

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

off leash policy - Baxter Woods

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: Gayl Anglin <ganglin65@gmail.com>

Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 2:29 PM

Thanks for your comments Gayl--I will make sure they are shared with the Parks Commission.

Take care,

Ethan

Ethan Hipple

Deputy Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

City of Portland

212 Canco Rd, Suite A

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207.808-5400

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www.portlandmaine.gov

Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 1:48 PM Gayl Anglin <ganglin65@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Ethan,

I received notice about the Parks Commission meeting this Thursday regarding the off-leash policy at Baxter Woods. Unfortunately, I am unable to attend due to another commitment, but wanted to at least send my input.

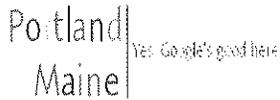
I am a Portland resident and dog lover. While I do not currently have a dog, I have had dogs most of my life and have always appreciated places where I could allow my dogs to run off leash. That being said, I knew the limits of my voice control with them and never had them in a place that would be disruptive to others or put them in a place where they could be injured or cause an accident. I have on three separate occasions since the beginning of this school year stopped to help people catch their errant dog who had run from Baxter Woods, on one occasion the dog was running in traffic. All three times the owners were exclaiming that "s/he never does this" however, all it takes is one time for a dog to get hit and/or cause an accident. Baxter Woods sits right on two major streets and is not fenced, which in and of itself does not lend it to being an off-leash park. Add to this, the level of voice command that is needed to keep a dog fully under control seems to often be interpreted liberally by dog owners.

I recommend that Baxter Woods require leashes for dogs, for both their safety and also for the general public, unless the city were to extend a fence around the entire border of the park, which does not seem feasible.

Best regards,

Gayl M. Anglin, Ph.D.
ganglin65@gmail.com

"Hungry man reach for the book, it is a weapon." - Bertolt Brecht



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Please keep dogs free in Baxter Woods!

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 3:44 PM

To: shambaugh@gwi.net

Cc: Justin Costa <jcosta@portlandmaine.gov>, Belinda Ray <bsr@portlandmaine.gov>, Spencer Thibodeau <sthibodeau@portlandmaine.gov>, Brian Batson <bbatson@portlandmaine.gov>, "Kimberly M. Cook" <kcook@portlandmaine.gov>, Pious Ali <pali@portlandmaine.gov>, Jill Duson <jduson@portlandmaine.gov>, "Mavodones, Nicholas" <nmm@portlandmaine.gov>, Ethan Strimling <estrimling@portlandmaine.gov>, Sally Deluca <sld@portlandmaine.gov>

Hi there Ben,

Thanks for the thoughtful comments and sorry to hear about the loss of your dog Sasha.

We will make sure the Parks Commission gets a copy of your comments for the meeting this Thursday.

Take care,

Ethan

Ethan Hipple

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On Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 2:33 PM <shambaugh@gwi.net> wrote:

March 1, 2019

Dear friends,

My dog Sasha died of old age a few months ago. She and I walked in Baxter Woods at least two times a day for 14 years. Baxter is just a block from my home and -- along with Portland High, Longfellow and Lincoln -- is a large part of what makes the Deering Neighborhood great. It was at Baxter Woods that I got to truly know my neighbors, catch up on people's lives, and take time to nourish my soul. This happened in many ways, because of connections made through people with dogs. Again and again, I knew the dog's name long before I knew the owner. Because the dogs were off leash, they were able to greet me as well as my dog, and we built community, one sniff and pet at a time. The pure joy of animals and owners freely wandering the woods is a gift and wonder to share. Though my dog is gone, going to Baxter woods every day fills me with joy.

Today I walked around Mackworth Island and made a point of visiting the cemetery of Baxter's many generations of Irish Setters. Yes, he loved birds. He also loved dogs and during all my time in Baxter woods, I have never seen the one bother the other. In fact, dogs keep the number of cats -- who do bother the birds -- to a minimum.

I was part of community conversations with the city regarding dogs in Baxter Woods that happened at the

Wilde Chapel a few years ago. As a result of those meetings, the city put in more trash cans to collect poop and the owners picked it up. Since then, the winter snows and annual "spring thaw" have been much cleaner – proof that the vast majority of dog owners are responsible and responsive and that we can work together, while still maintaining what is a treasure to us all.

Yes, there are rare occasions when a careless owner or poorly trained dog behave less than perfectly. These, however, are very limited and – as those folks don't seem to worry about rules or norms I do not think that new rules will change their behavior. They would, however, have a huge negative impact on the quality of life, the sense of community, and the joy that makes our neighborhood and our city special.

Thank you for keeping it as it is today – a gift to us all. Thank you for your continued great work on our behalf.

Sincerely,

Ben Shambaugh
147 Clinton Street
Portland, ME 04103
207 400-7516



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Baxter Woods

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: Christina Dalessio <cmd4567@gmail.com>

Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 3:46 PM

Hi Christina,
Thanks for your comments. I'll make sure the Parks Commission gets a copy.
See you on Thursday.

Ethan H

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On Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 2:50 PM Christina Dalessio <cmd4567@gmail.com> wrote:

Ethan,

After moving to Portland in 1994, I purchased a home within walking distance of Baxter Woods back in 2003 ... expressly so I would be able to walk my dog there off leash.

Over the past 16 years I have visited the park almost daily and have directly observed during that time that off leash dog walkers are in fact the most frequent, caring and responsible users of the park. We pick up after our dogs and we pick up trash left behind by other visitors such as students and families with kids. We are literally the heart and soul of Baxter Woods.

I'm told that you are concerned about ground birds. There has never been a ground bird population in this park since I moved to Portland 25 years ago, nor *would* there be if off-leash dogs were prohibited. There would still be people with kids and dogs walking everywhere in the park, not just on the trails, and there would still be people riding bikes through the park, large groups of students school running through the park, archeology groups digging holes and planting flags in the park, etc. The idea that prohibiting off-leash dogs would somehow prompt a miraculous ground bird revival at the park just doesn't make sense scientifically. The park already IS a bird sanctuary with many different species living there in concert with people and their pets. The dogs do not harm the birds, off-leash or on. In fact, watching and listening to the birds is one of the best parts of walking my dog there.

The tax-paying citizens of Deering/Rosemont/Deering Highlands/ Back Cove neighborhoods need space to run their dogs off-leash. There is simply no way to own a dog over 30 pounds and give it enough exercise on leash only. And other options around the city are not acceptable alternatives.

The woods behind Greenwood cemetery are remote, full of ticks and I do not feel safe walking there. There are literally homeless people living in tents back there. The Valley Street Dog Park is an unsanitary, filthy, dust bowl that is way too small to accommodate all the off leash dog walkers from our area of Portland. We need a place in in our neighborhood that we can walk to. And we have a perfectly good one. Please don't ruin it because of a few "squeaky wheels" who do not represent the majority of users.

In my opinion, the mindset of **exclusion** as a way to solve problems is really what's wrong with our country these days. Instead of **excluding** the people who are the most devoted and frequent users of the of the park, you should look for ways to find common ground and compromise among constituents. It's your job to work **with** us not against us.

See you Thursday.



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Meeting on Thursday

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: David Little <authorartist775@gmail.com>

Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 3:58 PM

Thanks for the comments David.
Take care,
Ethan

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On Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 1:52 PM David Little <authorartist775@gmail.com> wrote:
Hi Ethan. Sorry not to attend the meeting on Thursday.

I guess my issue with off-leash dogs in Baxter Woods is the multitude of dog doo deposits that lie hidden just off the trails. I can't tell you how many times I have stepped in dog shit while going off trail to look at a particular tree, pit and mound, view, and so on. Even setting up one's easel to paint in Baxter Woods can become unpleasant.

I have been wheeled around, and knocked over by dogs that don't obey voice commands or where the owner is out of sight.

I believe that were JPB alive today, he would be just fine with keeping dogs on leashes.

That's my 2 cents.
David Little
142 Brentwood St, Portland, Maine 04103



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Baxter Woods - public comment

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: Sarah Hilzinger Kellogg <sarah.h.kellogg@gmail.com>

Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 4:00 PM

Hi Sarah,
Thanks for the thoughtful comments. The program in Boulder looks very interesting and worth looking into.
I'll share your comments with the Parks Commission.
Take care,

E

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On Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 11:07 AM Sarah Hilzinger Kellogg <sarah.h.kellogg@gmail.com> wrote:

Hello Ethan,

I am writing to share my perspective on the Baxter Woods leash vs. no leash debate since I will be out of town this Thursday night.

I am someone who walks in Baxter Woods many mornings before work (irrespective of whether it is 9 or 90 degrees). In fact, we walk there so frequently that when my dog and I walk out the door of our house in the Back Cove, she takes me straight to Baxter Woods.

I can unequivocally say that the community of dog walkers that use the park is exceptional. We moved to Portland 3 years ago and the community of people that use the park as part of their daily routine are some of the most kind and welcoming people I have met as we've started to put down roots here. It is one of the examples I often cite when telling family/friends about how Portland is different than most cities: there is a degree of implicit trust the city imparts on its people to do the right thing, and it is not uptight or overly restrictive (particularly in contrast to bigger East Coast cities where we grew up/moved from). I think of Portland as a city that aims to strike the right balance between the Maine "frontier" spirit (channeling the type of mindset that is more pervasive Downeast) with the realities of a growing city.

I urge you to consider this balance, trusting your citizens to do what's right (while nudging them in the right direction as needed) and making the woods a place where the greatest number of people and wildlife can co-exist in peace. I am strongly of the mindset that moving from the status quo to a leash-only environment would be a detriment to a robust community, not to mention disband a group that I imagine inadvertently prevents nefarious activity.

On the point of nefarious activity - I think it is critical to be realistic about the state of drug use in the city. We also walk frequently in other wooded areas and have unfortunately had to deal with the aftermath of our dog finding drugs. If we assume the imposition of a leash law would make a large portion (if not all) of the Baxter Woods dog walking community to go elsewhere for their morning and evening (rain or shine) walks, its possible this could have unintended consequences on the safety of the woods. While I appreciate dog poo is

not a minor nuisance... we can all certainly agree that needles and edibles are a more acute safety issue. The community of dog walkers are out in the woods early in the morning and evening, when the park may otherwise be empty, and also the vast majority of us are picking up garbage as we go. To think that the existing community will continue to use the woods in this manner and to this degree (just with their dogs on leashes) is not realistic - we will go elsewhere. I urge you to fully consider what this will mean for how the woods WILL be used.

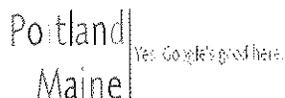
With this in mind, I feel strongly that there must be other ways to address the concerns that others have raised without jumping to a unilateral leash law. While I do not expect I have a full line of sight into the entire suite of concerns, here are just a few thoughts:

- On/off leash hours?
 - I am in full support of the neighboring schools feeling safe when they want to use the woods as outdoor exploratory space. I could fully understand and respect restricting a certain window of time during the school day where dogs must be on leash.
- Seasonal on/off leash?
 - I am not an expert, but I would expect ground bird nesting is particularly sensitive during certain times seasonally - restrictions that limit impact during sensitive times would also be entirely reasonable to me
- Bags/garbage bins?
 - I do not disagree that dog walkers can do a better job of picking up their dogs' poo. Bags and garbage cans at each entrance of the park can make a huge difference in this - there is 1 entrance without a garbage can, several without bags, and where bags are typically available they were not stocked most of this past winter.
- More publicity for park cleanup days?
 - One of the community members organizes this informally in the spring and fall, and a good group does get together to clean things up - but this type of effort may benefit from extra visibility (e.g., promotion by the city and/or Portland Trails)
- Off leash program?
 - I have heard some concern for walkers who do not have/like dogs feeling as if the off leash dogs are running wild and frightening. To address this, other cities have instituted off leash dog programs that allow dog owners that are responsible about off leash behavior to take advantage of it (rather than treat the woods like they are a "dog park"). Boulder (CO) is one example of a well established program that may be worth investigating, but the general model would be the cost of an off leash "tag" covers the cost of verifying that the dog has been trained to respond to basic off leash commands.

The easiest route forward would be to put in place a leash restriction and feel like the job is done. I urge you to take a route that endeavors to find a compromise on all fronts, which may be more challenging/more work, but also takes into account the positives that this community of dog walkers brings to Baxter Woods.

Thank you for your consideration!

Best,
Sarah Kellogg
908-399-9109



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Baxter Woods

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 4:40 PM

To: kevin@ktcole.net

Thanks Kevin, we will pass your comments on to the Parks Commission.

Take care,

Ethan

Ethan Hipple

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On Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 4:37 PM <ktcole@fairpoint.net> wrote:

Ethan, I'm not sure what's being suggested with respect to Baxter Woods. Unfortunately, I will be out of state when the meeting is to occur on Thursday, so I'm hoping I can add my two cents to the discussion via this e-mail.

Baxter Woods is one of the only really good off-leash areas in the city. I walk my dog there frequently. It's a pleasant stroll and I've not met anyone there who either caused a problem or expressed a complaint. The dogs almost always interact well with each other. I would be very sad to have the rules change to make the area less dog-friendly.

Thanks.

Kevin T. Cole

33 Fessenden Street



This email has been checked for viruses by Avast antivirus software.

www.avast.com



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Baxter Woods Leash Proposal

Carolyn Ehringhaus <carolyn.ehringhaus@gmail.com>
To: Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Wed, Mar 27, 2019 at 9:21 AM

Hello Ethan: I wrote to you last week regarding the proposal. After reading the materials from the links that you provided, I have written another letter for both you and the commission.

I had thought that the proposal to restrict dogs to leashes was due to negligent owners, particularly regarding waste disposal and dogs not being under voice control. Reading through the proposal documents, however, I see that the ecological report has major emphasis.

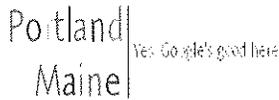
I would like to point out the following, keeping in mind the proposal's suggestion: *"Recreation use. Use trail cameras or other monitoring methods for fixed periods of time to quantify and describe recreation use and evaluate the potential impact of unleashed dogs on wildlife."*

1. Bird nesting: Regarding the ecological study, how many ground-nesting birds reside in or migrate to Baxter woods? I am not a bird expert, yet I do know that Baxter woods are not suitable for at least some of the more common New England ground nesters. We do have a diverse wildlife population, and I suspect that the dogs help to keep down some of the predators that kill birds, such as foxes.
2. Enforcement: With respect to the waste and voice control, signage is posted, yet nothing has been enforced. Additional patrolling and enforcing fines, possibly with the cameras suggested in the report, could quickly change behavior.
3. Previous incidents: As shown in the lengthy attachment documenting letters to the Park service, over a period of six years, there were actually very few letters concerning dog aggression incidents (again, monitoring can determine whether or not incidents occur with greater frequency in off-leash areas as compared to on-leash areas).
4. Alternatives: Baxter Woods is primarily a destination for local residents. It is not a "dog park" (Quarry or Valley St. are not options for many of us due to aggressive dogs and irresponsible owners). There is inadequate parking at these alternatives if Baxter users did switch, and neither Canco Rd. nor Evergreen are good options regarding space and/or parking. (Given the thicker growth behind Evergreen, wouldn't ground bird nesting be an issue?)
5. Dog waste: Lack of picking up has become a problem in Baxter woods and elsewhere. The PPH had an article about Hinckley Park (3/22/19) discussing this. Their Park ranger had planted 300 flags to encourage awareness and promote pickup prior to a predicted rain storm.

6. Lyme disease: In my 17 years of daily trail walking, including walking into growth to pick up waste, I have never found a tick. Given that Lyme disease is a serious health threat, the lack of tall grass and migrating deer in Baxter woods makes it a safer place for many residents and their dogs and/or children.
7. Safety: Prior to the woods becoming popular with dog owners, it was used by alcoholics, drug users, homeless people, and teenage partiers. I continue to pick up large quantities of broken glass, trying to keep the park clean and protect my dog's feet, as do other walkers. If dedicated dog walkers were not there daily taking care of the woods, glass and debris would only accumulate. Given the safety in numbers, there have not been incidents with aggressive humans, yet this could easily change without the presence of dogs.
8. Winter ice/falls: The paths have been covered with ice for much of 2018-2019 and recent winters due to the changing weather cycle. If dog walkers have to go elsewhere, the woods will be under-used much of the year. In addition, I have tried walking with my dog on leash under these conditions, and it is treacherous as even with cleats it is difficult to stabilize against the slightest pull. Many of the walkers are seniors, only adding to these potential human injury problems with increased risk of falling.
9. Quality of life: daily life for many of us has been enhanced greatly by being able to walk outdoors with our dog in Baxter Woods. Many of us walk to the woods and do not need to consume fossil fuels for transportation, and we value and take pride in this neighborhood asset.

I hope that, as a minimum, the council will decide to monitor the situation and will recommend increased patrolling before making any permanent changes. Although I care about wildlife, I think it is prudent to also consider resident quality of life.

Carolyn Ehringhaus
11 James St.
Portland, Maine 04013



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Baxter Woods On-Leash policy

Chelsea Malacara <chelsea.malacara@gmail.com>
To: Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Thu, Mar 28, 2019 at 10:50 AM

Thank you for the clarification.

On Thu, Mar 28, 2019 at 10:26 AM Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov> wrote:

Hi Chelsea,

Yes, if the rule change is approved, we would enforce the rule using existing fines. \$75 first offense, and goes up from there.

Unfortunately, we have limited funds for Park Rangers, so it would be enforced at strategic times, not 24/7.

Take care,

E

Ethan Hipple

Deputy Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

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On Wed, Mar 27, 2019 at 8:19 PM Chelsea Malacara <chelsea.malacara@gmail.com> wrote:

Ethan,

I just recently saw that there is going to be a council hearing on the proposed rule changes to Baxter Woods. Based on public concerns and most importantly, the ecological impact report, I fully support the decision to require dogs be on leash in Baxter Woods.

I was curious as to how the city intends on enforcing this rule? Will there be a fine, will there be new signage and rangers patrolling especially during peak times and the initial roll out?

Thank you for all your hard work.

Best,

Chelsea Malacara

--

Chelsea Malacara

chelsea.malacara@gmail.com

207-405-1009

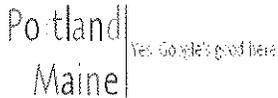
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--

Chelsea Malacara

chelsea.malacara@gmail.com

207-405-1009



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

parks 4/4, leash laws, and other concerns

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: D Leland <lelanddm@gmail.com>

Fri, Mar 29, 2019 at 9:05 AM

Yes, we are proposing that dogs in Baxter Woods are on a 25 foot leash. See attached memo for more information.

Take care,
E
Ethan Hipple
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On Thu, Mar 28, 2019 at 7:19 PM D Leland <lelanddm@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi - Thanks! I'm reading this as leashing IS going to be proposed. Right?

– Dawn

On Thu, Mar 28, 2019 at 10:20 AM Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov> wrote:

Thanks for your comments Dawn. I know it's a tough issue with strong feelings on both sides, so thanks for your efforts to find common ground.

I will share your comments with the Parks Commission.

Our primary concern here is abiding by the deed that calls for Baxter Woods to be maintained as sanctuary for wild birds. However, as you know, there are many properties within Portland where we do allow off-leash dogs, so this isn't an across the board policy change, it's just a change to how we manage this single property. We also hear from the public about dog safety issues at Baxter Woods.

You are correct that picking up feces is a separate, but important issue. I know you have been very instrumental in helping model positive behavior on that! We are working on enforcement, but with only a single full-time Park Ranger, we could use help from groups like yours, and we are always open to new ideas of how to increase enforcement.

We aren't proposing leash vs non leash times at Baxter Woods as that would address just the safety issues, not the underlying deed issues.

We currently have one full time Park Ranger and 4 seasonals that come on in the summer.

Hope this answers your questions.

