



Legislation Text

File #: 21-0378, **Version:** 1

ITEM TITLE:

Discussion Item: Off-Leash Areas

SUBMITTED BY: Bart Hinkle, Chief of Police

FISCAL NOTES:

Expenditure Required: N/A

Unencumbered Balance: N/A

Funding Source: N/A

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

During the April 6th Council Meeting, a discussion around modifying Valdez Municipal Code 6.08.020 (Running at Large Prohibited) occurred after questions were raised as to why “E Collars” were not considered “restraint” for dogs. During that discussion, Animal Control was tasked with identifying trails or other areas that may be designated “off leash” areas and to bring a recommendation forward for a discussion.

Currently, Valdez Municipal Code 6.08.020 prohibits dogs from running at large, except for section “C” of that ordinance, which states “dogs may run freely in any area of the city in which both hunting and the discharge of firearms is permitted”. That section of the code is attached to this agenda statement for reference.

What is not included in that section of code is a map depicting those areas. Instead, a person must go to Valdez Municipal Code 9.32 (Weapons) for a narrative and map that identifies areas in which both hunting and the discharge of firearms is permitted. That section of the code has also been attached to this agenda statement for reference.

The other attachments consist of different maps depicting options for “off leash” areas, and are:

Attachment “Current Off Leash Law Areas” - Depicts, via blue hashmarks, those areas in which dogs are currently permitted to be off leash.

Attachment “Potential Off Leash Law Areas” - Includes the current blue hashmark areas, along with potential sites that Animal Control identified - via green hashmarks or outline- as viable off leash

areas.

Attachment “Additional Off Leash Law Areas” - Includes blue and green areas, as well as additional, but not recommended at this time, off leash areas (in purple).

Attachment “Suggested Off Leash Law Areas” - A combination of blue and green hashmarks representing the recommended off leash areas.

In formulating their recommendation, Animal Control considered the current usage of the areas - including whether it has become common practice for dogs to be off leash in the area anyhow- with other factors, such as accessibility, ability to adequately sign the areas as “off leash”, population density, and input from other City departments - namely Parks and Recreation.

Regardless of the outcome of the discussion, it is recommended that a map of the “off leash” areas be included in the Animal section of the code.

Proper signage should be posted around “off leash” areas - when practical, and the VMC should be updated to include a definition for the ordinance that mandates a dog must be under the control of the handler at ALL times. For example, “Under Control” *means an animal’s owner must simultaneously monitor, direct, and restrict an animal’s movement and activities in a humane manner so the animal does not harass a human or another animal.*

The attachments do not reflect any future seasonal dog parks which may be implemented by the City.

Animal Control staff will be present at the meeting to participate in the discussion.