we feel they haven't done. And that's why there's all this outrage, because they just went ahead and said, we're just gonna mandate, we don't have to have a public hearing process, it's one person that's gonna make the decision. We know we don't like how those things go here in San Francisco. And most other cities, where there is a form of democracy. At the federal level, we don't have it the same way. So there is – if the city doesn't feel it likes the way it's going about its business like that, yeah, that's why that reversion is in there, to take it back, because of how they might go about doing that business.

You know, with regards to wildlife..

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Time.

BRUCE WOLFE:

..the, okay, thank you.

TEAL HEISE:

Hi, I'm Teal Heise and I'm here in two capacities: one, I am the owner of a dog walking business that actually uses the San Francisco parks, so I'm here very much to express my concern about the impact that this will have on the San Francisco parks and the animals that use those, as well, and including the wildlife, because I spend a lot of time out there and I'm seeing a lot of wild animals in the park that I use and – in Golden Gate Park – and I have no doubt that if dogs and other, dogs and owners flood into the city parks, we're definitely gonna see that infrastructure eroding, and I'd hate to see that happen. So that's definitely within your purview and that's something that does affect you and animals besides dogs.

And I'm also here because I'm a San Francisco native and I've been using these spaces for off-leash recreation since I was born. And I really hate to see, considering that this was only transferred to the federal GGNRA in my lifetime, I really feel that the important thing is to consider that they really should have a mandate to preserve the traditional use by generations of San Franciscans, and people from the outlying area, and people from outside of the state. And especially to lose it based on hypotheticals and speculation and a total lack of science and standards seems to be a pity.

Thank you so much.

ERIC HEISE:

Hi, my name is Eric Heise. I also, with my wife I own a dog-walking business. The reason why I really oppose it is that with the amount of dogs that are going to Fort Funston right now and the way that that is written, it's inevitable that the Golden Gate National Recreation Area is going to get to the point where there will be no dogs there. And all those dogs that are going there are not going away. Most of them do live in the City and County of San Francisco. They will be going into the parks. There's gonna be much more people in the parks than there are right now, which are already overcrowded. You're going to be having people walking dogs in places they shouldn't be walking dogs. There'll be more calls to SFPD. There's gonna be more calls to SF Animal Care and Control, and there's gonna be more conflicts between dog owners and non-dog owners, and all the rest of this.

Fort Funston is a place that is to be used for the people that live around Fort Funston as well as everybody else in San Francisco, but it's primarily an urban recreation area. It's not Yosemite, it's not Modoc, it's not any of those other national parks. That land was given by the City & County to the national government in order to be basically used for what it was being used before while it was still being used by the city and the county. People liked to walk their dogs off leash there. And with it being reverted back to where this plan's going, it's going to be much more dangerous for people to bring their dogs to Fort Funston the way they're gonna have to load them in. You're going to see a lot of dogs out, you know, on Skyline; they're gonna be running towards the Olympic Club. You'll see a lot of that. And, you know, you're gonna, you know, we're all gonna have to live with that. It's gonna be our day-to-day life. And, you know, you really, really should think about opposing it.

Thank you.

COREY EVANS:

Hi, I'm Corey Evans. As many of you know, I'm an animal law attorney. And I've actually done NEPA challenges before to EIS's, against the National Park Service actually, when they were doing a Santa Cruz Island pig eradication; our law office handled the NEPA challenge.

Although I don't like the reduction in the off-leash area, I'm here to urge you not to send a letter because it makes no sense. The Board of Supervisors already have a committee meeting set up on April 11, and it's a Land Use Committee meeting – to discuss and analyze the impact on city parks. Your proposition, to send a letter, is based on the assumption that all these people that are not gonna be allowed off leash are gonna go to the city parks, it's gonna

be too crowded, and then we're gonna have to, these animals that no longer can get exercise are gonna be ill-behaved.

COMMISSIONER GERRIE:

Mic.