Take care,

Ethan H

Ethan Hipple

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On Wed, Mar 27, 2019 at 3:01 PM D Leland <lelanddm@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Ethan,

I met you briefly some time ago at One Longfellow-- I do the Facebook page Responsible Dog Owners of Baxter... Please check out what I've been posting. I'm trying to strike a balance. Those who walk dogs there really do care about the park, the community it enhances, and having space for dogs to interact and run. And they're generally conscientious.

On the plus side

- It's a hub where we've gotten to meet others, and I have several friends I've met there.
- Some dog owners routinely pick up trash and beer cans, too.
- If drinking and drug deals go on, it's at night. There was an instance a year ago when one person saw some suspicious behavior and a group of us walked to the area and that seemed to be a deterrent to the people there. Then it occurred again, same thing.

Enforcement will always be with us

Enforcement is always an issue and it's not feasible to have park staff in there all the time.

- Some people didn't make a big effort over the winter to plow through a foot of snow into the trees to retrieve poop--and of course, that's where the kids go to do projects. The paths have also been littered with it.
- I've seen a couple men who have been unconcerned about picking up after their dogs or have been unpleasant in response to people not wanting dogs jumping on them or accosting their own dogs.
- Dog walkers have to be concerned about bikers who tear through the trails, often giving no warning, with little attention to whether people or dogs can get out of the way.
- We are adults and should know enough to behave--but we're talking about humans.

Some thoughts about leashing

I'm sure you know that most dog owners hate the idea but understand.

- Leashing won't stop people who won't pick up feces.

- What are the main issues that you/parks staff are hearing about? I know the environment is one. Is it any different than other parks? Worse? Better?
- If leashing is the goal, could there be consideration about off-leash times, such as 7-9 a.m. when dogs are most active, and use is greatest?
- What are the staffing and budget situations these days?

It would be lovely to have feedback that I could put on the FB page. Thanks so much.

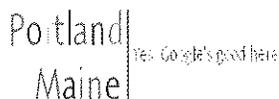
– *Dawn*

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Baxter Woods Off Leash Memo 3-7-19.pdf

142K



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Baxter Woods - Dogs Off Lease

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: Rick Lorello <rick@informationssystemsmc.com>

Thu, Mar 28, 2019 at 3:17 PM

Thanks for the comment Rick.
Take care,
Ethan
Ethan Hipple
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ehipple@portlandmaine.gov

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On Thu, Mar 28, 2019 at 1:35 PM Rick Lorello <rick@informationssystemsmc.com> wrote:

Hello

I don't agree with the request to make Baxter Woods a place to leash the dogs. No ground birds in the park.

--

Rick Lorello

Principal

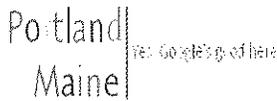
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Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Baxter Woods Dog Policy - Parks Commission April 4th Agenda

Brooks More <brooksmore@gmail.com>
To: Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Fri, Mar 29, 2019 at 1:29 PM

Thank you Ethan.

Have a great weekend.

Regards,
Brooks

On Fri, Mar 29, 2019 at 12:47 PM Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov> wrote:

Thanks for your thoughtful comments Brooks. I will share with the Parks Commission.

Thanks,

E

Ethan Hipple

Deputy Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

City of Portland

212 Canco Rd, Suite A

Portland, Maine 04103

207.808-5400

ehipple@portlandmaine.gov

www.portlandmaine.gov

Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Fri, Mar 29, 2019 at 12:42 PM Brooks More <brooksmore@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Ethan,

I saw your email address on some of the correspondence regarding Baxter Woods. So, I'm hoping that you can include these comments as part of the upcoming deliberations.

My name is Brooks More and I live at 7 Tremont St. in Portland. Our family owns a 2 year old dog and walk him every morning in Baxter Woods. In my experience, there is a consistent group of people that walk their dogs in Baxter every morning before work. For us, it is the only way for the dog to get a little bit of exercise in the morning (walking on-leash isn't really exercise for our dog).

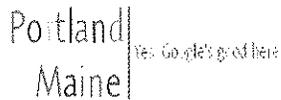
My sense of reading through the agenda materials is that the on-leash policy is inevitable and for good reasons. That being said, I'd like to ask if the Parks Commission could consider some compromises. For example, SoPo went through this type of issue with Willard Beach and decided to allow dogs off-leash for restricted hours and months. Rather than prohibit all off-leash activity in Baxter, would it be possible to limit it to a few hours in the morning? Say 6:00 a.m. to 8:30 or 9:00 a.m. After that window of time, all dogs would have to be on-leash. I realize that this may not address the bird sanctuary issues.

If all off-leash activity is prohibited, my expectation is that everyone will start driving over to the trails behind Evergreen. As a result of this consolidation of use, neighbors over there will then start complaining and it too will become off leash. If there is a chance for compromise, we would greatly appreciate it.

Thanks for your time and consideration.

Brooks

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Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Baxter Woods Leash Proposal

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: Jessica Marino <jbmarino77@gmail.com>

Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 9:39 AM

Thanks for your comments Jessica. I will pass them on to the Parks Commission for their meeting this Thursday. Take care,

Ethan

Ethan Hipple

Deputy Director

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On Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 8:37 AM Jessica Marino <jbmarino77@gmail.com> wrote:

Hello Ethan,

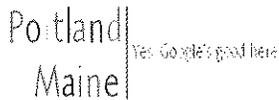
I'm not able to attend the meeting on Thursday night but wanted to share my thoughts. I've lived just blocks from Baxter Woods for 12 years and, even though I am a dog owner, I support enacting some kind of leash law and/or limiting times when dogs may be off leash there. I feel that I cannot safely walk my own dog there. I keep him on leash because he is a squirrel chaser and would gladly run into traffic after one. But we have had countless negative encounters where off leash dogs run up to him and get tangled in his leash. I have had those dog's owners scold me for bringing in a dog on a leash because "this is an off-leash dog park" and have had other times where an owner is nowhere to be found.

I have three children and when they were much younger their babysitter used to take them to the pond in the summer. A few years ago she stopped taking them because she felt like the number of dogs had increased and some were out of control and she didn't feel safe bringing the kids. One of my daughters did Cross Country running at Lincoln last year but after being chased by dogs during practice and during meets she did not sign up this year. There have been other cases where they have gone to Baxter Woods for science class and been approached by dogs with no owners in sight.

Most parents I know will not let their kids walk through Baxter Woods. Nobody will ride their bike there anymore.

I understand that Baxter Woods is a special place for dog owners who want to let their dogs off leash. But they are the minority. There is a huge community of people who cannot use those woods because of the influx of off-leash dogs. Baxter Woods is not a dog park. We have dog parks in Portland for those who want to let their dogs off leash. It is unfair that it is being used primarily by dog owners at a cost of the other neighborhood residents. It's a beautiful place and should be filled with walkers and bike riders. Nobody is saying dogs can't enjoy that park too, but everyone would be safer with those dogs on a leash. I would also support some kind of compromise; perhaps there could be times of day where dogs are allowed off leash and those times could be clearly marked.

Thank you for taking on this issue, which I know people feel passionately about on both sides.



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Dogs and Baxter Woods

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: Barbara Doughty <babsy1000@yahoo.com>

Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 8:24 AM

Thanks Barbara. I will share your comments with the Parks Commission.

Take care,

Ethan

Ethan Hipple

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On Sun, Mar 31, 2019 at 8:18 AM Barbara Doughty <babsy1000@yahoo.com> wrote:

Mr. Hipple:

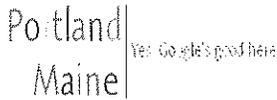
Please do not pass an ordinance that forces dogs to be on a leash in Baxter Woods. For years, I have enjoyed the beauty of that special place and especially seeing dogs running free and interacting with other dogs and humans.

This is a very special community of dog lovers. Incidents of bad behavior by dogs are so rare.

Governor Baxter proclaimed the Woods as a special place to be enjoyed by humans. As a dog lover himself, I can't believe he would have wanted to see them leashed. Doing so will deplete the Woods of many good folks who love to be there with their dog companions.

Barbara Doughty
35 Brook Road
Portland 84103

617-899-2583



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

re: Baxter Woods

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: J Godsey <joycegodsey@gmail.com>

Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 8:27 AM

Thanks for your comments Joyce. I will send along to Parks Commission.

Take care,

Ethan H

Ethan Hipple

Deputy Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

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Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Sat, Mar 30, 2019 at 11:04 AM J Godsey <joycegodsey@gmail.com> wrote:

I'm really aghast at this proposed leash restriction in Baxter Woods.

This is a case of a very tiny minority spoiling things for the majority of people.

We visit this park several times a week at various times of day.

And I have never experienced a negative incident in Baxter with my dog or other dogs!

This is a great place for dogs to learn to be social and learn to be off leash and under voice command. Fenced dog parks trap you and your dog with dogs that are unsocial and cannot behave off leash. I simply can't take my dog to a small fenced area, large unsocialized dogs tend to dominate smaller dogs.

It would be appropriate to TICKET people with unsocialized dogs who cause problems and ban those that are unsocialized. You KNOW that a proposed leash law will drive people with well behaved dogs from the park....and almost immediately be violated and you will end up trying identify people to ticket for letting their dogs BE dogs.

Nearly ALL walking and hiking trails on public land in the state are dog friendly. Imposing leash restrictions are usually dictated by the natural environment, to protect ground nesting birds or sensitive plantlife or erosion areas.

Imposing a leash restriction because a few people have caused problems is NOT a way to handle this situation.

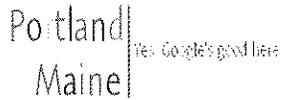
From Personal Experience:

My dog and I hike and walk all over the state.

Our few negative experiences are with TOURISTS DOGS who aren't socialized and are off leash and FENCED DOG PARKS where people who refused to properly train their BIG DOGS bring them to wrestle with other untrained big dogs. I have literally had to pick my dog up and FLEE!

We love Quarry Run but that's just too far to go very often. It's practically in Falmouth!

Joyce Godsey
joycegodsey@gmail.com
BookRepairSupply.com
82 Devon St
Portland, Maine 04102
978-918-6031



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Baxter Woods/Dogs

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: Mary Najarian <pickensmountainmama@gmail.com>

Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 8:29 AM

Thanks for your comments Mary. I will forward your comments to the Parks Commission.

Take care,

Ethan

Ethan Hipple

Deputy Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

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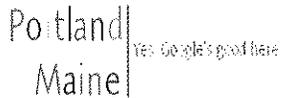
ehipple@portlandmaine.gov

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Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Sat, Mar 30, 2019 at 9:10 AM Mary Najarian <pickensmountainmama@gmail.com> wrote:

I understand there is a move on again to require dogs to be on leashes. I am strongly opposed. The woods make a healthy outlet for dogs to run, to be free to chase squirrels if so inclined or to chase each other. The owners enjoy a relaxing social time as well. Please do not impose this unnecessary restriction. Mary Najarian



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Baxter woods

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: Toji Perlman <tojiperlman@hotmail.com>

Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 8:30 AM

Thanks for the comments Toji. I will share your comments with the Parks Commission.

Thanks,

Ethan

Ethan Hipple

Deputy Director

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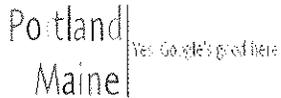
On Sat, Mar 30, 2019 at 4:02 PM Toji Perlman <tojiperlman@hotmail.com> wrote:

Hello,

I read the report concerning the leash laws in Baxter woods. I live next to the woods and walk my dogs there regularly. In the last 6 years, I haven't had one issue with unruly dogs. I think that the reason there have been more complaints than letters of support is because those who enjoy Baxter woods as it is don't feel the need to write to you. I think it would be a big loss for the residents around here to change the leash law. I also think it was largely due to more people using the the park to walk there dogs that pushed out those who where using the woods for sketchy purposes. Limiting its use for dog owners (mostly local families) not a good idea. Thank you for considering my thoughts.

Toji Perlman

Sent from iPad

**Ethan Hipple** <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

dog issues

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: D Leland <lelanddm@gmail.com>

Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 8:33 AM

Thanks Dawn. I'll make sure the Parks Commission sees your comments.
Take care,
Ethan

Ethan Hipple
Deputy Director
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www.portlandmaine.gov
Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Sun, Mar 31, 2019 at 1:28 PM D Leland <lelanddm@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Ethan

Maybe you can consider a couple things that came up:

- I tried out a 25' leash today. Did anyone ever actually do that? Dogs can't really play. Mine caught in brush beside the path and then tangled up and tripped another German shepherd and wrapped around people. The leash became covered in mud. It's laughably impractical and just got eye-rolls from people. Try to imagine 10 people with dogs on max. 25' leashes, trying to socialize their dogs.
- Ticks over at Evergreen appear to be an ongoing complaint and several folks mentioned that today. Is the city doing anything to eradicate them, aside from adding toxics to the environment? The deer aren't going away.
- Valley St. park is a poop swamp, a few responsible people come in the early morning, and many of those who do come sit on benches with cell phones and ignore dogs going off to the edges to poop. I've also found piles by the benches, and one day found **THREE** piles right by the gate.
- If you have a chance, check out (as I did a few weeks ago) the pathetic effort at a "dog park" over in Westbrook: A fenced square, with two broken gates, NO trees or shade or benches, and positioned at a busy intersection near Wm Clarke Dr. and the Hannaford. With snow a foot deep, nothing had been plowed. No one showed up while I was there.

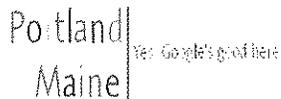
There was nothing about it that said "community."

I realize the decision has probably already been made by those who heard only a few overheated complaints over the years, and no happy messages from those of us who enjoy the space with dogs. It would be interesting to see the place a year off and review the trash left in the woods, which walkers now pick up.

Attached: Leash fun, kids, regular walkers who pick up trash, walkers scouting for dog poop off-path. Enjoy.

Thanks!

— *Dawn*



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

FYI: Baxter Woods - Fully eliminating the off-leash policy...

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: "Lesperance, Marc" <Marc.Lesperance@anthem.com>

Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 9:24 AM

Hi Marc,
Thanks for your thoughtful comments. I will send them along to the Parks Commission.
Take care,
Ethan
Ethan Hipple
Deputy Director
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212 Canco Rd, Suite A
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On Fri, Mar 29, 2019 at 8:59 PM Lesperance, Marc <Marc.Lesperance@anthem.com> wrote:

Mr. Hipple: I am writing to you out of my concern that the off-leash policy at Baxter Woods (BW) in Portland will be fully eliminated per the City's proposed ordinance change. My dog (Marco) and I are "regulars" in BW and I think I can speak for other "Regulars" in saying that - we all appreciate the hard work that the City staff and Portland Trails crews put in to keep BW safe, clean and gorgeous! First and foremost we dog owners realize how lucky we are to have BW as an off-leash place to enjoy with our canine loved ones! We respect and appreciate the City's role in protecting BW and honoring the deed governing how BW is to be maintained in perpetuity as a sanctuary for people and birds.

Marco and I walk in BW pretty much every day of the week, and even twice per day sometimes. Marco's ability to be off-leash in BW is a benefit to both he and I, as it allows us to each get the physical exercise and social experience we seek in the forest setting. Science shows that dogs are most fit and happy when they are allowed to sniff and mark territory freely. <http://digest.thefarmersdog.com/the-importance-of-letting-your-dog-sniff/> Requiring a 25ft. or shorter leash would drastically limit all dogs experiences in BW and generally make every one of our dogs lives (who love and need their woods romps) less rich and fulfilling.

If the off-leash allowance is fully eliminated - the thought of 25 ft. leashes being used by multiple dog owners during the same visit to BW causes me to envision people tripping over the long lines, dog leashes getting wrapped together potentially leading to dog fights, and dogs coiling their leashes around young trees or shrubs. People, likely dogs and possibly forest flora are going to get hurt! Even worse, with potentially dozens of leashed dogs around BW at peak use hours – passing runners, bikers or even pedestrians will be endangered. Requiring leashes on the BW setting will likely cause more problems than currently exist with the off-leash allowance.

Touching on the complaints and comments the City has purportedly received concerning off-leash dogs – I

have heard about and experienced first-hand some difficult situations in BW. I think I can speak to some people's concerns. While dog fights are not a common occurrence in BW, the worst I've seen happened when one of the dogs was actually on leash! Similarly – as I noted above – kids and people will not necessarily be safer in BW if a leash-law is enforced. Lastly on this topic - I've never heard of a dog biting a person in BW – so I trust that is not an argument for enacting a full time leash requirement. As for kids or other pedestrians being fearful of dogs – we handlers need to be aware of those situations and typically remove our dogs from the setting as needed. This too is not a reason to disallow off-leash dogs.

Looking at the history of Baxter Woods, I recall an initiative in the mid-1990s to ban dogs, and more recently in 2014, when citizen complaints caused the City to rethink the leash rules for BW. The City has considered leash rules before. But if you go back to the original intent, you may already know that both Mayor Baxter and Governor Baxter – namesakes of the BW park - were huge dog and animal lovers! You can see evidence of this at their Pet Cemetery on Mackworth Island – where a dozen or so dogs, horses and even cats I think are interred. While the BW Deed may not mention dogs – the Baxter's allowed their dogs a free run of their homestead on Mackworth Island. I believe the Baxter's would wholeheartedly support the current off-leash ordinance at BW. While there is no mention of dogs in the BW Deed, likely because Portland had no leash laws back in the 1940's - the Deed clearly disallows HORSES in BW and refers to BW as a bird sanctuary. I cannot imagine there is any evidence that ground-nesting or ground-feeding birds have been adversely impacted by off leash dogs in BW. Squirrels perhaps – but birds have not been threatened by the presence of dogs in BW in recent memory. I do not feel birds can be used as a reason to keep dogs on leashes in BW!

In closing I am ALL for keeping the BW off-leash/voice-command rules as is, but can live with an alternative or a compromise. I would suggest allowing dogs to be off-leash during certain hours in the morning and evening (e.g. 7-9am and 4-6pm per se) during the weekdays, with longer off-leash hours on weekends (say 7-10am and 4-7pm). I urge the City to reconsider fully eliminating the off-leash allowance in a wholesale manner! Allowing dogs to be off-leash for certain hours is a good compromise I think, and one that all impacted parties can find some agreement with.

Thanks, Marc

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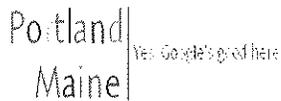
Marc Lesperance, 103 Candlewyck Terrace, Portland, ME
04102

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marc.lesperance@anthem.com

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Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Baxter Woods leash/off leash issue

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: Shannon Wong <shannonmwong@hotmail.com>

Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 11:10 AM

Thanks for your comments Shannon. I will pass along to the Parks Commission.

Take care,

E

Ethan Hipple

Deputy Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

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ehipple@portlandmaine.gov

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On Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 11:08 AM Shannon Wong <shannonmwong@hotmail.com> wrote:

Dear Ethan Hipple,

As a lifelong citizen of Portland and a life long dog owner I'm passionate that we need to have access to off leash opportunities for our pets. Portland has such a great network of trails and park spaces yet, not all of them offer off leash opportunities. As a resident in the Highlands neighborhood, a great joy has been walking with my family and dog to Baxter Wood and letting him run off leash to socialize with other people and dogs. For me, this is one of the reasons Portland is such a great place to live. Our outside spaces are shared spaces, and Baxter Woods is a particular gem. These spaces are becoming fewer and fewer, so I urge you to help to find a way that this park can be maintained as a shared space for humans and off leash dogs.

I understand that the issue of owners not picking up after their pets is a concern. Perhaps, as in South Portland, a ranger could patrol and place flags where there are incidences and volunteer responsible dog owners can organize days to go in and pick up the mess. I know I'd be more than willing to go to the woods and spend an hour once a month to help maintain the cleanliness.

