

Las Cruces City Council approves rules for soon-to-open dog park

By Steve Ramirez Sun-News reporter

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LAS CRUCES — City officials said Tuesday it is now just a matter of weeks before your pooch has a place all its own.

Construction is almost finished on a 55,258-square-foot dog park, on Hermosa Street just south of Meerscheidt Recreation Center and east of Maag Park. It will be the city's first park specifically designed for dogs when it is finished.

"I've seen what the park looks like and I'm excited about it," said Leslie Coltraine, a Las Cruces dog owner. "It's opening comes at a really good time of the year, when dogs really prefer being outside more. For my dog, the park is the perfect size. I think we're going to love it."

In anticipation of its opening, City Council approved rules and operational guidelines for the park at its meeting Monday.

Some of the rules that were unanimously adopted by the seven-member council include: the hours the park will be open to the public, from 6 a.m. until sunset; dogs must wear a collar and owners must be able to provide proof of vaccination if requested by police or animal control officers; puppies younger than four months will not be allowed in the park; and any dog that exhibits aggressive behavior must be leashed and immediately removed from the park.

City Parks Director Mark Johnston said dog owners will have to assume the bulk of responsibility for curbing their pets and making sure they adhere to park rules. But the park's location should help police and city officials to monitor park activities.

"The police training facility (just south of the park) and the parks office, both next door to the park, should be a help," Johnston said. "There are also groups who have a strong interest in the park and I anticipate that they'll also be a big help in monitoring it."

The park will not be grassed, but will have trees, a canopy for shade, a bench, and a water fountain that will include a spigot for dogs. The park will be fenced, and there are plans for limited parking.

"We're planning a grand opening ceremony sometime in the coming weeks," City Manager Terrence Moore said. "There are few issues still to be worked out, such as checking with the contractor's schedule for completion. But it is safe to say that the opening is only just a few weeks away."

Supporters of a dog park have been trying for more than two years to get one built in the city.

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Dog park

- The park will be 55,258 square feet, or a little more than 1.2 acres.
- The park is on Hermosa Street, just south of Meerscheidt Recreation Center.
- A \$150,000 state appropriation is paying for construction of the park.
- Several Las Cruces businesses have donated services to help build the park.
- Businesses and individuals have also donated trees.