COREY EVANS:

They're gonna be ill behaved and then they're gonna be possibly euthanized. That assumes a high impact on city parks that can't be mitigated. But that hearing hasn't even happened yet. It seems like the hearing about whether or not the city parks will be able to handle the impact is on April 11 and this, this commission shouldn't try to short-cut the Board of Supervisors hearing.

Also, I'm concerned because I know that most of you haven't even skimmed the 2400-page document because in fact large portions of the document talk about indirect impact on adjacent parks. It goes through for every type of category – water quality, soil degradation, human use of the environment, special status animals – and for every category, they look at every park that they're thinking of closing, and they say what's the indirect, indirect impact of this plan on the adjacent park. And they're talking about the city parks. So there *is* impact talked about, of the adjacent city parks. So if you want to send a letter and say they're doing the, they're not considering the impact, it seems like logic would dictate that you would have to say what's wrong with the current plan, because they're only supposed to consider the...

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Time.

COREY EVANS:

..reasonably foreseeable impacts. So you would have to prove that your impact of dog euthanasia is reasonably foreseeable, and my concern is that it's, that's not, logic doesn't show that, that it's reasonably foreseeable that dogs are gonna get euthanized.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Time.

STEVE HOOKER:

Hi, my name is Steve Hooker. I've been in San Francisco since 1973. I'm currently a dog walker and have been for a couple, the past couple of years.

I just wanted to say a couple of things. First of all, we're not here because we don't care about other animals. We're here talking about dogs because that's what the agenda item was about – the Dog Management Plan. It's not, it's not that we don't care about other animals. There are going to be big, big issues when we get out there and they've closed everybody into a very small area right near the parking lot – danger – right near the cliffs – danger – and it becomes very hard to not come too close with one group and another, and you're gonna have more conflicts. They are going to go to the city parks, there is gonna be an impact, it's gonna be a big impact. McLaren, Stern Grove – pretty much the only ones that have any size – they're gonna get it the worst, and the ones where it's awful now because they're tiny – they're gonna be unbearable. It's gonna happen. And I really think you should – whether, you know, wait 'til after April, April 11, it doesn't matter, but you really should voice your support of, you know, opposing it.

Thank you.

J.R. FLEMING:

My name is J.R. Fleming. I am a documentary filmmaker. Currently, the last six months I've been in pre-production for a film about pet overpopulation in the United States. And what I want to talk to you today is what a unique place San Francisco is for dogs. It's really, you know I've lived in New York and Chicago and San Francisco, and San Francisco has something really special here with these outdoor spaces here with these dogs. And the last six months or so, I've been to a dog park every day because we've also adopted two dogs. So we're there as well, and we've never seen any problems with them. And I'm not saying that my anecdotal evidence there should sway you, but you know, in the last six months every day I've gone, it's been a very peaceful experience. And I really think that you don't want to change the fabric of San Francisco too much because this is a shining example of – this is probably the best place for dogs in the country as far as euthanasia rates and as far as outdoor space is. And even saying that, there's a lot of work to be done within San Francisco to even lower those euthanasia rates even more.

So I really encourage you just to keep it as it is right now and let these outdoor spaces for humans and dogs.

Thank you.

RENÉE PITTIN:

Hi, my name is Renée Pittin. My name is Renée Pittin. I live in Noe Valley. I do think this is eminently the appropriate venue for us to voice out our concerns about access for exercise and recreation for ourselves and our animals and the dire consequences of removing access for thousands and thousands of domestic pets and ourselves from this part of the GGNRA, which, as has been pointed out, is less than 1% of the total GGNRA area. And this is not anecdotal, this is from GGNRA law enforcement from 2001 to 2006, which, basically their figures showed that in, in terms of disturbing wildlife, the figures were: people 96%, dogs 2%. So don't demonize the dogs here. I do urge the Animal Control and Welfare Commission to bring our concerns about this Dog Management Policy to the Board of Supervisors and I thank the commission for bringing this forward.