Baxter Woods has offered a special spot for my dog to socialize with other dogs, which is vital for his wellness, simultaneously offering opportunities for me to be social with other dog owners too which can sometimes be rare in the winter months. It's a space that the community can gather for a common purpose. This is a niche need for some people.

Just know that the site is such a valuable space for our particular family, and I know we are not alone. I'm sure we can come up with a way to compromise usage so everyone wins. Please don't take away the freedom of all the because of the short fallings of a few.

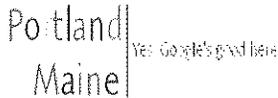
My best,

Shannon Wong

Shannon Wong
Massage & Pottery
Portland, ME
207-329-4386

<http://www.shannonmwong.com> (massage)

<http://www.wongpottery.com> (pottery)



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Comments regarding the Proposed Changes to Baxter Woods Off-Leash Rules

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 2:27 PM

To: Don Caton <dcaton@maine.rr.com>

Cc: "Mavodones, Nicholas" <nmm@portlandmaine.gov>, Justin Costa <jcosta@portlandmaine.gov>, "Kimberly M. Cook" <kcook@portlandmaine.gov>

Thanks for your thoughtful comments Don. I will share them with the Parks Commission.

Take care,

Ethan

Ethan Hipple

Deputy Director

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www.portlandmaine.gov

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On Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 1:04 PM Don Caton <dcaton@maine.rr.com> wrote:

My understanding is that you are encouraging public comment for the proposed changes that will require all dogs in Baxter Woods to be on a leash 25 foot or less. I have lived in the same house within walking a short distance of Baxter's Woods for 43 years. My children are the 5th generation of my wife's family that have lived in our house and 2 of them still live in the Deering Center neighborhood with children of their own. I have walked 4 generations of dogs in these woods and I am opposed to such a change:

- The large majority of dog owners are responsible and are self-policing. Each time that the Parks Dept. has brought up issues, things have improved. I doubt that adding another restriction will change the actions of any 'bad actors', only harm the responsible owners and their dogs.
- Baxter Wood's is a neighborhood meeting place for many of these dog owners, including a lot of our older residents. They walk together or meet at the field to let their dogs play, while they enjoy the outdoors and each other's company. Can you imagine what it will be like if groups of 2 or more dog owners try to gather or work together and have a discussion while their dogs play on 25 foot leashes? Someone will get hurt or just as bad: the conversations and gatherings of neighbors will just stop happening. Is that what the Parks & Rec Dept. is trying to achieve?
- During winter, the ice on the paths in the woods is a hazard. Walkers use "grippers" on their boots just to try to stand up. Adding leashes to the mix will cause injuries and force older residents to stop walking there completely.
- I find the argument regarding 'not qualifying' as a bird sanctuary to be a weak and laughable attempt to come up with reasons to leash the dogs. Has the Park & Rec Dept ever provided any education regarding any birds, let alone ground nesting birds, when they nest, or how to protect these nests the woods? There are signs describing trees in the woods - I've nothing to identify birds or that these woods are a bird sanctuary.

You also state that there alternatives for off-leash. This is a lot like what the federal government did to the American Indians: slowly taking away all the available good land and forcing us to less than desirable alternatives: the woods behind Evergreen Cemetery have a lot of ledge and are more dangerous in the winter time when it is icy. The cemetery is gated and locked, it's hours are 8 am – 4:30 pm: open too late for people that work and not open late enough for those that want to walk after work. The other options mentioned are not very desirable.

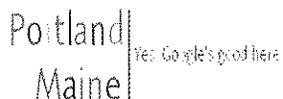
I have to admit that I do agree with the fact that these woods should be available for EVERYONE. I feel bad for those that are just plain scared of any dogs, but I don't agree that the majority of dog owners should be penalized for a few bad actors. Perhaps, you could look at some compromise, something similar to East End Beach: off-leash only before 9am and after 3:30pm (which as it turns out is when most dog owners walk their dogs there). It's not perfect, but it would provide plenty of worry-free access time for families with children, those afraid of dogs, school children.

I appreciate your willingness to request comments and hope your committee and the city council can consider the needs of the dog owners.

Don Caton

14 Holly St

Portland, ME 04103



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Baxter Woods Neighborhood Meeting

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: Eva Humeniuk <evahumeniuk@gmail.com>

Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 2:28 PM

Thanks for your comments Eva. I will share with the Parks Commission.

Take care,

Ethan

Ethan Hipple

Deputy Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

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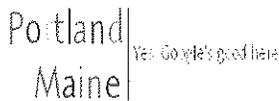
On Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 1:09 PM Eva Humeniuk <evahumeniuk@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Ethan, I won't be able to attend the neighborhood meeting on Baxter Woods but wanted to share my email thoughts and suggest a solution.

I walk through these woods quite often with my young children and pup. While, we have not had any bad experiences with dogs off leash I have no doubt others have.

One solution is that, perhaps the woods could have off leash "hours", similar to our beaches likes Willard. Perhaps a time early in the morning (before 7am) and evenings (after 7pm) dogs can be off leash but all other times dogs must be on a leash, (or whatever time everyone thinks is best).

Thank You, Eva



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Dogs in Baxter Woods

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Fri, Mar 29, 2019 at 12:54 PM

To: Michael Mertaugh <michaelmertaugh@gmail.com>

Cc: Sally Deluca <SLD@portlandmaine.gov>, "Waxman, Dory" <mermaidst@gmail.com>, Allison Carroll <acarroll@portlandmaine.gov>

Thanks Michael. Sorry to hear about the incident.

So the language we will use will be what is currently in Chapter 5 of City Code--we are simply proposing to move Baxter Woods from the "off leash/voice control" section (5.15-1(e)) to the "25 foot leash" section (5-15.1(c)) <http://www.portlandmaine.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1069/Chapter-5-Animals-and-Fowl---Revised-9182017>

See you on Thursday,

E

Ethan Hipple

Deputy Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

City of Portland

212 Canco Rd, Suite A

Portland, Maine 04103

207.808-5400

ehipple@portlandmaine.gov

www.portlandmaine.gov

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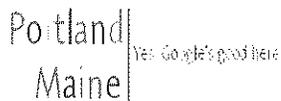
On Thu, Mar 28, 2019 at 1:37 PM Michael Mertaugh <michaelmertaugh@gmail.com> wrote:

Ethan,

I'd like to add my voice to the comments on dogs in Baxter Woods. I frequently ride my bicycle through Baxter Woods enroute to Pat's market on Stevens Avenue or the fish market on Forest Avenue. I was attacked by an off-leash dog there when I was bicycling on the path recently, and the dog owner limply explained: "I'm sorry, my dog freaks out over bicycles." I have seen many other examples of unwelcome behavior by dogs there.

I heartily support the proposed change, with a slight change in wording. I propose: "Dogs in Baxter woods are to be restrained at all times on a leash not exceeding 25 feet in length." This wording makes it clear that the dog owner is responsible for **restraining** his or her dog, which means much more than allowing any behavior within a 25 foot radius. We have all seen examples of aggressive behavior by dogs that are on leash but not restrained by their owners.

Michael



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Baxter Woods, Dogs, etc.

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 12:59 PM

To: Adam Victor <adam_victor@yahoo.com>

Thanks for the comments Adam--I'll pass along to the Parks Commission.

We do receive a lot of citizen comment on off-leash dogs at Baxter Woods--more than for any other open space in the city.

I'll see you at the meeting, and hopefully can answer some of your questions there.

Take care,

Ethan

Ethan Hipple

Deputy Director

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Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 11:21 AM Adam Victor <adam_victor@yahoo.com> wrote:

Hi, Ethan,

I understand you've received some complaints about unruly dogs in the Woods. I'd be curious as to the volume of complaints -- I've spent a good amount of time there myself (have lived in the neighborhood since 2003), and certainly have seen some rambunctiousness, excitement, and exuberance amongst the dogs — they are dogs, after all — but I've never witnessed danger, attacks, or people cowering in fear. I'm sure it's happened, but it's certainly not characteristic of the space, the dogs, the owners, or even the non-dog-owning bystanders (like myself).

I noted that this morning's Press Herald article does not reference dog attacks, danger, or anything of the like. It does mention that a pregnant woman was "nearly knocked over," and the owner wasn't "apologetic." OK...um...well, that doesn't really sound like a crisis. Also, some middle school students were "terrified" of dogs. That sounds more like a people problem than a dog problem.

I understand the bird issues, but are we at the stage where if there there are negative consequences for any person, or group of birds, we need to make this kind of change? A change that impacts not only the hundreds of dogs and taxpayers who enjoy the park daily, but also the surrounding community?

If you've ever been in Baxter Woods at 7 o'clock in the morning, there is life, there is conversation, there is joy, there is animation, and there is community. People who look out for each other and their dogs. And it is all incredibly enhanced by the untethered nature of both dog and owner.

The net effect of making this change will be a reduction in the park's usage. It will become more sparse, less trafficked, less safe, and less of a community gathering place. Is that what Portland citizens want? I hope not.

See you Thursday night, and thanks for your consideration.

Adam Victor
224 Coyle St.
Portland, ME 04103
207-766-6807



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Baxter Woods for dogs

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Wed, Apr 3, 2019 at 2:25 PM

To: Caroline Robinson <robinc@portlandschools.org>

CC!! Good to hear from you, and thanks for the comments. I'll pass them on to the Parks Commission.

It is a tough one--I've got many friends and neighbors (you included!) who love to use it as an off-leash dog area, but we are trying to balance that with other uses and the deed restrictions to preserve it as a bird sanctuary. Definitely a good case study of the challenges of balancing the multiple uses of public land.

Take care,

E

Ethan Hipple

Deputy Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

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www.portlandmaine.gov

Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Tue, Apr 2, 2019 at 10:26 PM Caroline Robinson <robinc@portlandschools.org> wrote:

Howdy!!!!

I hear you are the one sifting through everyone's perspective on the old Baxter Woods leash question!

As a massive fan of Baxter Woods (Lewis and I walk George in there twice a day!) I want to say that it's my favorite part of our neighborhood and watching George gallop around with his buddies is often the best part of my day. I am definitely in the 'please keep off leash permission there' camp.

The community of dog owners there is pretty awesome, very responsive and responsible, and fun to walk with.

That being said....I utterly respect cross country runners who want to not have dogs get excited when they fly through!

Good luck with this one....it's dear to the heart of many!

CC

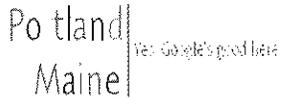
--

CC Davies Robinson
English Teacher
Senior Humanities Team
Casco Bay High School

"Love allows understanding to dawn, and understanding is precious. Where you are understood, you are at home." -John O'Donohue

***** Please Note: *****

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Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Compteplation of leash law in Baxter Woods

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: Lita Semrau <lita@portcityarch.com>

Tue, Apr 2, 2019 at 2:24 PM

Hi Lita,
I've attached a memo that we wrote to the Parks Commission that helps explain the reasoning. Hope it helps answer your questions. FYI... We allow off-leash dogs on approximately 495 acres in Portland. Valley St Dog Park and Quarry Run account for about 6 acres together, and Baxter Woods is 29 acres.

Take care,
Ethan
Ethan Hipple
Deputy Director
Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department
City of Portland
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207.808-5400
ehipple@portlandmaine.gov

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Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Tue, Apr 2, 2019 at 12:21 PM Lita Semrau <lita@portcityarch.com> wrote:

Just want to know what would motivate even considering a leash law in Baxter Woods – there are already many place in Portland where leashes are required and very few where dogs can run . . . please do not mention the dog park below Maine Med (that place is overused and too small for an adequate walk for me) and we need to more spaces for humans and their dogs to be able to take in a little exercise at their own pace . . . las

Lita Semrau, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP

Port City Architecture

65 Newbury Street

Portland, ME 04101

p: 207.761.9000

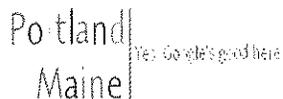
w: www.portcityarch.com





Baxter Woods Off Leash Memo 3-7-19.pdf

142K



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Baxter Woods off-leash issue

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: Rochelle Spiegel <rochellespiegel@gmail.com>

Tue, Apr 2, 2019 at 2:26 PM

Thanks for your comments Rochelle. I will pass them on to the Parks Commission.

Take care,

Ethan

Ethan Hipple

Deputy Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

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ehipple@portlandmaine.gov

www.portlandmaine.gov

Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Tue, Apr 2, 2019 at 10:00 AM Rochelle Spiegel <rochellespiegel@gmail.com> wrote:

Hello Mr. Hipple,

I am writing to you because I am a small dog owner and I regularly take my dog off-leash into beautiful Baxter Woods. My husband and I bought our house in the neighborhood to live within walking distance of Baxter Woods. We are responsible dog owners and have always respected this place. Our dog is very well trained and always stays with 15 feet of us. We are also nature lovers and love admiring all of the trees, shrubs, wildflowers, mushrooms, mosses, and birds up in the trees.

We walk there in the mornings before work and I know our presence there has made many strange and drugged-out homeless people feel very uncomfortable. I've seen them move on and pack up their sleeping bags because they see us coming. I've even called the police many times to report tents and crazy people acting oddly. We've even scared away groups of teenagers smoking pot on their way to school. Responsible and respectful dog owners make a huge difference in this park.

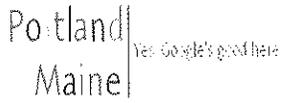
My elderly neighbor has lived in this neighborhood her whole life and will not set foot into Baxter, not because of the dogs, but because that is where the "Bad people hang out", because she only knows that drug addicts used to hang out in there. I try to tell her it's not like that anymore but she is terrified of being mugged or raped by a drug addict living in there.

If this park becomes a leash-only park I'm afraid it will turn into a homeless and druggie haven again, especially on the back trails. Personally, my husband and I would no longer use this park and I know many of us responsible people would just go somewhere else where our dog can run and play with other dogs.

Maybe a better solution would be to have a multi-use park by setting times of the day that are off-leash and leash only, like Willard Beach. This way everyone could use the park.

Please do not take this place from us.

Respectfully,
Rochelle Spiegel
503-307-4091



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Baxter Woods public comment

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: Marissa Bodnar <marissabodnar@gmail.com>

Tue, Apr 2, 2019 at 3:54 PM

Thanks for the comments Marissa--we'll forward on to the Parks Commission.

Thanks,

Ethan

Ethan Hipple

Deputy Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

City of Portland

212 Canco Rd, Suite A

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ehipple@portlandmaine.gov

www.portlandmaine.gov

Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Tue, Apr 2, 2019 at 1:39 PM Marissa Bodnar <marissabodnar@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Ethan,

I'm writing to weigh in on the proposed leash rule in Baxter Woods. I can't make it to the hearing on Thursday, but am hoping the committee will take this under consideration with the other public comments.

As a dog owner who visits these woods multiple times a week, every week, I strongly oppose this proposal. I can't really speak to the bird sanctuary part of the memo, but do feel it's important to share my experiences regarding "safety concerns."

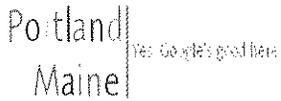
I've been bringing my rescue dog there for more than three years and have never worried for my safety or his. I don't doubt there are occasional incidents – sometimes a dog gets excited and jumps up on someone – but that can also happen anywhere, leash or no leash, rules or no rules. From my experience, the suggestion that dogs in Baxter Woods are "unruly" or a threat to people or other dogs is completely absurd. In fact, I actually see owners of less friendly dogs taking the preemptive step of putting them on a leash.

As a former resident of Deering Center, I can tell you this is the heart of the neighborhood for any dog owner. It's a wonderful community of people and dogs. I've made friends in these woods and so has my dog. The location is still five minutes away from our home and allows us to meet up with other folks to get some activity in, especially on busy work days and the part of the year when daylight is in short supply.

In my opinion, a 25-foot leash just makes for a tangled mess of a walk with brush and trees right along the trails, and as dogs greet each other. The questions I'm left with: How will this be enforced? And if passed, is the city willing to look at making other locations available for off-leash dogs?

Thanks for your time.

Marissa Bodnar (& Atlas)
207-653-3446.



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Baxter Woods - in support of off leash

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: Adrienne Fine <adrienne.fine@gmail.com>

Wed, Apr 3, 2019 at 2:07 PM

Hi Adrienne,
Thanks for your comments, we will share with the Parks Commission.
Take care,
Ethan
Ethan Hipple
Deputy Director
Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department
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212 Canco Rd, Suite A
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207.808-5400
ehipple@portlandmaine.gov

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Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Wed, Apr 3, 2019 at 2:05 PM Adrienne Fine <adrienne.fine@gmail.com> wrote:

Hello Ethan,

Thank you for accepting emails prior to the meeting in regards to the Baxter Woods dog leash issue. I just wanted to email you as a citizen and neighbor to Baxter Woods (27 Florence St, Portland) to say that I am in support of continuing to allow dogs to be off lease within Baxter woods.

In general I see users of Baxter woods following the current rules of voice command, not letting your dog out of sight, and picking up after them (even off trail). It would be a shame to take away one of the few areas that dogs are allowed off leash within the City limits, especially one that is walking distance from many neighborhoods. Forcing dog owners who chose to buy homes in dog friendly neighborhoods walking distance to Baxter Woods to now drive to the City limits to get to other off leash areas is not favorable. Portland is a dog friendly City and removing this central off leash area would change that perception.

I appreciate your time on this matter.

Thank you,
Adrienne Fine



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Baxter Woods

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: Mollie Bash <mbash2@gmail.com>

Wed, Apr 3, 2019 at 3:50 PM

Thanks for the comments Mollie. We will share with the Parks Commission.

Take care,
Ethan

Ethan Hipple
Deputy Director
Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department
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212 Canco Rd, Suite A
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207.808-5400
ehipple@portlandmaine.gov

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On Wed, Apr 3, 2019 at 9:05 AM Mollie Bash <mbash2@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Mr Hipple,

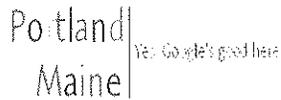
I am writing to you as a citizen of Portland who visits Baxter Woods daily with her two dogs. I live in Portland and am a Portland taxpayer. Baxter Woods is a fantastic off leash space for dogs to be able to play in Portland. As someone who visits daily, changing the leash law would have a significant negative impact on my quality of life as Portland citizen. Every dog owner that I have encountered there is conscientious about watching their dogs and cleaning up after them. There are very few places like Baxter Woods in Portland available for dogs and there are many more places for people to walk if they do not wish to be around dogs.

A far bigger concern in terms of the park being family friendly is the amount of broken glass that can be found in the Woods. This is something that I pick up whenever I see it and I know other people walking their dogs do the same. This will continue to be a bigger problem for children and families if the number of people walking their dogs decreases due to this proposed law.

I am unable to attend the meeting tomorrow due to work but it would be extremely disappointing to lose this space.

Thank you,
Mollie Goldenberg

Sent from my iPhone



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Baxter Woods

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: Debra Flynn <debra_ann@maine.usa.com>

Wed, Apr 3, 2019 at 4:03 PM

Thanks very much Debra, I will make sure the Parks Commission sees your comments.

See you tomorrow,

Ethan

Ethan Hipple

Deputy Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

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ehipple@portlandmaine.gov

www.portlandmaine.gov

Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 11:07 AM Debra Flynn <debra_ann@maine.usa.com> wrote:

Hello,

I live on Hartley Street and I wanted to let you know that I will be there at the meeting to support the city in it's obligation as a trustee of Baxter Woods.

This is not only a public safety issue, a waste issue but dogs that are loose are detrimental to the environment. Baby birds learning to fly as well as other wildlife are at risk from loose dogs.

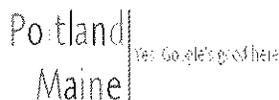
We have 2 greyhounds that have been attacked in the day in these woods, so much that they now refuse to enter or go near them during the day when there are loose dogs. We hear people all the time calling or whistling for their loose dogs. We've had loose dogs come into our yard, no person in sight or dogs come after us walking on the sidewalk past the woods. This isn't a dog park, yet people seem to forget how to be responsible for their pet.

Thank you for addressing this issue of Baxter Woods not being in compliance with the deed.

Debra Ann Gorneault

--

Sent from my Android phone with mail.com Mail. Please excuse my brevity.



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Baxter Woods leash law change

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: Anne Callender <anne@whipplecallender.com>

Wed, Apr 3, 2019 at 4:06 PM

Hi Anne,
Thanks for your comments and thoughtful letter. I will make sure the Parks Commission gets a copy.
Take care,
Ethan
Ethan Hipple
Deputy Director
Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department
City of Portland
212 Canco Rd, Suite A
Portland, Maine 04103
207.808-5400
ehipple@portlandmaine.gov

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Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Tue, Apr 2, 2019 at 3:03 PM Anne Callender <anne@whipplecallender.com> wrote:

Hello Ethan -

Please include my letter enclosed with the comments on proposed changes to the leash law in Baxter Woods.

I have enjoyed walking my dog in Baxter Woods for the past 15 months (at least twice a day) and have had many wonderful experiences and relationships because of it. Your proposal will deny me and my husband the happiness that we enjoy by having a place near by to let our dog run. Dogs bring a lot of joy and comfort to humans, and they are a big part of a healthy life. Your proposal will impact my life negatively.

Sincerely,
Anne Callender

April 1, 2019

Mr Ethan Hipple
Deputy Director
Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department
City of Portland
212 Canco Road, Suite A
Portland, ME 04103

RE: Baxter Woods Off-leash Policy

Dear Mr. Hipple -

I am disappointed to read your recommendation of having dogs leashed in Baxter Woods. The study commissioned by the City solely looks at the use of the Woods from an ecological assessment bias that puts more weight on the “sanctuary for wild birds” than it does on the “benefit of the people of Portland for public recreational purposes”.

I am frustrated that staff has not taken the time to survey users of Baxter Woods and appears to be heavily influenced by complaints rather than observing those who regularly use it and keep it vibrant. If you did, you would find that the regular users have formed a community that enjoys seeing each other on a regular basis for walks and while allowing their dogs to play. This might sound like a joke, but I used to have regular walks with a Rabbi, a Priest and a professed Communist, and found that we would enjoy each other’s company discussing a wide range of topics. None of us would have ever had that opportunity to meet and form such a meaningful relationship if it wasn’t for this park.

If the dog owners of Portland knew that we had to regularly write comments to staff about our love and joy of walking with and meeting other people in our community in Baxter Woods, we would fill your in box on a daily basis. The majority of the users are responsible in keeping their dogs under watchful eyes, picking up their feces, and keeping the play under control. The park has allowed us to socialize our dogs as well as ourselves. For over 15 years, I have enjoyed the benefits of this park, it seems capricious to change the rules now.

I disagree that there ample access to other open spaces for dogs to run free in Portland. Baxter Woods proximity to 3 streets has an advantage for my safety. I would not be comfortable walking alone in Evergreen Woods because of its lack of visibility and proximity from habituated areas. The same can be said for Canco Woods, and Valley Street doesn’t present itself with a way for me to get exercise in unison. There are more dogs than children in the blocks surrounding Baxter Woods and it provides a welcomed break from walking dogs on leashes on the street.

In this era of disconnectedness, Baxter Woods has given me a way to connect with my neighbors and form bonds with my community that aren't available to me in any other form. Introducing leashes into the park will make it difficult to have the same interactions. Dogs behave differently on leashes when interacting with other dogs. Some appear more aggressive to protect their owners and themselves since they can't retreat to assess the situation. Dogs that enjoy playing with each other will get tangled up in leashes. Twenty-five foot leashes threaten to entangle more humans and do bodily harm.

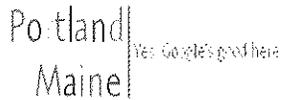
I respectfully request that you and the Parks Commission consider that the benefit for the people of Portland and leave the off leash provision in place. The report did not find that this park had any high-value plant or wildlife habitats. There isn't a lack of wildlife in Baxter Woods with its owls, woodpeckers, hawks, raccoons, squirrels, chipmunks, skunks, foxes and opossums. Evergreen Cemetery with its larger acreage and less light pollution is a greater draw for migrating birds. In 1946 when this land was deeded to the city, dogs could run free without much fear of being hit by cars or being lost or stolen. My mother's dog would walk her to school in the morning, return at lunch to walk her home, and repeat the exercise again at the end of the day. Those days are long gone and dog owners would like to have places to allow them to play with their dogs off leash. There is a big need and desire for these types of spaces and they should be accommodated in similar fashion to providing ballfields for another portion of the population.

Governor Baxter was a tremendous dog fan and I have a hard time believing that he won't have left the woods to the dogs if he knew how limited the options would be for them to roam free and play today.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Anne Callender and Dash the springer spaniel
138 Pleasant Ave
Portland ME 04103



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Keep Baxter Woods off-leash!

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>
To: Stephan Spiegel <stephan@stephanspiegel.com>

Wed, Apr 3, 2019 at 4:35 PM

Thanks for your comments Stephan, I'll get them to the Parks Commission.

Take care,

Ethan

Ethan Hipple

Deputy Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

City of Portland

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207.808-5400

ehipple@portlandmaine.gov

www.portlandmaine.gov

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On Wed, Apr 3, 2019 at 4:19 PM Stephan Spiegel <stephan@stephanspiegel.com> wrote:

Dear Mr. Hipple,

I'm writing to voice my strong opposition to the proposal to revoke the off-leash status of Baxter Woods.

I'm both a dog walker and a property owner. I walk my dog almost daily at Baxter Woods. While having to take my dog elsewhere for off-leash activity would be an inconvenience, I'm much more concerned about what the rule change would do to the value of my property.

My wife and I bought our house three years ago. We specifically wanted a home within walking distance to Baxter Woods, because of its status as an off-leash area. We paid significantly over asking for our home, in large part because of its location, and I know we're not the only home buyers in our neighborhood for whom this is the case.

Some of our long-time neighbors have not set foot in Baxter Woods since the 80s or 90s. They are afraid, not of dogs, but of "shady people" who supposedly hang out there. Having never seen anyone of that description in Baxter Woods, it's clear to me that the presence of dog walkers keeps drug users and urban campers out. In fact, some of the wooded areas immediately adjacent to Baxter Woods, on private property and thus off-limits to dog walkers, show signs of recently inhabited encampments.

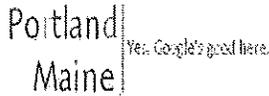
To summarize, I believe banning off-leash dogs from Baxter Woods will lower the surrounding property values in two ways: One, by making the area less desirable to home buyers who are also dog owners, and two, by making the woods themselves more attractive to drug users and homeless people, with the ensuing rise in crime and refuse.

Please don't allow the unattainable "unspoiled" woods imagined by some who would use it once or twice a year ruin it for those of us who use it daily, and to take money out of the pockets of all of us who own property around Baxter Woods!

Regards,

Stephan Spiegel

151 Prospect Street
Portland ME, 04103



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Fwd: Baxter Woods concerns

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Thu, Jan 10, 2019 at 4:39 PM

To: Chelsea Malacara <chelsea.malacara@gmail.com>

Cc: Sally Deluca <sld@portlandmaine.gov>, Ethan Owens <eowens@portlandmaine.gov>, Matthew Coleman <mcoleman@portlandmaine.gov>, Joe Dumais <jdumais@portlandmaine.gov>, Jeff Tarling <jst@portlandmaine.gov>

Hi Chelsea,
Ethan Owens forwarded me your email...

Sorry to hear about your dog encounters at Baxter Woods. We are currently evaluating our leash policy at Baxter Woods. We do have a recommendation from our ecologist consultant that dogs be limited to on-leash so that we can comply with our deed restrictions to maintain Baxter Woods as a bird sanctuary. And anecdotally, we do receive many complaints of aggressive off-leash dogs in Baxter Woods. It is a complicated issue, with many emotions on all sides, so we don't take it lightly.

We will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of our current policy and report out to Parks Commission on any new recommendations. Ultimately, City Council would need to approve any proposed change to Chapter 5 of city code that regulates dogs on public property.

Feel free to let me know if you have any other questions or background info.

Take care,
Ethan

Ethan Hipple
Deputy Director
Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department
City of Portland
212 Canco Rd, Suite A
Portland, Maine 04103
o: 207.808-5400
ehipple@portlandmaine.gov

www.portlandmaine.gov
Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Ethan Owens** <eowens@portlandmaine.gov>

Date: Wed, Jan 9, 2019 at 10:21 AM

Subject: Fwd: Baxter Woods concerns

To: Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>, Joe Dumais <jdumais@portlandmaine.gov>, Matt Coleman <mcoleman@portlandmaine.gov>, Tarling, Jeff <jst@portlandmaine.gov>

For you guys

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Chelsea Malacara** <chelsea.malacara@maine.edu>

Date: Wed, Jan 9, 2019 at 9:50 AM

Subject: Baxter Woods concerns

To: <eowens@portlandmaine.gov>

Good Morning,

I wanted to reach out as a member of the Deering Center community and a commissioner on the Portland Parks Commission. Last summer there was talk about monitoring bird activity in Baxter Woods and possibly reevaluating whether or not Baxter Woods should be an off leash park.

As a dog owner myself, I never bring my dog there. The amount of dog bags seems to pile up and of more concern is the number of times myself or my dog has been accosted by other off leash dogs who are not well behaved.

I am currently pregnant and went for a solo walk, without my dog, through the park this morning knowing it wouldn't be busy. While it wasn't busy, I had two scary dog encounters. The first, two dogs came running at me and one jumped high, nearly knocked me over, and scratched my leg. The owner nonchalantly said "yeah the black one still jumps" and kept walking. Then about 5 minutes later, another dog approached me growling, looking like it was ready to bite. Again, another unapologetic owner just said "he's fine."

As someone who is passionate about park preservation, accessibility, wildlife, and dogs, I am curious about what progress or conversations, if any have recently taken place about changing the status of Baxter Woods but also changing rules about off leash dogs and having some type of enforcement. I would be supportive of turning a portion of Baxter Woods into an dog park but as it stands, with such a small footprint and irresponsible dog owner, I don't understand why it's still off leash.

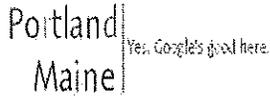
I hope you can shed some light on this matter.

Best,

Chelsea Malacara

--

Ethan Owens CPRP, CPSI, AOLCP
Parks Assistant Director, Athletic Facilities and Playground/Courts Manager
City of Portland - Parks, Recreation and Facilities Management Dept.
212 Canco Road Portland, Maine 04103 ~ USA
207-808-5400 eowens@portlandmaine.gov



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Fwd: Baxter Woods

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Tue, Oct 10, 2017 at 5:15 PM

To: jackson.mcmann@maine.edu, Mike Murray <msm@portlandmaine.gov>

Hi Jackson,

Thanks for your inquiry. We have an ongoing city-wide park sign project, and Baxter will receive new signs as well. We developed special language for signs at Baxter to address dogs-at-large issues. They are currently in production at the sign company and will be up within a couple weeks of receiving them from the sign company.

Take care,
Ethan

Ethan Hipple, CPRP
Parks Director
City of Portland
212 Canco Rd.
Portland, Maine 04103
o: 207.808-5400
ehipple@portlandmaine.gov

www.portlandmaine.gov
Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

----- Forwarded message -----
From: **Mike Murray** <msm@portlandmaine.gov>
Date: Tue, Oct 10, 2017 at 10:59 AM
Subject: Fwd: Baxter Woods
To: Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Can you reach out to Mr. McMann on schedule?

Mike Murray
Assistant to the City Manager
City of Portland
389 Congress Street
Portland, ME 04101
207.756.8288

----- Forwarded message -----
From: **Jackson McMann** <jackson.mcmann@maine.edu>
Date: Sun, Oct 8, 2017 at 6:47 PM
Subject: Re: Baxter Woods
To: Mike Murray <msm@portlandmaine.gov>

Good evening,

Today in Baxter Woods I witnessed a bike that was moving very fast hit a dog. The dog was a little shaken up, but overall both the dog and the biker were okay. There are still no signs up. Signs could have prevented that from happening today. Please let me know if you still plan on putting up signs.

On Mon, Sep 11, 2017 at 1:20 PM, Mike Murray <msm@portlandmaine.gov> wrote:
To All,

Parks staff has recently been meeting on this very subject and will be installing signs at both entrances to Baxter Woods outlining current policy and expectations.

Mike Murray
Assistant to the City Manager
City of Portland
389 Congress Street
Portland, ME 04101
207.756.8288

On Mon, Sep 11, 2017 at 8:28 AM, Ethan Strimling <estrimling@portlandmaine.gov> wrote:
Thanks for the note. I have cc'd staff to have them look into this issue.

On Mon, Sep 11, 2017 at 8:24 AM Jackson McMann <jackson.mcmann@maine.edu> wrote:
Good morning,

My name is Jackson McMann and I have lived in Portland for all 22 years of my life. First, I want to say thank you for your career so far as a public official for our wonderful city. You are representing us well, and many of us appreciate what you have done.

I am emailing you to bring to your attention a problem in the heart of Deering: Baxter Woods. This beautiful community area is full of good people and friendly vibes, but there have been some issues surrounding dogs there. Dogs are allowed off-leash here, yet some still get into disputes over how much "off-leash" is allowed. Many bikers and runners get frustrated with people who are just letting their dogs run around. There are also incidences of small children who do not know how to act around dogs (e.g. running around letting the dogs chase them and then screaming when the dog gets a little excited), thus further causing problems. I have yet to meet an unfriendly dog in this community. What I have met, though, is a woman who is terrified of dogs yet continues to walk through Baxter Woods yelling at dog owners to keep their pets away from her.

Baxter Woods is a convenient area for dogs and their owners to take a stroll through nature in a place that is more known for its city environment. Being dog-friendly is a staple of this neighborhood and part of what makes it such a family-centered community. What I am asking is that a sign gets put at the entrance of the woods. Something that gives a friendly warning about off-leash dogs in the areas. There is also a beautiful, on-leash cemetery across the street with plenty of walking/biking paths for those who do not want any contact with dogs.

There is no reason that both bikers and off-leash dogs cannot get along. We each have to do our part by being aware of each other and properly training our pets. Either way, thank you for taking the time to read this.

Sincerely,

A Concerned Resident

—
Ethan Strimling
Mayor, Portland
389 Congress Street
Portland, ME 04101
207-874-8941

Notice: Under Maine law, documents - including e-mails - in the possession of public officials or city employees about government business may be classified as public records. There are very few exceptions. As a result, please be advised that what is written in an e-mail could be released to the public and/or the media if requested.



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

February with Parks, Recreation & Facilities

Stacey Dand <swd@portlandmaine.gov>
To: Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Thu, Feb 16, 2017 at 3:19 PM