SHIRLEY WAYNE [not sure of name]:

Hi, good evening. My name is Shirley Wayne and I'm a native San Franciscan. I go over to Crissy Field and Fort Funston. These are beautiful areas. I had a chance to review the document, 2400 pages, and interestingly enough, there is no data on the human impact. As a person with two dogs, I go to the beach, I see cigarette butts, I pick up plastic bottles. I do what I can to protect this environment. With the information inside that document, it had some law data, which was really interesting. And it wasn't significant, as mentioned with this other woman here, that, the human impact bothers the other animals, the birds, the other animals that are living there. So with the dogs that are there, it, it actually would – I'm sorry, when I go down with my dogs, I'm very respectful. There are areas that they can improve. They can do better fencing and, and, and curb, curb these areas.

As a citizen I'm asking you to support the, the small people here, because I've written to Dianne Feinstein, I've written to Jackie Speier, but because this is a federal item, it's almost like David and Goliath. So I do ask that you support the citizens of San Francisco. There's a lot of people out here and it's a very passionate, passionate item. So I hope that you can put your suggestions forth to the Board of Supervisors and make our city a better place.

Thank you.

SUSAN BLANCHARD:

Hello. [clears throat] Excuse me. My name is Susan Blanchard. While there is a place to comment on the GGNRA report and its impacts, we do – well, I'm sorry, as a city it is our responsibility to have a voice as well, so I believe that this is a correct forum and a good thing to do.

Changing the off-leash areas in all of those parks, all of the said places, will change the game of dog walking considerably. Currently dog walking is affordable by, you know, regular standards. Most people can afford it if they have a dog. I know this is a giant reason people adopt dogs in San Francisco is because they have the ability to

afford a dog walker and be able to have their dog have that off-leash outside experience with lots of exercise while they are otherwise occupied at work.

Changing the off-leash areas, making it much smaller, will impact dog walking drastically. They're proposing to change numbers and everything, which I won't get into, but it will change everything. It will become more expensive and much more cut-throat to try and get a dog walker, and it will put exercise out of the reach of the common person while they're at work and their dog needs to go out, and I know that's a huge deal for a lot of people, that's the only reason they have a dog is because they do have the ability to have that dog exercised while they're away.

Yeah, thank you so much.

LISA VITTORI:

I wasn't quite ready, but here I am. I could talk for hours, but I'll spare you. And Philip, I apologize for interrupting you. Because I'm Italian, I can't help it, but I stay, I stay for the whole fight. And I actually believe in fighting all the way through this and fighting fair. And I'll tell you what the big problem with this is, that this report was prepared without any, anybody advocating for dog walking in that whole report. You know? And I don't believe in that, you know, I believe in inclusion, you know, we are in a city that believes in inclusion. I work in classrooms that believe in inclusion. And I think that that's why people are out here. You know, they're out here because they love walking with their dogs and they go out for an hour or two every day. These are people who use the parks. But you know what – we're also here because it's, it's never been a fair process.

And Pam, one of the reasons why there's not compliance, which I don't really believe in anyway, is because we watched the sausage being made and we don't believe in the sausage maker anymore. You know, we watched this – we've gone to hearing after hearing after hearing where people agreed to things and then didn't do them. Or where people listened to us and then, and then did something different. Or where there were 80, 80% of the comments in 2001 were from people advocating for their off-leash recreation, and that wasn't included in this report. And I'm not just talking about people who love their dogs, but I'm also talking about people like Keith, who are experts in birds, or Mary Dunlap, who are bird watchers and lawyers who talked extensively in their letters about, about how to integrate it all, and none of that was listened to.

You know, I'm going to drive everybody to like places that they don't know about, like Billy Goat Hill. You know, like the natural areas are gonna be destroyed because we're all gonna still be walking. I need to walk. In fact I've gained 20 pounds since I've had old dogs [laughs]. You know, I need to walk and I need it for my mental health. And I'll tell you what, I have a service dog because I have a severe illness that would cause me some day to jump off the Golden Gate Bridge if I don't take care of it, okay? That's why we're here..