FYI, just a comment on Baxter woods

~~~~~  
Stacey Willis Dand  
Marketing Consultant  
City of Portland -- Public Assembly Facilities Division  
P: 207.808.5436  
E: swd@portlandmaine.gov

----- Forwarded message -----  
From: **Kevin Donoghue** <kjdonoghue@gmail.com>  
Date: Thu, Feb 16, 2017 at 1:36 PM  
Subject: Re: February with Parks, Recreation & Facilities  
To: "Portland Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department" <swd@portlandmaine.gov>

Love the newsletter. I've found Baxter Woods to be pretty poor for skiing with kids as it's essentially become an off-leash dog park.

[Quoted text hidden]  
[Quoted text hidden]

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This email was sent to kjdonoghue@gmail.com  
*why did I get this?* unsubscribe from this list update subscription preferences  
Recreation Department, City of Portland, Maine · 134 Congress St · Suite 2 · Portland, Me 04103 · USA

0

#4611363 (<https://seeclickfix.com/issues/4611363>)

www.esri.com) | Esri, HERE, Garmin, INCREMENT P, NOAA, USGS  
43.6726907770178, -70.2883749661866

**Replace Leash Law Signs!**

Created Date: 06/27/2018 1:16 PM

86 Concord Street Portland, Maine

**Details**

Replace Leash Law Signs!: I am a dog owner in Deering Center. I reported this issue last year and received no help. All of the leash law signs are either gone or illegible. Recently there have been several aggressive dogs off leash that have attacked othe...

*This request has no associated secondary questions.*

1 2

### Comments

- All
- Public Only
- Internal Only

|                                                                                                 |                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Category:<br><b>Replace Sign</b>                                                                | <a href="#">Recategorize</a>   |
| Status:<br><b>Acknowledged</b>                                                                  | <a href="#">Change Status</a>  |
| Assigned to:<br><b>Public Works</b>                                                             | <a href="#">Assign</a>         |
| Due Date:<br><b>07/19/2018</b>                                                                  | <a href="#">Change Due Dat</a> |
| SLA Expires at:<br><b>07/19/2018</b>                                                            |                                |
| Priority:<br><b>Normal</b>                                                                      | <a href="#">Prioritize</a>     |
| ( <a href="https://seeclickfix.com/issues/4611363">https://seeclickfix.com/issues/4611363</a> ) |                                |

### Status Log

|                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Opened:</b>       | 06/27/2018 1:16 PM |
| <b>Acknowledged:</b> | 06/27/2018 3:17 PM |

### Integration Info

|                      |            |
|----------------------|------------|
| <b>Cityworks AMS</b> |            |
| <b>Next poll at:</b> | in an hour |
| <b>Status:</b>       | Succeeded  |
| <b>Remote ID:</b>    | 69152      |



**Concord St Resident**   
(<https://seeclickfix.com/users/1568725>) | Registered User

Opened

Replace Leash Law Signs!: I am a dog owner in Deering Center. I reported this issue last year and received no help. All of the leash law signs are either gone or illegible. Recently there have been several aggressive dogs off leash that have attacked other dogs, cats, and even children! This is no longer just a Baxter Woods issue, the majority of incidents that I have seen were near Concord/Norwood. Please put up new signs and replace the ones that are unreadable. If not, I fear that you will have a dead dog, cat, or even child on your hands. I'll look forward to seeing swift action. Thank you.

06/27/2018 1:16 PM



**Fix It! Portland**   
(<https://seeclickfix.com/users/873807>) | Verified Official

Assignment

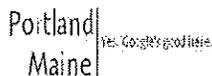
Fix It! Portland assigned this issue to Public Works

06/27/2018 3:17 PM

Check integration

1/11/2019

City of Portland Mail - Fwd: RE: Baxter Woods



Jeff Tarling <jst@portlandmaine.gov>

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**Fwd: RE: Baxter Woods**

1 message

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Jeff Tarling <JST@portlandmaine.gov>  
To: jst@gapps.portlandmaine.gov

Fri, Jan 11, 2019 at 11:24 AM

>>> Randy Billings <rbillings@mainetoday.com> 4/15/2014 12:09 PM >>>

Thanks for forward, Jeff. But could you please forward the original emails? I would like to reach out to these people. If you need me to file a formal Freedom of Access Act request, I would be more than happy to do so; just let me know.

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**From:** Jeff Tarling [mailto:JST@portlandmaine.gov]  
**Sent:** Friday, April 11, 2014 12:20 PM  
**To:** Randy Billings  
**Cc:** Joe Dumais; Troy Moon  
**Subject:** Re: Baxter Woods

Hi Randy -

Attached our Mayor Baxter Woods park information, including the dedication plaque, MBW brochure which includes a brief description of the prescribed uses by the donor, Governor Percival Baxter, the 1936 Park map, & a draft of a possible new sign that could help educate visitors to the park (the sign mockup was donated by a frequent visitor to the park and dog owner / sign graphic professional).

Baxter Woods has a variety of uses / visitors including - hiking / walking, mountain biking, nature viewing of trees, flora & fauna; outdoor environmental education, and visitors with dogs. While all uses are up in Baxter Woods as it is in all of Portland's

1/11/2019

City of Portland Mail - Fwd: RE: Baxter Woods

park system, dog use seems to increased exponentially due to popularity. As with any use, for example if the current dog visits were switched with say mountain biking we would likely hear from dog walkers or other groups that there are too much of that activity. Problematic dog visits seem to be limited to small numbers but indicative of the overall use increase.

In the email below also included the requested recent complaints received. In a nutshell - the park has many types of uses and visitors. Mayor Baxter Woods is unique due to donor guidelines or conditions set in the deed to the City by Governor Baxter. "A sanctuary for Wild Birds" was one of the primary uses along with a "held in trust for the people of Portland as a Municipal Forest and Park for public recreational and educational purposes..." kept in a natural state and as a sanctuary for wild birds", the deed mentions use of pedestrians and horses in the use. (see the attached brochure)

I cc'd Troy Moon and Joe Dumais who may have more information on parks & policy etc. More details soon on our proposed public meeting.

Jeff

>>> Randy Billings <[rbillings@mainetoday.com](mailto:rbillings@mainetoday.com)> 4/11/2014 9:43 AM >>>

Hi Jeff,

This is a follow-up to our conversation. If you could please send me whatever background material, including the complaints the city has received, about dogs in Baxter Woods, I would greatly appreciate it.

Randy Billings

---

4/2/14

1/11/2019

City of Portland Mail - Fwd: RE: Baxter Woods

Jeff:

I hope the early spring is treating you well. I took my 6th grade students to Baxter Woods this morning and once again encountered the problem of many off-leash dogs. Many of our students who come from immigrant and refugee families are terrified of dogs. Extremely terrified of them. Despite my coaching every time we head to Baxter to stay still if a dog is coming at them, most run in fear and the dog chases them thinking it is a game. Once again, I had a boy in tears today, terrified, hiding behind a tree crying. I asked the seemingly oblivious dog owner to please keep the dog from chasing our students. I did not see any action on his part. There was a small girl walking the woods today with her family, huddling next to her mom scared when she saw a different pair of off-leash dogs in the forest. I saw these same dogs poop in the forest and the dog owner do nothing about it. Actually, he wasn't even watching the dogs as they were running in the direction of the family. Just about every time I take students to the woods we encounter these problems many times throughout the day, particularly with my morning classes. I understand it is difficult balancing the desires of dog owners with the other community uses of the space, however, I am wondering where the conversation is at regarding dogs in the woods. Is there an expectation that dogs need to be on-leash? If so, could we add some signage about this and enforce it? I would really like to use the woods this spring and want to find ways for it to be a positive experience for all of my students. Aside from the dog issues, the students had a blast today and asked to go to the woods for the rest of our science classes for the year.

Any help you could offer is much appreciated.

Thank you,  
6th Grade Science  
Lincoln Middle School

=====  
=====

12/15/13

Hoping you can help keep; there's talk in the Deering hood that the schools are attempting to enforce a leash law in Baxter woods. All of the doggy wood hood over here are concerned! These woods are our daily stomping grounds and we want to keep them leash free for our pups to pounce and play.

We've heard it's being sent to the council for a vote...could you message me when you see it up on the council agenda...we plan to organize against this.

Also, wondering if you could help guide me...I'd like to get a copy of Baxter's deed to the city for this patch of wood...how do I go about finding it????

=====  
=====

1/11/2019

City of Portland Mail - Fwd: RE: Baxter Woods

9/13/13

Hello,

I obtained your email from Jamie Parker, who was returning a message I left regarding my recent experiences at Baxter Woods park off of Forest Ave. He suggested I forward my comments and concerns to you.

I have been frequenting that park for about two years since moving to Portland. Since spring has arrived however, it has become more and more something of a glorified dog park where various breeds run around unleashed and well beyond the means of their owners reach. I usually visit with my 4 year old who is unfortunately terrified of dogs after having been bitten, yet even if she wasn't afraid, I myself would not like to be caught unawares by the several dogs who inevitably will run up to us while we walk the paths. Owners usually beckon their pets to no avail and they cannot grab them when they are 10-15 feet ahead and quite frequently sometimes show no wish to contain them. I almost always get the supposed reassurance that their dogs 'are really friendly' or that they 'love children'.

I must admit, it's not my desire to please strangers' dogs. For the sake of their happiness and freedom, my particular family, and I believe many others, are negatively affected while visiting what should be a peaceful slice of nature. The dogs eagerly sniff, lick, jump and prod. I am forced to quickly pick up my daughter as she freezes in fear and hides behind me. Sometimes with a drink in my hand or other items, this isn't possible and I shouldn't have to do this. I always immediately inform them my daughter is afraid of dogs and they usually apologize and maybe try to go after their dog, but the damage is done and increasingly my daughter is afraid of who's around the corner and I'm more and more angered, to the point I looked up the park website, obtained the number and left a message that Jamie kindly answered.

The rules of the park clearly state the dog must be leashed OR under voice command, which I take to mean heeding carefully their owner's commands. This is almost never the case. These are animals after all and are eager to explore, and who can blame them when their owners put their needs before other people. I don't believe Gov. Baxter intended these lands to be an animal park. It should be the exception not the norm to see an unleashed dog, especially throughout trails that meander and are sometimes well disguised with summer foliage.

My daughter and I love to identify plants, leaves and wild edibles and we're genuinely on edge to get on our knees and do so, when several dogs in a half hour period will come in contact with us in a way that invades our private time and personal space. It could be a small breed, but we have come across a Great Dane two weeks ago who was unleashed. It is extremely selfish and entirely intentional that owners unleash their dogs; the dogs are almost always leashed entering the park (of course due to traffic), they are then set free to have their fun once under cover of trees. There have been only two occasions where I have been upset enough to vocalize my feelings to the owners themselves and they weren't well received because for some reason it's seen as abnormal to not want to greet every unknown dog with cheer. Not everyone is a dog lover. Humans rights should come before animals. Again, if it was an occasional

1/11/2019

City of Portland Mail - Fwd: RE: Baxter Woods

occurrence I would not think twice, however my daughter has been enrolled in a local preschool, Roots-N-Shoots on nearby Clinton Ave. and part of their curriculum is to regularly visit Baxter Woods. I would be very angered to know that this is still an issue while toddlers are exploring the woods. There are several places in Portland where dog owners may take their pets for their pleasure. Not every natural space should automatically be one. It's not exclusive to Baxter Woods; even the Eastern Promenade is experiencing a lot of unleashed dogs running up and down the hills just adjacent to a children's playground. However, it's more of an issue when as I mentioned the trails and paths are significantly more hidden.

I appreciate your reading these concerns. If you would like to contact me for any reason, please do so here or at 978-489-4982. Thank you again.

Regards,

Yael

Staff writer

Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram

Desk: 207-791-6346

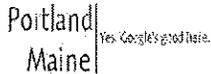
Cell: 207-615-5271

Twitter | Facebook

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1/11/2019

City of Portland Mail - Fwd: Re: Yes to dogs in the woods - an idea!



Jeff Tarling <jst@portlandmaine.gov>

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**Fwd: Re: Yes to dogs in the woods - an idea!**

1 message

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Jeff Tarling <JST@portlandmaine.gov>  
To: jst@gapps.portlandmaine.gov

Fri, Jan 11, 2019 at 11:43 AM

>>> Ben and Shari Shambaugh <shambaugh@gwi.net> 5/5/2014 5:45 PM >>>

Hi Jeff,

As you may have noticed, Baxter woods is looking great these days. Dog owners are listening and they care about their woods, their city, and fellow Portlandians! I have a suggestion, which is to keep the rules as they are (allowing dogs off leash) and enforce them. At \$250 a fine for not picking up after your dog, the city staffer will pay for their summer job many times over -- and if the person shows up at random times and issues fines, people will get the hint. After a few summer months, it will not be needed any more and will not cost the city anything or take valuable city council and citizen involvement time!

At the same time, I would put signs and a trash can at the entrance most used by the neighborhood, the entrance on James Street.

Thanks for listening  
Ben Shambaugh

Feb 11, 2014 02:13:51 PM, shambaugh@gwi.net wrote:

>  
> Thanks Jeff. I just ran into our mutual friend Norm Buttrick who gave me the gist of what you said. Thank you for your care and oversight of the forests of Portland! I would enjoy a walk through with you some time. Let's try to find a time that works.

>  
>  
> All the best,  
> Ben Shambaugh  
> 761-1569

on Feb 10, 2014, Jeff Tarling <JST@portlandmaine.gov> wrote:

>  
>  
> Hi Ben -

First, thanks for visiting 'Mayor Baxter Woods' so frequently, that is exactly the intent of Percival Baxter

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ik=5cb7043df0&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-f%3A1622383044896611723&simpl=msg-f%3A1622383044896611723>

1/3

1/11/2019

City of Portland Mail - Fwd: Re: Yes to dogs in the woods - an ideal

and role of having a forest in the city.

In the past few weeks Forestry crews have been removing invasive Norway Maple trees in Baxter Woods. Our top two primary goals in managing the trees at Mayor Baxter Woods is safety and keeping the woods as 'natural' as possible. The tree removal mentioned targeted Norway Maples as they will tend to overtake or out compete the native Red & White Oaks, Yellow Birch and Beech trees. (They likely seeded into the park from trees planted along Stevens Avenue.)

Recently in January the students at McAuley High School began working on a survey for Hemlock Woolly Adelgid another exotic pest from 'away' that threatens our native Hemlock trees which make up the largest tree type in the woods. Unfortunately the pest was found the first day. Thus our work at removing the Norway Maples to remove the seed source to hopefully keep the Norway Maples from spreading into new areas if we loose our Hemlocks.

I would be glad to meet you at the park someday for a walk. Also attached some Baxter maps & information. The first one is the View of Deering from 1886 where you can see the old 'Forest Home', the 1932 map of the woods, 'Forest Home', our recent brochure of the park.

Thanks,

>Jeff Tarling

Info on Norway Maples -  
[http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/invasive\\_plants/weeds/norway-maple.pdf](http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/invasive_plants/weeds/norway-maple.pdf)

>

>>>> Cheryl Leeman <cal4161@yahoo.com> 2/7/2014 7:43 AM >>>

Good morning, Ben. thank you for your thoughtful comments regarding Baxter Woods. It is indeed one of the jewels of the city's park system. By copy of this email, I am asking Jeff Tarling, City Arborist to respond to your concerns. Appreciate hearing from you. Best, Cheryl

>

>

On Wednesday, February 5, 2014 6:38 PM, Ben and Shari Shambaugh <shambaugh@gwi.net> wrote:

>

>Dear Cheryl,

Thank you for your continued great work on behalf of all of us!

I am writing with a question about Baxter Woods. Like many in Deering, I am in Baxter Woods not once but several times a day with my dog (walking or today on cross-country skis!). It is a treasure for the neighborhood and the city and for me a place of spiritual solace and connection with nature, neighbors, and new friends. I am pleased that Baxter woods is well cared for, with bridges, paths, and recently sand added when walkways were icy.

1/11/2019

City of Portland Mail - Fwd: Re: Yes to dogs in the woods - an ideal

My question is about a series of tree cutting over the past few weeks. I understand needing to thin for the health of the woods. This, however, seems excessive and contrary to Mayor Baxter's intention for this special place. I have looked and have found no notice or other explanation, only more and more red dots - an ominous portent of more cutting to come. Do you know what is planned? Is there anyway that this could be shared with the users of the park?

Thank you much. Hope to see you around.

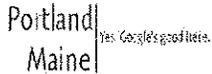
Ben Shambaugh  
147 Clinton Street  
761-1569  
(You may remember me as the dean from St. Luke's Cathedral)

>Notice: Under Maine law, documents - including e-mails - in the possession of public officials or city employees about government business may be classified as public records. There are very few exceptions. As a result, please be advised that what is written in an e-mail could be released to the public and/or the media if requested.

>  
>

1/11/2019

City of Portland Mail - Fwd: WHAT?!! no dogs off leash in Baxter Woods! What would Gov. Baxter say?



Jeff Tarling <jst@portlandmaine.gov>

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**Fwd: WHAT?!! no dogs off leash in Baxter Woods! What would Gov. Baxter say?**

1 message

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Jeff Tarling <JST@portlandmaine.gov>  
To: jst@gapps.portlandmaine.gov

Fri, Jan 11, 2019 at 11:41 AM

>>> Bonnie Washuk <bwashuk@sunjournal.com> 4/23/2014 12:06 PM >>>

Hi Jeff, After reading today's story in the Press Herald I emailed Leslie Bridgers. She gave me your contact email.

Like a lot of people, I take my dog, a black lab named Lucy, to Baxter Woods 3 or 4 times a week. Before I let her off leash I spent many hours training her. She's good with recall now, helped my the fact I always have treats in my pocket. (Lucy loves to eat.)

I do plan to speak or oppose plans to no longer let dogs off leash in Baxter Woods. Remembering how the late Gov. Baxter LOVED dogs, I'm guessing he would not approve of banning off-leash dogs.

I'm usually in and out of there in 20 minutes, quick, but I really love the ability to enjoy nature so close to home. The woods is very well kept, I do my part to keep it that way. (pick up always).

It's a great resource to let Lucy sniff and run free. We both enjoy mingling with other dogs and dog owners. From what I observe, it is a community of responsible dog lovers.

That said, there's always room for improvement. Not everyone picks up after their dog, which is wrong.

One day there was a class from the school, I called Lucy, leashed her until the little ones passed. A few Somali students seemed scared even though Lucy didn't do anything and was on leash. Other students came up and asked if they could pet her, which they did. If it's a culture issue for immigrant students, maybe they could be taught that dogs are pets here.

Anyway, can you keep me informed of when any meetings will be held?

I will probably share my sentiments with Mayor Brennan and councilors.

Many thanks,

Bonnie Washuk Zaccaro and Rick Zaccaro, 22 Aiden Circle, Portland.

Home: 773-3243.

Like Page

Responsible Dog Owners of Baxter Woods Dogs

November 5, 2018

Posting to you all from Sarah Maloney: Good morning RDOOBWD!! Saw your post about german shepard puppies playing...lately I've noticed on several occasions out-of-control dogs who's owners do nothing to control them. I am a dog person, but last week one lunged at me aggressively and attacked my dog, and this AM an owner with two dogs did nothing when his dogs ruthlessly hounded mine when he was headed in opposite direction- he had no voice control over the dogs, and one of them made a point to turn back to attack mine several times- another friend reported she was also scared by an aggressively behaving dog towards her last week...we need to make sure the woods stay safe for all, and being able to be leash free doesn't mean your dog can act all wild and crazy...if I post this I'll be a nag, but maybe you guys could put in a public service announcement for well-controlled and well-behaved dogs in the woods?? Thank you!!!

Liz Miraglia McGranahan Unfortunately that's the risk you take when taking dogs to unleashed dog parks, which Baxter Woods is not, by the way

2

Manage

LikeShow more reactions

· Reply

· 10w

Responsible Dog Owners of Baxter Woods Dogs Liz, Baxter is indeed for unleashed dogs.

Manage

LikeShow more reactions

· Reply

· 4w

Write a reply...

Jenny Siler Thank you Sarah Maloney!

Responsible Dog Owners of Baxter Woods Dogs  
August 31, 2018

This from Jeremy, a fellow dog walker:

"I don't think there's anything that can be done but I'm noticing a fair amount of unfriendly leashed dogs in Baxter Woods. I appreciate that they're leashed but I'm constantly forced to grab my dog and leash him up so he doesn't get bit by a dog that probably shouldn't be taking walks in an off leash dog park."

[ DEAR WALKERS - I've heard this comment from a few people. First, be glad they're LEASHED. It's the unleashed ones with disagreeable owners that are worrisome. Yelling at them just makes it worse. Maybe first ask them to control their dogs, then asking that they be more considerate. READERS, HOW HAVE YOU HANDLED THIS SUCCESSFULLY?]

Gini Monsell I've heard this said by so many people, but Baxter woods is NOT an 'unleashed dog park'. We are lucky enough to be able to use it as such, but there are stipulations to the rule. Unleashed dogs MUST be within 50 feet of their owner and must be under STRICT voice control. If you are following these rules, one shouldn't have to 'grab my dog and leash him so he doesn't get bit.' Everyone in the neighborhood has the right to use that park. It is not intended for the use of unleashed dog walkers only. It is also for the local schools, walkers, bikers, cross-country skiers, etc. and they all have a right to enjoy it without being disturbed by off leash dogs and their poop. This "it's an unleashed dog park, don't come here if you don't like it" mentality is going to ruin it for us all one day. (I'm sure this comment won't win me any popularity contests in this group but oh well, its the truth lol).

5

Manage

Like Show more reactions

• Reply

• 19w

Judy Ann Haas Yes! My thoughts exactly. Well said.

1

Manage

LikeShow more reactions

· Reply

· 19w

Gini Monsell \*\*\*Also: a dog with leash aggression towards a loose dog running up on them, doesn't mean the dog is unfriendly. Furthermore, some people keep their dogs leashed not because the dog is aggressive, but because they dog is a runner. Either way they still have a right to be there.

6

Manage

Like

· Reply

· 19w

Jeremy Conn I understand all these factors they weren't relevant to my experiences however

Manage

LikeShow more reactions

· Reply

· 19w

Paula Gates I no longer live in Portland but when I did I was deeply grateful for a place like Baxter Woods. Having to call my dog in a couple of times during each walk seemed an acceptable price to pay for such a treasure of a place.

I have a pitbull and often called her in simply to allow others who seemed uncomfortable to be comfortable again...who wants to rock such a lovely boat

2

Manage

LikeShow more reactions

· Reply

· 19w

June Delano Many dogs (including mine) only bark aggressively when leashed. Hopefully, people will have patience (and remember that our wonderful pets are also territorial canines.)

1

Manage

Like

· Reply

· 19w

1 Reply

Mike Margate Been going there for years until recently. Went today and saw a sign for leashed dogs. When did that happen?

Manage

Like

· Reply

· 19w

Responsible Dog Owners of Baxter Woods Dogs Mike - Leashed or voice-controlled dogs has always been the rule. The signs are new.

Responsible Dog Owners of Baxter Woods Dogs

January 12, 2018 ·

Spooky morning at Baxter! Plus lots of poop to pick up. Please, please pick up any you see, in addition to your own dog's. It's pretty disgusting to be dodging it on the path.

And my two dogs each brought me a dead squirrel within 5 minutes of each other. Thoughtful. They didn't have wounds but I'm thinking they froze to death and fell.

Dogs and hysteria

People, I think it's time to bring it down a notch. And especially, we should not be doing it in this forum. Keep in mind that we two-leggeds do a lot more damage to each other than the dogs

ever do.

We're all grateful for a respite from the world that's offered by Portland's parks. I'm in Baxter Woods frequently and find that HUMANS go there for community, and for their dogs. Over the years I've met a lot of nice people --and dogs-- and have made a few friends. 99% of the time all goes well and often dog owners will gently remind others of the need to pick up or to watch their dogs. Some of us control our dogs too much, others are more generous both with dogs and others. We humans all need to do a better job being responsible. Let's not make this another us-versus-them situation.

26 Feb 17 · 19 neighborhoods in General  
ThankReplyReply

Andrea Gaines  
Andrea Gaines, Deering Center · 26 Feb 17  
Thanks, Dawn. You speak very well to the issue.

Ron Harrity  
Ron Harrity, Deering Center · 26 Feb 17  
Respectfully, I can't think of a better use of this forum than to discuss our shared green spaces.

Robyn Brown  
Robyn Brown, Deering Highlands · 26 Feb 17  
This is the appropriate forum to serve as a reminder that there is a leash law in Portland. It is also required that you pick up after your dog.

Andy Graham  
Andy Graham, Rosemont · 26 Feb 17  
As has been stated before, Baxter Woods and Capisic Pond Park are two of the very, very few places that dogs can be off-leash legally in Portland.. Robyn, while there may be a leash law in Portland, dogs are allowed off-leash while under voice control in both of those places. There are many, many, many acres of public space available for you folks who are timid around dogs - please leave those of us who are responsible dog owners those few spots we have left. Help us police irresponsible dog owners, but don't insist on regulating every public acre in Portland.

Kevin T. Cole  
Kevin T. Cole, Oakdale / USM · 26 Feb 17  
Baxter Woods is a designated off-leash area. We still must pick up after our dogs.

Dawn Leland  
Dawn Leland, Rosemont · 27 Feb 17  
I could have stated my initial comment better -- discussion, yes, but not mean-spirited,

us-vs.-them comments that I felt were not productive.

Lorrie Ferrari

Lorrie Ferrari, Rosemont Triangle-27 Feb 17

I have always lived with dogs and never expected tax payers to provide for them - there are 2 dogs parks (I also don't use them but they do exist) and I don't feel that my dog or myself have the right to limit others enjoyment of public spaces because they are afraid of dogs and packs of dogs. Unfortunately "responsible" doesn't mean the same thing to everyone but I'm sure none of us wants our dog harmed or killed by a responsible dog owners dog

mary emmons

mary emmons, Valley-27 Feb 17

I was walking my 2 little dogs the other day (on leash and poop bags in hand) in the city. as I was walking by a gentlemen he tried to kick my dog which was doing nothing. As I have said portland is becoming very un friendly to dogs. He is very lucky I just called him alot of vulgar names. As a taxpayer in Portland and paying way too much in taxes etc . I find portland is not a nice place to live anymore.I respect people who dont like dogs but I also would like them to respect me and my dogs. As far as dog parks they are over crowded and dangerous for my little ones. We need more open spaces for our pets. As a TAXPAYER who pays alot I would like a little open space to let my dogs be free if only for a few minutes . I try to get to ocean ave once in awhile but it is hard for me to get there. Sooo respect goes 2 ways

Sarah Maloney

Sarah Maloney, Deering Highlands-27 Feb 17

Hello neighbors, I'm saddened by the comments in this feed and the un-neighborly feel of several of them- As a dog owner I greatly value Baxter Woods for what it offers me: a safe and beautiful space to allow my young dog to run free which aids greatly in his overall demeanor and my ability to own him and have him as a companion.. I also typically go between 6-7 AM or late in the day when no one is really there except the regulars. He is not aggressive towards anyone and ignores humans completely. I do understand however that this is not a DOG park, this is a city park, and perhaps it will become necessary at some point to create dog walking hours similar to Willard Beach and other shared human/dog spaces. One thing that would really help in the park is more containers to dispose of poop, IMO- I try to be hyper vigilant about where he goes and will frequently go off trail to tromp after his toileting to get it picked up- but it is a HUGE problem, agreed. I would hope as this discussion continues that this not become and us versus them between dogs and humans, again, it is a city park and as a dog owner in the neighborhood I thank my lucky stars it exists and would hate for it to go away.

Kevin T. Cole

Kevin T. Cole, Oakdale / USM-27 Feb 17

My sympathy for those with an irrational fear of dogs was destroyed when I was physically assaulted and injured by a person with such a fear. It's really a mental health issue and should be treated as such.

The only reason there is a taxpayer cost for dogs is because our city has decided to have a leash ordinance, which resulted in demand for creation of off-leash areas and dog parks. When I was a child in Portland, neither existed. Dogs roamed free. The biggest issue with that seemed to be that dog poop showed up on lawns--big deal. Now, the only place in Portland where I am allowed both to let my dog run free and to smoke a cigar is the forest behind Evergreen Cemetery.

Portland has changed a lot.

Bringfido.com

Baxter Woods  
555 Stevens Ave, Portland, ME, US, 04103-0000

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Save

Website

Reviews

Directions  
Or call (207) 874-8801 for more information.

Description  
Baxter Woods is a forested retreat in the midst of residential neighborhoods where you and your dog can enjoy a stroll along the primary or secondary trails. Dogs must be leashed at all times and humans must clean up after their dogs.

Reviews  
BringFido Traveler Rating

Baxter Woods has received a rating of 4.0 out of 5 bones by 1 dog owner on BringFido.

Gwen  
More than one year ago.  
We like it!

This park has a bunch of trails and an open space for dogs to romp. It is off leash, but make sure dogs are close when there are small children around as kids love running up to try to pet

my dog and I have to tell them not to. During the week it is pretty quiet and that's when I usually go.

Gayl Anglin

December 10, 2018 ·

Dear People that walk your dogs in Baxter Woods:

PLEASE put them on a leash. This morning was the second time in a month that I became part of an improptu dog rescue of someone's baby that took off on a wild run. And while I get that they may "never do this," all it takes is one time for them to get hit by a car. The dog this morning barely missed getting hit, save for me running out into the street to wave my arms frantically at the car who slowed and swerved at the last minute. This is an urban park and your babies need to be on leash.

Signed: Your neighbor and fellow dog lover

15:15

7 Comments

Like

Share

Comments

Margie Arnett

Margie Arnett People refusing to use leashes drive me NUTS!

Manage

Like

· 5w

Alicia Hicks Olsen

Alicia Hicks Olsen First rule of owning a dog. Never say never. They will prove you wrong.

Manage

LikeShow more reactions

· 5w

Kayla Cavallaro

Kayla Cavallaro YES. omg YES

Manage

LikeShow more reactions

· 5w

Christine Lashua

Christine Lashua Hi, can you set it up so that I can share this. So important.

1

Manage

LikeShow more reactions

· 5w

Gayl Anglin

Gayl Anglin Yes!

Manage

LikeShow more reactions

· 5w

Penny Von Helmolt

Penny Von Helmolt Good work as usual Gayl. I remember you crawling on the 10 Freeway in LA- rescuing a poor little fellow. Bravo!

1

Manage

LikeShow more reactions

· 5w

Gayl Anglin

Gayl Anglin Ha. Those were the (crazy) days.

Responsible Dog Owners of Baxter Woods Dogs

June 13, 2018 ·

Does anyone know details of a rumored "bike camp" that may include Baxter Woods?

New signs are there at entrances. Oddly they do NOT include any "no smoking" notice. Again today we spotted a young woman smoking and politely said to her that it was not allowed. She kept on walking. What is it about timber and dry leaves that smokers don't get?

Responsible Dog Owners of Baxter Woods Dogs

June 4, 2018 ·

Does a poop bag in COLOR left on the path for a walker's return-trip pickup, more incline you to take it to the trash? Just wondering.

Also, found leash. **\*\* Not- purple poop bag was pictured under this post\*\***

← my note

Responsible Dog Owners of Baxter Woods Dogs

May 18, 2018 ·

Rochelle sent this 5/15:

This morning we noticed a Maillard duck family with very new tiny ducklings in Baxter pond [near Forest Av.]. They are very vulnerable in that small pond and helpless if dogs go after them. I'm hoping you can post something letting people know about them so they don't allow their dogs to harass them. Last spring, I witnessed people laughing while their dogs swam around chasing ducks in that pond.

I know someone else who witnessed teenage boys throwing things at them early this evening. She has called Maine Audubon about it.

Anyway thanks for listening and I hope you have time to ask people to keep their dogs out if the pond.

5/18: Unfortunately, I think they have already been eaten. We checked on them this morning. Dad was alone and then flew away while we walked around the pond looking for mom and babies.

Responsible Dog Owners of Baxter Woods Dogs What time was it that you saw these critters? Would love to time my walks to see them (dogs on leash of course).

Manage

Like · Reply · 34w

Liam Sullivan

Liam Sullivan I saw the 10 baby ducks tonight around 6pm with the mother duck. They are pretty amazing creatures and we are lucky to have them in our neighborhood

1

Manage

Like · Reply · 34w

Responsible Dog Owners of Baxter Woods Dogs

Responsible Dog Owners of Baxter Woods Dogs Oh good!

Manage

Like · Reply · 34w

Liam Sullivan

Liam Sullivan Update: Asher and I saw the ducklings this morning with what I am assuming are their parents; 1 duck and 1 drake. They look like they are healthy, growing and noticeably a lot more independent, but I only counted 8 ducklings today. Okay; back to work!

Responsible Dog Owners of Baxter Woods Dogs

March 19, 2018 ·

Way too much poop on the path, folks. Watch what your dog is doing!

How much more trouble would it be to just type two letters "th" instead of ' ?

Responsible Dog Owners of Baxter Woods Dogs

Responsible Dog Owners of Baxter Woods Dogs Of course the problem is how police are distributed in the community-- dog poop isn't high on the list. The park rangers do come in periodically but there aren't enough of them either to be everywhere, all the time. Just reality in what is not a police state. Luckily, emergency calls (see previous post) do get a quick response.

1

Manage

Like · Reply · 43w

Debra Ann Flynn

Debra Ann Flynn if people truly got fined for not watching their loose dogs, having no control of them in attack mode or for their waste I think all the parks would be better :)

Responsible Dog Owners of Baxter Woods Dogs

March 11, 2018 ·

Someone added a smile to the snowperson! Good idea. Except that another storm is due Tuesday. No smile for that. A few determined daffodils are peeking through the melted areas elsewhere.

A sudden flurry of people occurred, some having forgotten the time changeover. Two girls had to be told (nicely) not to smoke in the woods. Fire's unlikely now but the place is full of pine pitch AND smoking in parks is illegal.

A person came with a small female dog in heat, running loose, causing a brief rumble among the males. A couple people pointed out it's not a great idea to bring her loose like that, both for the dog's safety and to avoid a fight. Owner just ignored it all and walked on.

Responsible Dog Owners of Baxter Woods Dogs

March 10, 2018 ·

Dogs found a newly killed squirrel on the path. They were curious. I took it and stashed it under some logs. Then Joe ran back, dug it out, and went to a new location and dug a new hole, dropped in the squirrel, and covered it, using his nose in lieu of the missing front leg. Then he came back to me. What IS that? Reverence for the dead? Saving for a snack later? A commentary on my choice of burial?

# Complaints rising over unleashed dogs in Portland's Baxter Woods

[pressherald.com/2014/04/23/a\\_controversy\\_unleashed\\_/](http://pressherald.com/2014/04/23/a_controversy_unleashed/)

By Leslie Bridgers

April 23, 2014

It takes only a short stroll into the trees from the entrance on Stevens Avenue to see who rules Portland's Mayor Baxter Woods.

On Tuesday afternoon, dozens of dogs romped through the park, some sprinting down the trails, a few fetching balls in a field and others ambling by their owners' sides – almost every one without a leash.

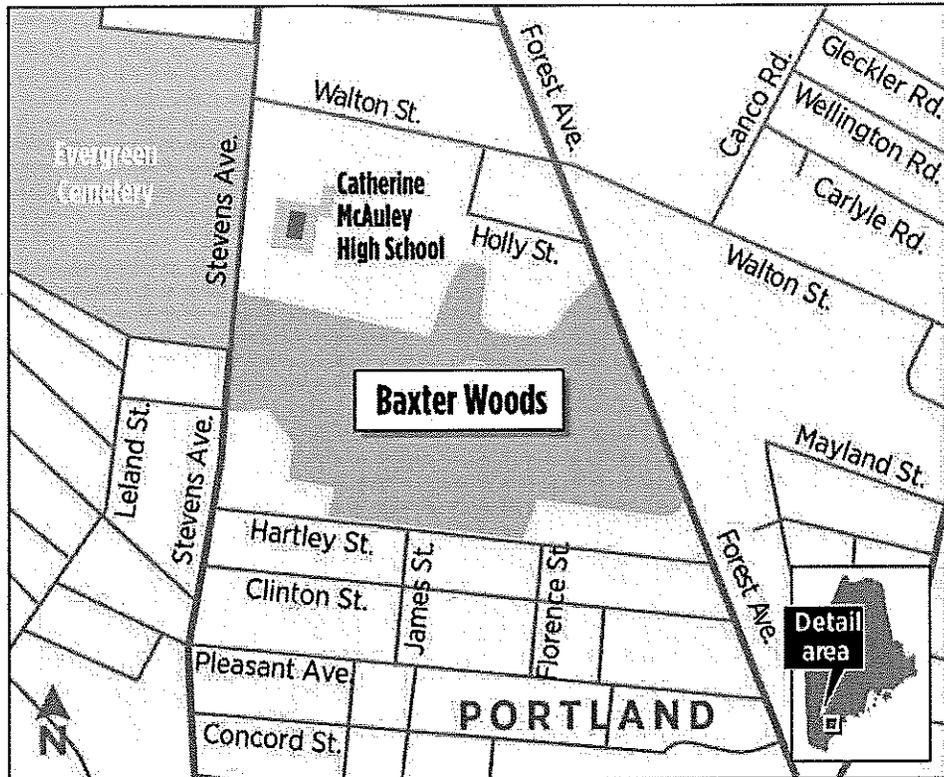
## Additional Photos



Moriah Duval of Portland walks her dog Penelope, center, and a friend's pooch, Kyra, during a visit to Mayor Baxter Woods in Portland on Tuesday. Dogs are allowed off-leash in the park if they're under voice control, but some visitors to the woods complain about the effect loose dogs can have on children and others. Shawn Patrick Ouellette/Staff Photographer



Tammy Riley of Portland walks her dogs Noelle, left, and Sophie off leash during a visit to Baxter Woods on Tuesday. City officials say they want to balance the needs of all of the park's users. Shawn Patrick Ouellette/Staff Photographer



STAFF GRAPHIC | MICHAEL FISHER

Dogs may not rule for long, however.

Complaints that loose dogs have chased and frightened children, among other things, have thrust the popular park into the recurring conflict between dog owners who want their pets to run free and people who, for various reasons, prefer them on a short leash.

The city is about to post signs and hold a meeting to warn dog owners to be respectful of other park users. If those efforts don't work, the signs warn, the city could require leashes in Baxter Woods.

While officials hope to avoid it, similar conflicts have escalated into culture clashes over dogs' access to beaches, parks and other public areas, dividing neighborhoods and communities in southern Maine, including in Portland and South Portland.

Most recently, dog owners in Scarborough forced a special election to overturn leash rules adopted to protect shorebirds such as piping plovers, one of which was killed by an unleashed dog on Pine Point Beach last summer.

The number of dogs in Baxter Woods has been on the rise since Portland banned dogs from Western Cemetery in 2001, the outcome of an early and bitter clash between pet owners and those who felt overwhelmed by loose dogs.

The number of complaints about dogs in Baxter Woods has risen, too, said Jeff Tarling, the city's arborist.

Dogs are allowed off-leash in the park if they're under voice control, Tarling said, but people's definitions of voice control vary. City code says an off-leash dog in Baxter Woods, or any other public area where leashes are not required, must be within 50 feet of its owner and immediately return to the owner's side when called.

Although dogs that use the trails regularly far outnumber the people who are opposed to them running loose, Tarling said, everyone should be able to enjoy the park peacefully.

"We're just looking at this to be so that all visitors have the same experience," he said.

Within the next month, the city plans to post signs at the park's four entrances and hold a public meeting to make dog owners more aware of the effect their animals can have on other people in the park.

That includes Yael Ashtari's 4-year-old daughter, who has been scared of dogs since she was bitten by one.

"The dogs eagerly sniff, lick, jump and prod. I am forced to quickly pick up my daughter as she freezes in fear and hides behind me," Ashtari wrote in a letter to the city in August.

Robin Lea, a sixth-grade science teacher at Lincoln Middle School, wrote to Tarling this month, saying she had taken students to nearby Baxter Woods "and once again encountered the problem of many off-leash dogs."

Lea said her immigrant and refugee students are particularly scared of the dogs – presumably because they're not familiar with them as pets. Many Muslims consider dogs unclean and avoid them.

Despite Lea's instructions for her students to be still, she said, "most run in fear and the dog chases them thinking it is a game."

And that could cause more than tears.

Two years ago, Tarling said, a middle school student who was running through the woods with the cross-country team was bitten by an unleashed dog.

There's no mention of dogs in the terms laid out by Percival Baxter in 1946, when he conveyed the 30-acre park to the city in honor of his father, James Phinney Baxter, a former Portland mayor. Rather, he deemed it a place for recreation and education, as well as a sanctuary for birds.

"There's no question it's probably not a place that birds are going to find inviting right now," Tarling said.

Before requiring leashes for dogs in the woods, he said, the city will try to educate dog owners and balance the needs of the park's various users. He hopes people will start policing themselves.

Baxter Woods is not yet a battleground similar to Scarborough's beaches, but David Victor can see the same thing happening if the city considers a leash requirement.

"People would come out," he said. "It would be like Scarborough."

Victor has been bringing his black Lab, Lily, to Baxter Woods twice a day for 10 years. Because of her taste for other dogs' excrement, he keeps her on a leash. But that doesn't mean he's fine with a leash requirement.

He fears that people who want to let their dogs run loose would stop coming, and the character of the park, as a place for dog owners to meet and mingle, would change completely.

"There's community here," he said.

*Leslie Bridgers can be contacted at 791-6364 or at: [\[email protected\]](#)[\[email protected\]](#)Twitter: [@lesliebridgers@lesliebridgers](#)*



Ethan Hipple &lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

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**Baxter Woods**

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Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>  
To: Aimee Kudlak <akudlak@maine.rr.com>

Fri, Apr 5, 2019 at 3:18 PM

Thanks for the comments Aimee.  
Take care,  
Ethan

**Ethan Hipple**  
Deputy Director  
Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department  
City of Portland  
212 Canco Rd, Suite A  
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[www.portlandmaine.gov](http://www.portlandmaine.gov)  
Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Fri, Apr 5, 2019 at 2:50 PM Aimee Kudlak <[akudlak@maine.rr.com](mailto:akudlak@maine.rr.com)> wrote:

Dear Ethan,

Thank you for reaching out to all of us who love Baxter Woods. I too am a dog walker there. My 16 1/2 year old dog, Freddy, has outlived almost all of his former friends. There are a lot of both old and new dog owners walking in the woods these days. Some of the new dog owners need as much training as their dogs. But I can't imagine that there is so much damage being done by the dogs that they would have to be kept on leashes.

When I first started walking in Baxter, there was a huge forest of trees behind the Mother House on Stevens Avenue. These were cut down to make a ball field for Cathrine McAuley high school which was very rarely used. No one seemed to complain about the destruction of these woods and all the wildlife it destroyed. Now plans are in the works to build five or six buildings on this ball field. The noise and traffic and commotion coming from the construction will do more harm to the wild life in Baxter Woods than any dog can do, not to mention the influx of all the people that will be moving into those condos.

The dog walkers actually do a lot to clean up the woods. We do a poop cleanup weekend in the Spring, pick up broken bottles and trash and try to keep the woods as natural as we can. One time, someone tossed a bunch of metallic confetti on one of the paths. It took weeks to clean it up, but we did.

I hope this situation can be resolved in a way that will benefit all living things: dogs, cats (yes some people walk their cats), birds, squirrels, fox, raccoons, chipmunks, salamanders, frogs, fish, turtles, trees, but most of all the people who love Baxter Woods and want to keep it just as it is and has been for the past 73 years.

Sincerely,,  
Aimee A Kudlak



Ethan Hipple &lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

---

**Re: A Baxter compromise — set hours**

---

shambaugh@gwi.net <shambaugh@gwi.net>  
To: Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Fri, Apr 5, 2019 at 5:02 PM

Thank you Ethan, for all your work and your love of the parks!

On 2019-04-05 12:55, Ethan Hipple wrote:

Thanks for the suggestion Ben.

We are looking at some compromise options and weighing that with the possible impact on safety and bird sanctuary habitat.

I appreciated the civility shown at the meeting last night by all involved. I know it is a tough topic that folks are passionate about.

Take care,  
Ethan

**Ethan Hipple**

Deputy Director  
Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department  
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[www.portlandmaine.gov](http://www.portlandmaine.gov)

Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Thu, Apr 4, 2019 at 6:09 PM Shambaugh <[shambaugh@gwi.net](mailto:shambaugh@gwi.net)> wrote:

Dear Ethan,

Thank you for a good hearing and your great research. I appreciate your points and suggest a possible compromise, which you mentioned but did not include in your bullets points. Off leash 7-9 and after 5 pm. Leashed at other times. That allows the middle of the day for all and does limit bird threats. It works on the beaches and Robinson woods and could work here too.

Thanks again  
Ben Shambaugh

Sent from my iPhone

On Apr 1, 2019, at 3:44 PM, Ethan Hipple <[ehipple@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:ehipple@portlandmaine.gov)> wrote:

Hi there Ben,  
Thanks for the thoughtful comments and sorry to hear about the loss of your dog Sasha.

We will make sure the Parks Commission gets a copy of your comments for the meeting this Thursday.

Take care,

Ethan

**Ethan Hipple**

Deputy Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