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Time.

LISA VITTORI:

..because we want fairness. Thank you.

NANCY STAFFORD:

Hi, my name is Nancy Stafford. I'm co-director of the San Francisco Professional Dog Walkers Association. This will definitely have a dramatic negative effect on our clients, both dog and human. Absolutely it would cause more problems with the shrinking of an area. It's, there are 10,000, approximately, dog visits a day across the GGNRA. There are 178,000 dogs in the city. There needs to be a way to have everyone share space, and there's, the more dispersion the better, the safer for everyone.

But to talk about safety – their own data says there were 45 dog bites. I believe that was between a one or two-year, I'm not quite sure of the, but it was a lengthy period of time – 45 dog bites. Well if there are 10,000 dogs a day,

that's millions a year, and 45 is very, very miniscule. And we also don't know the details of how those dog bites happened.

Of the attacks on people versus dogs – of the attacks on people, 98% were done by other people, only 2% were done by dogs. So I don't see that there is a big safety factor involved, as the GGNRA has proposed.

Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

Is there any additional public comment? Seeing none, public comment is closed.

COMMISSIONER ALDRIDGE:

I'd like to move that without further ado, we vote on Sally Stephens' motion to send our recommendation for the city to reject the Alternative Plan, if that's appropriate, and see where we stand on it.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

I just, I second that.

COMMISSIONER ALDRIDGE:

Do we want to take a vote?

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

Okay, so I'm gonna do roll call? Commissioner Gerrie?

COMMISSIONER GERRIE:

So I would say no, I'm not supporting the, against the, how do you say it?

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

It's either support...

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Just one correction I would make is the fact that I've removed from the agenda item "impact on city parks." So the only impact that we're discussing is – if I can find the agenda – that, to talk about that they, they did not, we're asking the Board of Supervisors to oppose the Preferred Alternative because it doesn't consider possible negative impacts on dog behavior caused by severe restrictions on off leash, nor does it consider possible impact on potential for increased surrenders of dogs. That's, that's what we're gonna – we're not talking about impacts on city parks. Just to be clear.

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

Even though nobody as yet read the Management Plan through, we're gonna oppose it?

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Yes. It's not in the plan, I can tell you that. They don't..

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

But you haven't, you haven't finished it. Has any...

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Oh I, yeah, I've read, I've read it. They have not, they don't discuss impacts on dog behavior.

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

I haven't read the whole thing.

COMMISSIONER PAGE:

Yeah, I just wanted to clarify, like, the, the letter – I'm comfortable asking the Supervisors to make sure that they've included these other issues and the considerations in the DI, DEIS, but I'm not comfortable in telling them that this plan is, approving it or not approving it, because I haven't read it all the way through. So I don't, I'm just not – I want to clarify exactly what we're voting on.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Yeah, I think that the, the concern is that if we say they didn't consider this, they'll say, then the GGNRA, based on past experiences, that they'll then say, well, you know, either, we'll go and we'll consider it, but they won't actually look at the impacts and it won't, they won't use that when they, when they come up with their final plan. However, if you said that you can't support, that the city takes a position of not being able to support the Preferred Alternative certainly unless that's included in, in, in the discussion, then that's sort of basically what it, what this is saying. It's saying to the GGNRA that they really do have to look into it before anyone can support it.

COMMISSIONER ALDRIDGE:

So just, everyone hates the person that brings up Roberts Rules of Order here, but if we were paying any attention to it at all, the motion that I posited was that we send a letter to the Board of Supervisors urging them to oppose a recently announced Preferred Alternative for a new Dog Management Plan in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and then there's a lot of because, and you're dropping the because about the impact on city parks...

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Right.

COMMISSIONER ALDRIDGE:

..but nevertheless I move that we vote on sending a letter to the Board of Supervisors urging them to oppose, so we can, we should probably vote up or down on that.

COMMISSIONER [female]:

I think Roberts Rules of Order also allows for some discussion on the actual motion, so it seems like this is...