City of Portland

212 Canco Rd, Suite A

Portland, Maine 04103

207.808-5400

[ehipple@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:ehipple@portlandmaine.gov)

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Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Mon, Apr 1, 2019 at 2:33 PM <[shambaugh@gwi.net](mailto:shambaugh@gwi.net)> wrote:

March 1, 2019

Dear friends,

My dog Sasha died of old age a few months ago. She and I walked in Baxter Woods at least two times a day for 14 years. Baxter is just a block from my home and -- along with Portland High, Longfellow and Lincoln -- is a large part of what makes the Deering Neighborhood great. It was at Baxter Woods that I got to truly know my neighbors, catch up on people's lives, and take time to nourish my soul. This happened in many ways, because of connections made through people with dogs. Again and again, I knew the dog's name long before I knew the owner. Because the dogs were off leash, they were able to greet me as well as my dog, and we built community, one sniff and pet at a time. The pure joy of animals and owners freely wandering the woods is a gift and wonder to share. Though my dog is gone, going to Baxter woods every day fills me with joy.

Today I walked around Mackworth Island and made a point of visiting the cemetery of Baxter's many generations of Irish Setters. Yes, he loved birds. He also loved dogs and during all my time in Baxter woods, I have never seen the one bother the other. In fact, dogs keep the number of cats -- who do bother the birds -- to a minimum.

I was part of community conversations with the city regarding dogs in Baxter Woods that happened at the Wilde Chapel a few years ago. As a result of those meetings, the city put in more trash cans to collect poop and the owners picked it up. Since then, the winter snows and annual "spring thaw" have been much cleaner -- proof that the vast majority of dog owners are responsible and responsive and that we can work together, while still maintaining what is a treasure to us all.

Yes, there are rare occasions when a careless owner or poorly trained dog behave less than perfectly. These, however, are very limited and -- as those folks don't seem to worry about rules or norms I do not think that new rules will change their behavior. They would, however, have a huge negative impact on the quality of life, the sense of community, and the joy that makes our neighborhood and our city special.

Thank you for keeping it as it is today -- a gift to us all. Thank you for your continued great work on our behalf.

Sincerely,

Ben Shambaugh

147 Clinton Street

Portland, ME 04103

207 400-7516

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Ethan Hipple &lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

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## Baxter woods and Quarry Run dog park

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Ethan Hipple &lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

Mon, Apr 8, 2019 at 11:10 AM

To: Audrey Bergeron &lt;audrey.b.bergeron@gmail.com&gt;

Thanks Audrey.

We are looking at possible compromises and studying whether that could have a positive impact on safety and the bird sanctuary issues.

Enforcement is still required during off-leash voice control times because many people do not comply with voice control rules (dog 50 feet from owner, must return when called).

But either way, we will be looking at alternatives.

Our Parks Maintenance crew is capping the debris that is exposed each Spring--most likely will happen next week. And the piece of metal will be removed sooner. Thanks for letting us know!

Take care,  
Ethan

**Ethan Hipple**

Deputy Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

City of Portland

212 Canco Rd, Suite A

Portland, Maine 04103

207.808-5400

[ehipple@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:ehipple@portlandmaine.gov)[www.portlandmaine.gov](http://www.portlandmaine.gov)

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On Sun, Apr 7, 2019 at 9:42 AM Audrey Bergeron <[audrey.b.bergeron@gmail.com](mailto:audrey.b.bergeron@gmail.com)> wrote:

To the Deputy Director, Dept of Parks, Rec, & Facility:

I would first like to thank you for all that you do to ensure that Portland has so many beautiful parks for the public to enjoy. I attended the public comment hearing regarding Baxter woods this past week and, although I disagreed with your suggestion regarding the leash law, I appreciate the time and effort you put into your presentation.

I have two requests for your department. The first is regarding Baxter woods and the second is regarding Quarry Run dog park.

My request for Baxter woods is to follow a model similar to East End beach where dogs must be on leash for a certain time (like 9-5) for certain months (April through October). This would be easier to enforce because it limits the enforcement period to 8 hours a day. It would also give people who want to enjoy the woods without meeting dogs a time of day to do so and this time lines up well with the school day and cross country meets. This would also encourage dog walkers to bring their dogs outside of these hours so they can let their dogs off leash. I know that you expressed concern over birds not knowing this schedule, but based on the research you presented, I don't believe you can definitively say the presence of dogs is the only thing affecting the bird population. For example, you compared the number of bird species to places like Wolfe's Neck, but these places do not experience the noise pollution from planes and traffic, the amount of people, or nearby construction that Baxter woods does.

My request regarding Quarry Run dog park has to do with the bricks and chunks of metal that are currently sticking out of the dirt in the open area at the top of the hill where people and dogs tend to congregate. My understanding is that this is an old land fill and this is a recurring issue. My concern is that the sharp corners of these bricks and metal parts are trip hazards for humans and could cut dogs' paws. Is there a plan with the weather warming up to fill in more dirt in this area or to have these items pulled out?

Thank you for your consideration.  
Audrey Bergeron  
14 Florence St Apt 2



Ethan Hipple &lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

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**Question: Baxter Woods - Complaints about dogs, Support of a Leash Law in Baxter Woods...**

---

Ethan Hipple &lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

Mon, Apr 8, 2019 at 6:33 PM

To: "Lesperance, Marc" &lt;Marc.Lesperance@anthem.com&gt;

Cc: "sld@portlandmaine.gov" &lt;sld@portlandmaine.gov&gt;, "mlesperance@maine.rr.com"

&lt;mlesperance@maine.rr.com&gt;, Jessica Grondin &lt;jgrondin@portlandmaine.gov&gt;, Matthew Coleman

&lt;mcoleman@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

Hi Marc,

I've answered your questions below in red. Jessica Grondin will be responding to your FOAA request.

Take care,  
Ethan**Ethan Hipple**

Deputy Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

City of Portland

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On Mon, Apr 8, 2019 at 4:17 PM Lesperance, Marc <[Marc.Lesperance@anthem.com](mailto:Marc.Lesperance@anthem.com)> wrote:

Mr. Hipple: I am following up on your presentation at the Parks Commission meeting last Thursday, April 4, 2019 and have a few questions for you and the Parks Department.

At the meeting on Thursday you mentioned that the City has received "many complaints" from Portland citizens about off leash dogs at Baxter Woods, and in your 3/7 memo (attached) to the Parks Commission – you note that the Parks Department "...regularly receive(s) verbal and written comments from the public about the current policy: primarily the comments are opposed to the off-leash policy, with a smaller number in favor."

While my unofficial tally of speakers at the Thursday meeting polled 24 who spoke against the leash law, I counted only 1 and possibly a 2<sup>nd</sup> person who favor the leash law in Baxter Woods. As a discounting of the overwhelming public response against the leash law at Thursday's meeting – both you and at least one member of the Parks Commission pointed out that the written comments submitted to the City and in the Commission's packets were more "50/50" in favor of the leash law.

Being compelled to verify the written complaints the City attests to, I reviewed the Public Comments pdf (attached) and tallied the following comments:

- **10** distinct complaints about off-leash dogs in Baxter Woods
- **11** neutral or general statements or communications about Baxter Woods (e.g. concerning tree trimming, replacing signage, ducks in the Baxter Woods Pond, etc.)

- 15 written comments in support of Baxter Woods as-is – and most directly against a full time leash law

I can provide a written summary of the comments tally if you'd like, but clearly the written comments are not, by the numbers, in favor of a leash law!

**My questions are:**

1. How does your statement in the 3/7 memo, that comments received are "...opposed to the off-leash policy" reconcile to the tally above of public comments released in the PDF (attached) and summarized above?

**EH Response:** I think most reasonable people would conclude that 10 written complaints about a single property would qualify as an issue worth addressing, but you are free to disagree. The tallies are interesting, but we are not aiming to simply count up which side has more "votes" in favor and going with that. Sometimes land management decisions require thoughtful choices that don't please everyone--our job as Park professionals is to try to balance the many uses of parks: open space, athletics, habitat, play, trails, access to water, accessibility, dog play areas, etc... The bottom line is that we receive many complaints about off-leash dogs at Baxter Woods, and we also have deed issues, so that prompted us to work with the Parks Commission on creating some reasonable recommendations to address that. As you know, public comment is encouraged as part of that process. One of the things the Parks Commission asked us to do is to explore possible compromises (such as designated off-leash hours, which you suggested in your earlier email), which we are currently evaluating and will discuss at the June meeting.

2. What did the Parks Department receive for verbal comments about off-leash dogs in Baxter Woods, and how does it tally and validate such complaints?

**EH Response:** Verbal complaints were generally made to our Rangers in the field, or phone calls to our office. We do not log verbal comments.

3. Will the Department release the verbal comments, or a summary of the verbal comments received about Baxter Woods (dog-related or not)?

**EH Response:** We do not log verbal comments.

4. The most recent written public comment (see PDF) was dated January 2019, and many go back as far as 2013 – will the Parks Department share new, previously unreleased public comments it has received since January 2019? I submitted an e-mail just last week, that you graciously acknowledged and forwarded to the Commission – and I am certain many others submitted written comments as well that should be tallied and considered before the Commission votes on the proposed leash law.

**EH Response:** Yes, our proposal has generated a lot of written public comment, mostly opposed to the proposed change, and we have shared all written comment we received with the Parks Commission prior to their meeting last week. Those comments also get posted as backup material on the agenda website. I've attached that for you in the meantime.

Lastly – I submitted a Freedom of Access Act request to Jessica Grondin earlier today (4/8/2019) for the City of Portland's communications with Forest Synthesis, LLC and/or Robert Bryan concerning the Forest and Wildlife Habitat Management Plan for Mayor Baxter Woods – report dated May, 18, 2018. I am seeking any City (Parks or other Department's) communications with Forest Synthesis, Robert Bryan or any other consultants related to the work Forest Synthesis and/or Robert Bryan did on the City's behalf as it relates to Baxter Woods. Please let me know if you have any questions about this FOAA request. **Good to know, thanks. Jessica will work with you on that.**

Thanks, Marc

**Marc Lesperance**, 103 Candlewyck Terrace, Portland, ME  
04102

W: (207) 209-0517 | M: (207) 329-4953 | H: (207) 774-6584

[marc.lesperance@anthem.com](mailto:marc.lesperance@anthem.com)

[Quoted text hidden]

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**5 attachments**

-  **4, leash laws, and other concerns.pdf**  
162K
-  **2019-01-10 City of Portland Mail - Fwd\_ Baxter Woods concerns.pdf**  
125K
-  **Public Comments Baxter Woods Off-Leash.pdf**  
1489K
-  **Public Comments Baxter Woods Off-Leash 4-3-19.pdf**  
434K
-  **Public Comments Baxter Woods Off-Leash 4-1-19.pdf**  
1243K



Ethan Hipple &lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

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**Fwd: City Park Inquiry**

---

Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>  
To: Avril Williams <adandyline@gmail.com>

Thu, Apr 11, 2019 at 4:34 PM

Hi Avril,  
Presumpscot River Preserve is lovely (but a long walk in). Deering Oaks is another option, or Fore River Sanctuary.

Here is a good map of city parks and forests: <https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1a4gsFhxy7BDqsN0NtlS2IDkhsA&ll=43.663640789674496%2C-70.28501602131433&z=14>

Take care,  
Ethan  
**Ethan Hipple**  
Deputy Director  
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City of Portland  
212 Canco Rd, Suite A  
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207.808-5400  
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[www.portlandmaine.gov](http://www.portlandmaine.gov)  
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On Thu, Apr 11, 2019 at 1:55 PM Avril Williams <adandyline@gmail.com> wrote:

Thank you so much for getting back to me! Curious if you know an area that would be better suited. Was interested in Baxter due to having a surrounding wooded area as opposed to a wide open park but not opposed to other options. Thanks so much for your time!

Avril Williams  
A Dandy Line Studios

On Apr 11, 2019, at 9:26 AM, Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov> wrote:

Hi Avril,  
Typically for yoga or fitness classes under 25 people, we don't require a permit, so you should be all set to do your class. Copying Rusty Groh, one of our Event and Permitting Coordinators who can get you more information if you need it.

FYI, Baxter Woods does have a high number off off leash dogs (and a high amount of dog waste), so just tread carefully! You are free to do the class there, just wanted you to be aware.

Take care,  
Ethan

**Ethan Hipple**  
Deputy Director  
Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department  
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[www.portlandmaine.gov](http://www.portlandmaine.gov)  
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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Ethan Owens** <[eowens@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:eowens@portlandmaine.gov)>  
Date: Thu, Apr 11, 2019 at 8:44 AM  
Subject: Fwd: City Park Inquiry  
To: Ethan Hipple <[ehipple@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:ehipple@portlandmaine.gov)>, Matt Coleman <[mcoleman@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:mcoleman@portlandmaine.gov)>

Could one of you guys give her a shout?

**Ethan Owens** CPRP, CPSI, AOLCP  
Parks Assistant Director, Athletic Facilities and Playground/Courts Manager  
City of Portland - Parks, Recreation and Facilities Management Dept.  
212 Canco Road Portland, Maine 04103 ~ USA  
207-808-5400 [eowens@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:eowens@portlandmaine.gov)

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Avril Williams** <[adandyline@gmail.com](mailto:adandyline@gmail.com)>  
Date: Fri, Apr 5, 2019 at 1:54 PM  
Subject: City Park Inquiry  
To: <[eowens@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:eowens@portlandmaine.gov)>

Hi! My name is Avril Williams and I'm a certified yoga instructor. I am looking for a space to teach outdoor yoga and was really interested in Baxter Woods as I think it would be amazing to offer a yoga class that is in nature while still being in the city! I would love to teach the classes regularly throughout the summer and early fall for one hour and offer them by donation, pay what you can. Is that possible? Do I need some kind of permit? Looking to start next month if possible so any direction you can offer would be so helpful. Feel free to read more about me on my web site, [www.adandyline.com](http://www.adandyline.com). Thanks for your time.

Avril Williams  
A Dandy Line Studios

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Ethan Hipple &lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

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**Baxter Woods**

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**Ethan Hipple** <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>  
To: sarah furman <sarahfurman@msn.com>

Thu, Apr 11, 2019 at 10:02 AM

Thanks for the comments. We are working on some compromise proposals right now. I'll make sure the Parks Commission sees your comments.

Take care,

Ethan

**Ethan Hipple**

Deputy Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

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212 Canco Rd, Suite A

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[www.portlandmaine.gov](http://www.portlandmaine.gov)

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On Wed, Apr 10, 2019 at 6:40 PM sarah furman <[sarahfurman@msn.com](mailto:sarahfurman@msn.com)> wrote:

Dear Mr. Hipple,

I have been a resident of Portland for the last 20 years, and have been enjoying Baxter Woods for the last 14 years with my dogs. I walk my dog at Baxter Woods at least 4 times a week. We have met many people in the park, and many dogs. I have to say that all the dogs I have met have been well behaved, and the owners have been respectful of the park. Additionally, I have only seen one incident of drug use in the park. I do fear that if dogs are not allowed off leash, then this park will become a place for drug use and for the homeless to stay. I do hope you will reconsider the leash law that may go to vote in the future as it will certainly change the safe, clean, and friendly park that we all enjoy at Baxter Woods.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sarah Furman



Ethan Hipple &lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

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## ground-nesting birds

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Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>  
To: david victor <dvictor242@gmail.com>

Thu, Apr 11, 2019 at 3:29 PM

Thanks David,

I did hear that comment at the meeting, but I can't vouch for the source or validity of it. If you're interested, I've attached our Management Plan, completed by licensed Forest Ecologist Rob Bryan.

We are working to protect habitat for ground nesting *and* ground feeding birds, which are not necessarily the same. There are also many birds that utilize the pond, which is at ground level.

Either way, we have two issues at Baxter Woods: dog and human safety issues, as well as a bird sanctuary issue. We are exploring some potential compromises that may help improve both. We'll discuss those at the June meeting.

Take care,  
Ethan

**Ethan Hipple**  
Deputy Director  
Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department  
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212 Canco Rd, Suite A  
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207.808-5400  
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[www.portlandmaine.gov](http://www.portlandmaine.gov)  
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On Thu, Apr 11, 2019 at 3:00 PM david victor <dvictor242@gmail.com> wrote:

at last week's meeting, Mark said that there are only three ground-nesting birds that he knew of ( in the area , I assume) , whipoorwills, killdeers and another , but that none of these was in Portland. I didn't hear you respond to this. have you verified this? do you know his source?

it seems to me that the question regarding how many ground-nesting birds we might expect has to be quantified. for example, if only one or two species would be coming to the woods ,if dogs were leashed is that a sufficient number to change this long-lasting situation so drastically?

we have to have a sense of proportion in a democracy or it doesn't work. and given the relatively few complaints ( I've been told that the average per year is quite low) what remains of the argument that is pro-leashing?

david victor  
portland



**Baxter Woods Ecological Assessment and Plan FINAL 2018-5-18.pdf**  
5435K



Ethan Hipple &lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

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## our email exchange yesterday on baxter woods

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Ethan Hipple &lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

Thu, Apr 18, 2019 at 11:36 AM

To: david victor &lt;dvictor242@gmail.com&gt;

Cc: Matthew Coleman &lt;mcoleman@portlandmaine.gov&gt;, Sally Deluca &lt;sld@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

Hi David,

There are many species of ground nesting birds in the Portland area, including oven birds, ground sparrows, wood cock, wood thrush. Maine Audubon estimates 10-12 species of ground nesting birds that can be found in the area, as well as hundreds of species of ground-feeding birds. Our goal is to create suitable habitat where these birds can live and reproduce, while balancing that with other community needs like biking, walking, and dog walking.

You are correct that the presence of barking dogs can scare away birds. That is one of the things we are working to address so that the woods can once again serve as a viable habitat "bird sanctuary" as stated in the deed.

You can read many of the complaints and comments we've received over the years in the [materials we submitted to the Parks Commission](#). That should give you an idea of the type of comments, and the quantity.

Thanks for letting us know about the trees--they were actually tapping pine trees, so they won't get too far making edible syrup! We did go address it though, thanks for the tip.

Take care,

Ethan

**Ethan Hipple**

Deputy Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

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On Fri, Apr 12, 2019 at 8:44 AM david victor &lt;dvictor242@gmail.com&gt; wrote:

thanks for your response, but you didn't answer a couple of my questions: 1. how many ground-nesting birds are in the portland area; Mark effectively said "none." is this true?, and 2. how many complaints about unleashed dogs in the woods are you receiving annually?

without quantifying , how can any justification be made for changing the rules.

it's also worth pointing out that ground-feeding birds would surely be alerted to the sounds of dogs bounding through the woods to get them and would quickly fly away. cats, which run free and our plentiful in deering center, are surely a greater threat than lumbering and noisy dogs.

and finally, please remember that for almost five months of the year, the paths in the woods are ice-bound. the only people who are in the woods then are people walking their dogs off-leash. the woods would effectively be empty if leashes were required. often during the winter homeless people inhabit the woods and people presence is comforting.

incidentally, today we noticed that someone is tapping some of the maple trees in the woods. is this authorized by the city?

thanks for listening.

david victor



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

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## Baxter Woods

---

**Ethan Hipple** <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>  
To: Stanley Beretsky <beretsky4444@gmail.com>

Wed, Apr 17, 2019 at 8:39 AM

Hi Stanley,  
Thanks for your message.  
Take care,  
Ethan  
**Ethan Hipple**  
Deputy Director  
Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department  
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On Wed, Apr 17, 2019 at 8:35 AM Stanley Beretsky <beretsky4444@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Mr Hipple

Please allow me to keep walking my dog offleash in Baxter Woods. Thank You.

Stanley



Ethan Hipple &lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