COMMISSIONER ALDRIDGE:

After the motion? Okay.

COMMISSIONER [female]:

Yeah, I believe so.

COMMISSIONER ALDRIDGE:

Okay, that's fine.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

If there is additional...

COMMISSIONER PAGE:

I mean, yeah, I, one thing I wanted, a caveat to all of this is, I think it was Sherri Franklin that said, earlier when they were preparing the DEIS, they didn't use any of the public comments or listen to them at all. And I think, you know, unless we have studies or some real concrete evidence that we can provide to the Supervisors or that they can get, they're not gonna listen to this either; they only have a duty to look at reasonably foreseeable and direct effects, and unless we can really prove to them that this is reasonably foreseeable with some hard numbers, they tend to ignore just opinions. They want to see something substantive, so again, that, for me, makes this more symbolic unless we have something more to show them, either to the Supervisors, or that the Supervisors can get and show when they write whatever letter they're gonna write.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Well I think that certainly the testimony of the professionals and dog behaviorists at the SPCA, with the, you know, understanding of shelters, and then the rescue groups also have expertise to be looking at issues of behavior and what causes it, what causes problem behaviors, that sort of thing. I think that that's the, that's the data that, that we have and that, that would be, that indicates that there are these potentials for, for problems.

COMMISSIONER PAGE:

I, I've worked on these before and I, I tonight didn't hear anything concrete enough that I think they will listen to, but, you know, I mean it's worth a shot, but I'm just saying that I think there's gonna be a real battle to get them to look at those indirect effects.

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

Are there scientific studies? I mean, there was a lot of talk about scientific studies. Are there scientific studies with control groups and..

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

I don't know about control groups, but I know that there have been studies in, the, there haven't been a lot of studies about specific – what do I want to say – but the, the dog behavior community is united in, the dog trainers and dog behaviorists are pretty united in understanding the value of off-leash recreation. There have been some studies that have shown, that were cited by Jean Donaldson in 2007, about, you know, with regards to aggression, whether it causes or helps aggression or causes aggression, that sort of thing.

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

But no control groups, or, I mean, it's an opinion about...

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Yeah, no, it's, it's both; it's both. Off hand I don't have a particular citation, but I do know that it's been referenced in, in, by the, by the professionals who are experts in the field.

COMMISSIONER RUSSO:

Commissioner Stephens, could you give me some additional information on the upcoming April 11 Board of Supervisors meeting? I wasn't aware of that until I heard it, and if you can just kind of expand on, on your understanding of what's going to happen.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Yeah, I don't know a lot about it. Supervisor Weiner, who represents the Castro area and Noe Valley, has called for a hearing on the impacts of the plan. I assume that he'll ask Rec & Park to come. He'll probably ask ACC to show up, and what do they see as potential impacts of this plan – of this, in particular the Preferred Alternative but probably, you know – the reason people are focusing on the Preferred Alternative is that that's the one that the GGNRA is saying that's what they want. And I think that..

COMMISSIONER RUSSO:

Which they consider balanced?

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

An average; it's considered to be an average between things as they are and no dogs.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

What? No.

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

The Preferred Alternative is right in the middle.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

No, it's their Preferred Alternative. They have, but..

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

But it's an average, though, is why it's..

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

No, not necessarily. It's what they decided matches what they feel are their a) priorities or their, what they want. I mean, if there's an area where they really don't want to have dogs, then they'll say we don't want them there. They may or may not have the evidence to support that and hopefully they don't make a decision without that evidence, although having read through this, I think there are a lot of cases where they make those kind of statements without the evidence to back it up.

But it's, the Preferred Alternative is not an average, it's their Preferred Alternative. The assumption is that will become their final..

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

It's not an average, but it's in the middle of other..

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

No. It's physically in the middle of the page, but that doesn't mean it's in the middle of...

COMMISSIONER KATZ:

And not always on every, not on every location – every location they treat it differently, so that they had a plan for each location, I think four plans, five plans, four?

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Five. Five plans.

COMMISSIONER KATZ:

A, B, C, D, E, yeah. Five plans for every location.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

One of which is the no-change.

COMMISSIONER KATZ:

One of which is no change, and the other four run the gamut. And they picked, picked from each, in each location they picked a different plan. So the Preferred Plan is different for every location.

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

Yeah, I understand that.

COMMISSIONER KATZ:

It's not right in the middle for, for all of them.

Let me just add – I just, and you mentioned the Land Use and Economic Development Committee is the committee that this is going to before at Supervisor Weiner's request, and we, I am meeting with Supervisor Weiner tomorrow and I believe Rec & Park will be meeting with him, too. And the city is looking at this. We are looking at a whole range of impacts and whether they've been addressed. I think, and I don't want to put words in your mouth, Commissioner Stephens, but I think you're trying to keep it within the purview of the Commission?

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Right.

COMMISSIONER KATZ:

By addressing the impact on dogs. And, you know, I don't know enough about the NEPA process to know whether they have a duty to consider that or not. I know I have been informed that they have a duty to consider other impacts that they have failed to consider, so that's, that's where, I think, we as city agencies have concerns.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

But getting also to your question, Susanna, is that the hearing will be whatever; you know, I mean, people will come in, obviously the Rec & Park, ACC will probably give statements, be asked questions, and there'll be public comment, that sort of thing. I don't know whether he has a specific resolution that he wants the Board to vote on. If he does not, I know that there are other Supervisors that have them in the wings waiting. He has expressed concern with the Preferred Alternative and especially concerns with how restrictive the off leash is with the cutting, you know decreasing by 90%. So it would, I think he wants, he wants to hear, the GGNRA will be there as well. It was originally scheduled for Monday and the GGNRA couldn't make it, and so they then rescheduled it to April 11. So, you know, it will be a chance for them to hear a lot of different viewpoints. I'm sure Audubon will be there talking about their concerns and, and you know, dog groups will be there, SPCA I'm sure will be there and talking, Marin

Humane, a lot of the groups will all have their opinions. I think the only ones that'll actually get specifically invited are gonna be the city departments, right?

COMMISSIONER KATZ:

I don't know that. I do know that when the city looked at this issue before, when the Board looked at this issue before, their concern at that time was I think, not dissimilar from the discussion we're having here is that perhaps the GGNRA did not complete a process that was without holes in it, and so that is, I think that's what the Board of Supervisors resolutions from 2001 indicated that they wanted a process that [ringing phone] – that would be mine. Sorry [laughs]. That the GGNRA wanted a process – sorry – that was complete, and again I'm not convinced that this, even with 2400 pages, I'm not convinced that it's completed.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

And I do think that it's appropriate for us to give input to the Board independent of, either before or after the Supervisors hearing. It's basically, I'm sure that a lot of people will be showing up, a lot of trainers and behaviorists will be showing up and making the same points that may have been made here as well, but I do think that it, it's, it's appropriate for us to, to do something at this meeting, and then it will just enter into their whole discussions.

COMMISSIONER RUSSO:

What would you see as a result if this commission did nothing? I mean, how would it change their result?

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

I think that that would indicate to the Board that this is not an issue they need to worry about, that if we do nothing, it would tell the Board that the impacts on dog behaviors and surrenders is not something that the GGNRA needs to have looked at because they didn't look at it in this and the fact, if we say they should and then we don't vote for it, then that's basically telling them that it's, it isn't important.

COMMISSIONER DENNY:

If I can just – having gone through it painstakingly and I probably caught something. For the, for the Commission, I, I think the Achilles heel of this whole document is in the section that says why we need to do this. Okay? And if you can't, and I, I think it's very weak. And anything after that chapter is superfluous, because what's changed? What, what, what's the real problem here? What, what, what, why do we need five different action plans on this? What's changed? They – I read the thing on why we need this and it was well, we want to ensure for the posterity of our kids in, you know, 500 hundred years that it'll be exactly as it was right now, and we want to make sure that – oh, safe, safety and health, safety and healthy environment, safety, fewer conflicts – what's, if you can get past that chapter and believe that that is, that they have put the argument forward that they really need to do this, then you have to start diving into the tables and, and figuring where _____ is going to be the best and all this, and I'm not downplaying that, but I, I just hope the Commissioners take a look at it and read that specifically over and over, why we need to do this. That's all I wanted to say.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Why the GGNRA needs to do this.

COMMISSIONER DENNY:

Right, yeah.

COMMISSIONER WAYNE:

Commissioner Stephens: I guess one of the things I'm unclear about in this is, usually in environmental reports there's various categories in which you give comments – you know, there's health and safety, there's biological

resources, you know, there's a whole – and, and it's not clear to me where, like if you're asking the Board of Supervisors to say it's insufficient in this particular category, where do, where do the issues around behavior and euthanasia fit? Does that make sense?

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Yeah, it actually fits in a category of community, and I think especially with regards to the surrenders and euthanasias, it's an impact on the surrounding community. The Crissy Field dog group has contracted with a NEPA lawyer and also a consulting firm about, that's diving into this and one of the things that they are very much looking at and looking into is the fact that they, when they talk about, I think it was the visitor use experience, that there's other definitions of it that they don't use that you can use, that would include things like, especially in the concept of community, and the, the, they don't look at impacts on the community of people who are there at the, in the, using the parks, and, and they should. They don't look at, but it's mostly, I think, with regards to the impact on surrounding, the surrounding community. And that, that's what I've been told the, the NEPA lawyers and everybody say that that's completely okay to do. The GGNRA *didn't* do it but that they really should have. Because it will have an impact on the community with regards to potential impacts on behavior and surrenders.

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

Any more discussion before moving forward with the vote?

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

The vote is still not exactly clear in terms of where it stops? Once again, can you..

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Oh it's basically the same as the agenda item with the thing "negative impacts on" or "do not consider potential negative impacts" and then just remove the lines "on city parks and," but the rest of it's the same.

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

We're moving forwards?

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

Okay.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Yes.

COMMISSIONER WAYNE:

And I have one more question: the numbers that are cited in here, and I haven't gotten through the whole report myself either. Did those come from the report – 75%, the 90% -- what's the source of those?

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

No, those are actually just, looking at the maps and looking at the different, the amount of changes that are made in the maps.

COMMISSIONER WAYNE

Okay, so you did, you basically kind of did a sketch analysis of that.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Yeah.

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

And on those maps, are those areas that are off leash now legal off-leash areas? Or they're used as off-leash?

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

No, those are where it's legal, according to the 1979 Pet Policy.

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

But..

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

That *is* the law of the GGNRA. That is the, where they are legally allowed off leash in the maps that show the Alternative A, which is the existing, no change – that's all legal off leash.

And, and the, I guess, where the, where the resolution stops and what we tell the Board of Supervisors is probably the, you know, all the background information that was included in the agenda item, which was included so that people who didn't know anything about the subject would know whether or not they wanted to come and talk about the issue – is not necessarily all that would included; it could be.

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

Okay, now we're gonna vote. So I think we should do a roll call – either we're yay or nay. Yay for the letter, nay against the letter.

Commissioner Gerrie?

COMMISSIONER GERRIE:

Nay.

COMMISSIONER ALDRIDGE:

Yay.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

I think you need to identify your, who you are [laughs]. Sorry.

COMMISSIONER GERRIE:

I know everyone's voices, so [laughs]

COMMISSIONER ALDRIDGE:

Jack Aldridge: For.

COMMISSIONER PAGE:

Geneva Page: For.

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

Andrea Brooks: For.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Sally Stephens: For.

COMMISSIONER HEMPHILL:

Pam Hemphill: Against.

COMMISSIONER RUSSO:

Susanna Russo: For.

COMMISSIONER BROOKS:

So the motion passes with 5 in favor and 2 opposed. [audience applause]

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS:

Thank you.