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**Baxter Woods**

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**Ethan Hipple** <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>  
To: Teresa Valliere <woodfordscorner@gmail.com>  
Cc: Parks Commission <parkscommission@portlandmaine.gov>

Wed, Apr 17, 2019 at 8:47 AM

Hi Teresa,  
Hope all is well with you. Answers below in red...  
Take care,  
E

**Ethan Hipple**  
Deputy Director  
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Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Wed, Apr 17, 2019 at 8:12 AM Teresa Valliere <[woodfordscorner@gmail.com](mailto:woodfordscorner@gmail.com)> wrote:

Hi Ethan,

Hope you are well!

Been following the Baxter Woods leash proposal and have some questions -

- when is the next public meeting? Will there be time for public comment at the meeting? **Next regular meeting is first Thursday in June. Final date TBD as some staff and commissioners may be out of town that day. Either way, it will be posted here. Public Comment will be allowed for folks who haven't already made public comment on the issue.**
- Is there a Parks Commission meeting on 5/2? There is your event about public spaces, so I am assuming the next regular meeting is on 6/6 **See above**
- still possible to send public comments via email? and to you or the commission? **You bet. We are sharing all email we get on the topic with the commission.**
- the article in the Forecaster you are quoted saying that dogs are allowed off leash at Evergreen. The friends of Evergreen site says dogs on leash (max 25'). I've been stopped with my dog off leash there by cemetery staff in the past, so I am confused. What is the rule? **The article misquoted me and they issued a correction last week. Off leash dogs are allowed in the Evergreen Woods, behind the cemetery. Dogs in the cemetery itself must be on 25-foot leashes.**

[Quoted text hidden]



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

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## ground-nesting birds in baxter woods.

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Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>  
To: david victor <dvictor242@gmail.com>

Fri, Apr 19, 2019 at 10:59 AM

Thanks for the feedback David.

I also would remind you that we are proposing changes for a variety of reasons that have been brought up by the public: both safety/nuisance issues with off leash dogs, as well as the bird sanctuary issues.

Either way, you raise some interesting points. Human and dog activity have altered the natural habitat at Baxter Woods. Our understanding from the experts in the field is that Baxter Woods could serve as exceptional bird habitat if properly managed. Of course, we would have to monitor and evaluate whether that is true once changes are implemented.

We'll be sure to look at the issues you raise as we are coming up with the best possible policy.

Take care,  
Ethan

**Ethan Hipple**  
Deputy Director  
Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department  
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207.808-5400  
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[www.portlandmaine.gov](http://www.portlandmaine.gov)  
Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Fri, Apr 19, 2019 at 9:15 AM david victor <[dvictor242@gmail.com](mailto:dvictor242@gmail.com)> wrote:

thanks for you response, but you neglected to mention the fact that a number of these birds do not like habitat like that of baxter woods. for example, oven birds like sites with little undergrowth ( baxter woods is filled with undergrowth) and wood thrushes like habitats with running water. woodcocks like young forests. i'm sure that among the other species there are water birds and shore birds. so , how many species are we talking about here, especially when we factor in the urban area that the woods are situated in and the preferable area behind evergreen?

finally, you keep ignoring what I keep pointing out: there are feral cats in the deering center neighborhood and many domesticated cats that run free. cats are the biggest killers of birds, by far, in the u.s. why harp on dogs?

david



Ethan Hipple &lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

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## Baxter Woods input

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Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>  
To: E Hamlin <ehamlin@maine.rr.com>

Fri, Apr 26, 2019 at 8:31 AM

Thanks for the thoughtful comments. I will make sure the Parks Commission gets a copy.

Take care,

Ethan

**Ethan Hipple**

Deputy Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

City of Portland

212 Canco Rd, Suite A

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207.808-5400

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[www.portlandmaine.gov](http://www.portlandmaine.gov)

Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Sun, Apr 21, 2019 at 8:34 PM E Hamlin <ehamlin@maine.rr.com> wrote:

Hi, Ethan,

My wife and I were not able to make the City meeting/discussion about Baxter Woods because of our work schedules, but I wanted to weigh in on it before the formal discussion happens in June. For the record, we do not own any dogs (or pets of any kind), but we do enjoy seeing wildlife.

In case you don't have the time or inclination to get through all that follows, I have thought about this quite a bit, and would vote **in favor of a requirement that dogs be leashed**.

If you are patient, my thoughts follow:

I understand how nice it is for dog owners to have a place where they can take their dogs to play and to visit with other dog owners. It is obvious that the trips to the park are absolutely the highlight of the day for the dogs and probably rank high with the owners, so I don't blame them at all for wanting so badly to keep the current system in place. In my experience, most of the dog owners are fairly responsible about keeping their dogs in line and cleaning up after them. Unfortunately, not all are so good, and when walking through the park it is not uncommon to have dogs run up to and sometimes jump up on us, and on a couple of occasions I have been approached by off-leash dogs and had the owners suggest that I not pet them because they are not good with strangers. Overall, a mixed bag.

When people come visit our house for the first time and note the location, I generally hear myself telling them that Baxter Woods is an off leash dog park. I realize there is more to it than that, but it very much feels like the park use is dominated by off leash dogs and their owners. As noted, many are great people and most of the dogs are nice - with a few painfully obvious exceptions. I discussed this with my wife, and we both acknowledged that we tend NOT to enter the park when we go for walks simply because it is usually full of dogs. I have no idea if others feel the same way, but most of the people I see entering the park have dogs with them.

I was surprised to read that Baxter had indicated a desire for the park to serve at least partly as a refuge for birds. I absolutely agree that the presence of off leash dogs is a deterrent to ground-nesting and to some

extend ground-feeding birds. Given the number of squirrels that I have seen with partially missing or obviously deformed or damaged tails and other injuries, I suspect the dogs are pretty rough on anything at or near the ground. The squirrels seem to thrive regardless, but I doubt other animals are as resilient.

I have been reflecting on the park and how it is used more frequently lately, largely because of the publicity around the upcoming discussion about off-leash dogs, but also in light of events where the park has been misused. A couple of these were recent; I think it was you who I corresponded with recently about the guy who backed his pickup over the sidewalk and into the woods to chainsaw and take wood from the side near Hartley Street. There was also a more recent discussion on a neighborhood social media site ("Nextdoor.com") about someone who drilled into some of the large pine trees in Baxter trying to tap them for resin to make some kind of folk medicine. These are a couple of the more egregious abuses I have seen, but because I live directly across from the wooded section of the park along Hartley, I am painfully aware of how many less responsible dog owners walk their dogs along the sidewalk and allow them to defecate in the park without cleaning it up. This happens frequently when I am home and happen to be looking out, so I assume it occurs many times throughout the day. I cringe every time I see a small child walk into that section of woods to pick up a stick or look at something, and on a rainy day when I have the windows open I can sometimes even smell it in my house or when walking by.

I also frequently see several people dumping their leaf and yard waste, plant material from old windowboxes, etc. I have also seen at least one person dumping other organics such as corn husks, vegetable scraps, and other material. Once this included a turkey carcass, but I retrieved that for proper disposal. I also occasionally see people cutting vegetation (something that looks like trout lilies, but I'm not sure that's what they are) and bagging it up to take away - one guy said he was feeding his animals...another one simply apologized and left. I have also seen people cutting small evergreen boughs in the early winter - presumably for holiday decor. Needless to say, all of this drives me a bit nuts. When I see it and have the opportunity I try to dissuade people, but doubt I am getting much traction. It is very frustrating to see how many people use or treat the park in a way that I feel damages or diminishes it.

I guess it's obvious that I have a number of gripes and concerns, but I think maybe some improved signs encouraging people not to take, cut, tap, or harvest things, and to clean up after their dogs might help. I also think that requiring dogs to be leashed would give the park wildlife a better chance to thrive and might encourage people who do NOT own dogs to use the park more.

Thanks very much.

Sincerely,

Eric Hamlin (90 Hartley)



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

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## Keep Baxter Woods leash free, here's why

---

Al Ghanekar <al.ghanekar@gmail.com>  
To: Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Fri, Apr 26, 2019 at 12:45 PM

Thanks for the info, Ethan.

Al Ghanekar 777  
<http://alghanekar.com>  
[al.ghanekar@gmail.com](mailto:al.ghanekar@gmail.com) 777

On Fri, Apr 26, 2019 at 11:15 AM Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov> wrote:

Thanks Al. Appreciate the comments.  
Just so you know, we have 495 acres of open space in Portland where dogs are allowed to run off leash.  
[Check out our Parks page here to find them.](#)

Take care,

Ethan

**Ethan Hipple**

Deputy Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

City of Portland

[212 Canco Rd, Suite A](#)

[Portland, Maine 04103](#)

207.808-5400

[ehipple@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:ehipple@portlandmaine.gov)

[www.portlandmaine.gov](http://www.portlandmaine.gov)

Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Thu, Apr 25, 2019 at 11:16 AM Al Ghanekar <al.ghanekar@gmail.com> wrote:

Hello Mr. Hipple,

Please allow dogs to remain off leash at Baxter Woods. I've had my dog for 3 months and I alternate between Baxter Woods and two others in Sopo. A leash law would just force me to only go to Sopo.

I would never walk him around Baxter Woods on a leash because that would be pointless. Dogs need freedom and stimulation, playing with other dogs. They still are biologically wild animals and need to interact with their kind.

We Portland citizens can enforce people to pick up after their dogs if they are not doing it. Putting in a leash law will reduce these dogs' quality of life.

Al Ghanekar 777  
<http://alghanekar.com>  
[al.ghanekar@gmail.com](mailto:al.ghanekar@gmail.com) 777

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Ethan Hipple &lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

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**Fwd: Best Park in Portland!!!!**

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Parks Commission &lt;parcscommission@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

Fri, May 10, 2019 at 3:17 PM

To: Dory Waxman &lt;mermaidst@gmail.com&gt;, Ethan Hipple &lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;, Matt Coleman &lt;mcoleman@portlandmaine.gov&gt;, Sally Deluca &lt;sld@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

Please see below email.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Jason Kaplan** <jasonrkaplan@msn.com>

Date: Thu, May 9, 2019 at 6:12 PM

Subject: Best Park in Portland!!!!

To: [parcscommission@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:parcscommission@portlandmaine.gov) <[parcscommission@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:parcscommission@portlandmaine.gov)>

Hello to whom ever is reading this.

I just wanted to thank you for having such a wonderful park. The baxter woods park I have been walking threw my entire life. From as a Kid chasing my father threw it on my bike, walking to Deering High school for 4 years. And now as a just someone who enjoys a safe fun play to enjoy nature. The dog community there is wonderful!!! so many happy dogs. Every time you go there are respectful dogs there playing and so much fun to watch and enjoy. Even on the worst days I can go there and watch them play and frolic and feel better. On cold winter days when no one is in the park there are still the loving dog owners who are there clicking around with their cleats trying to stay upright on the ice. I am really sorry its easier for people to complain and people don't appreciate the finer things in life and wright you about all there happy experiences. It would be a real shame if you were to kick so many happy people out of the park with a dog leash law and create such a hostel and dangerous environment for humans and dogs there. I hope you guys have done more research then last time and learned that 25 foot leashes just don't work and are very destructive of the environment. I can't imagine going there and not seeing smiling faces watching people and there dogs playing threw the park like its intended to be. I know people take jobs and everyone wants to make a change that they can say "I made that happen" but leashes make dogs more aggressive and also less trained. Every time I've gone there its the dog crew, that have bought houses in the neighborhood so they could let there dogs play off leash there, that are picking up the trash from all the school kids and calling the cops when they see people drinking or smoking there. I remember the park before the dog people were there and it was not as nice and people didn't take pride in the park. You go there now and people smile when they say this is my park, "I walk my dog here twice a day and love chatting with my dog's friends owners". I understand your hoping that birds that don't exist there will hopefully move in but it doesn't make sense to pick on the dogs. What about the fox, cats, hocks, skunks.... I really hope your not going to try and leash them. It just seems sad to me to ruin something so positive that Portland has for maybe and what ifs. Its a safe park surrounded by friendly neighbors. It would be like suggesting to go to evergreen woods where its hard to see and homeless people pop out from around the bend and there are tones of ticks and no parking with limited hours. 25 foot leashes would be dangerous for dogs. They would

be able to play due to choking/ strangulation, rope burns and it would make it hard for runners and bikers to enjoy the park. There's no way they could predict a 25 foot leash. If you're worried about the ground nesting birds maybe you could do something like they do for piping plovers. Where they put a fence and a top on it. So the birds won't at least eat them or their eggs. But it's nature and that's why we love the park. Who are we to control nature and say who lives. We all wish we could live in harmony but everyone has an off day, even dogs and it's not our job to ruin it for everyone but to just smile and say hi to people and hope by being kind we can make their day better.

I hope you don't ruin an amazing park for what ifs and what could be while bending the rules for yourself but you will do what ever you want to.

Thank you for your time and I hope you continue to allow me and everyone else to enjoy the amazing park Baxter provided for us.

Jason Kaplan.  
Life time Portland resident

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You received this message because you are subscribed to the Google Groups "Parks Commission" group. To post to this group, send email to [parkscormission@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:parkscormission@portlandmaine.gov).



Ethan Hipple &lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

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## Baxter Woods Leash Law

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Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>  
To: Jennifer Baldwin <jenbaldwin563@yahoo.com>

Wed, May 22, 2019 at 12:28 PM

Thanks for your comments Jennifer. I'll make sure the Parks Commission gets them as well.

Take care,  
Ethan

**Ethan Hipple**  
Deputy Director  
Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department  
City of Portland  
212 Canco Rd, Suite A  
Portland, Maine 04103  
207.808-5400  
[ehipple@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:ehipple@portlandmaine.gov)

[www.portlandmaine.gov](http://www.portlandmaine.gov)  
Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Tue, May 21, 2019 at 8:58 PM Jennifer Baldwin <jenbaldwin563@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dear Ethan,

I have been a frequent visitor to Baxter Woods (minimum 1 often 2-3 visits per day) for the last two years since I got my first dog. Prior to that, I would often visit with my sister's dog while dog sitting him, we both live within walking distance of the woods. As I understand it, the developers of the property the abuts Baxter Woods were required to do some environmental impact study as part of the purchase of the previous Maine Girls Academy and determined that the presence of unleashed dogs had a negative impact on ground feeding birds. There are still birds in the woods. I've witnessed three different woodpecker species, turkeys, warblers, owls, crows and the famous falcon from Deering Park was sited there last fall.

I am both a dog lover and a bird lover. I've witnessed many species in the woods on our regular visits and don't believe dogs are negatively impacting the bird sanctuary, putting them on leashes will not change their patterns.

I am opposed to the suggestion that dogs should be required to be on leash at all times in Baxter Woods. It's not necessary. One of the things I love about my neighborhood is the access to the woods and the dog owners who frequent that space. My two year old dog and I have developed a social circle of dog walkers and dogs with various personalities during the last two years. It's often a respite from my high stress professional career and the challenges of family member dealing with Stage IV cancer treatment. Like-minded insofar as our interest in four-legged friends, we've developed a community. I fear this ruling should it pass would upset the patterns and the support I receive daily from my

neighborhood.

Both my dog and I were attacked by a dog (Sherman Rosenberg) who was not under voice command in the fall of 2017. We took this up with Rue and the prosecutor and several months later another neighbor was attacked by the same dog on a sidewalk near the woods. This unruly canine was on leash during the second attack but still exhibited similar aggressive behavior. While I don't think Sherman has the skills or the owner to command his behavior off leash, I'm not letting this experience keep my away from the woods.

I would much prefer some ruling that would limit the human practice of littering the woods both with trash and feces. That has presented a bigger issue for me in the past.

I doubt I will make it to the next public hearing on this topic but wanted to share my thoughts and support for keeping Baxter Woods as a safe area for responsible dog owners to let their dogs frolic off leash.

Thanks,  
Jennifer Baldwin



Ethan Hipple &lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

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## another Baxter Woods question

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Ken Jones <KenJayJay@hotmail.com>  
To: Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Sun, Jun 2, 2019 at 1:56 PM

Hi Mr. Hipple,

I wrote to you a little over a month ago for some information about dogs in Baxter woods. I appreciated your quick response to my questions.

I have another question now.

Amid the concerns about dogs in Baxter, I haven't heard any similar outcry about the campers in the woods leaving litter. Campers are what I call the people who sleep overnight in Baxter woods. Surely their presence on a regular basis must have some negative impact on the woods, I'm guessing even more so than people walking dogs.

I walk in the woods very early in the morning. I've seen individuals and hiking groups and bicycle groups sleeping in hammocks and tents. Since these campers mostly leave by the time the late morning regulars come through, I don't think many people are aware of them. But they do leave an enormous amount of litter behind. Actually, to be fair, the bicycle group that slept in hammocks did not leave any litter behind.

Last Friday morning (May 31), a couple set up a large tent off the field on the school side of the woods. several dogs started rummaging around at this camp site because of food the pair left near what looked like their camp fire from the night before. When another walker and I tried to get the dogs away, the man in the tent became quite rude and threatening.

I called the police. they showed up very quickly and had the pair take down their tent. the pair left the woods about an hour later, but they also did not remove their litter.

I've attached some pictures I took that afternoon. the pictures include a plastic garbage bag full of who knows what, drink cans, and a sawed off tree limb near their fire. Those white piece of paper you see in the one picture are used toilet paper. This is not the first time in the last year we've seen such evidence of people defecating in Baxter woods.

As much as some people seem outraged by dogs in the woods, I find it hard to believe this kind of thing doesn't seem to concern anyone.

So now to my question: Who is supposed to clean up stuff such as this mess the campers left last Friday? This mess was just from two people one night.

I pick up several beer cans weekly and often several pieces of clothing, even shoes and backpacks.

But I draw the line at cleaning up used toilet paper. There are several of the regular late morning dog walkers, much more ambitious than I am, who come through with trash bags and pick up litter.

Thanks for your help,

Ken Jones

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**4 attachments**



**thumbnail\_IMG\_1653[2].jpg**  
481K



**thumbnail\_IMG\_1654[1].jpg**  
579K



**thumbnail\_IMG\_1655[2].jpg**  
448K



**thumbnail\_IMG\_1652[1].jpg**  
574K



Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

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## another Baxter Woods question

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Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

Mon, Jun 3, 2019 at 3:40 PM

To: Ken Jones <kenjayjay@hotmail.com>, Jill Mulkern <jmulkern@portlandmaine.gov>

Hi Ken,

My Ranger informs me that the camp has been removed. Please let us know of any other issues that come up.

Take care,

Ethan

**Ethan Hipple**

Deputy Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

City of Portland

212 Canco Rd, Suite A

Portland, Maine 04103

207.808-5400

[ehipple@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:ehipple@portlandmaine.gov)

[www.portlandmaine.gov](http://www.portlandmaine.gov)

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On Mon, Jun 3, 2019 at 6:52 AM Ken Jones <kenjayjay@hotmail.com> wrote:

Thanks, I appreciate your quick response.

Ken

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**From:** Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

**Sent:** Sunday, June 2, 2019 3:17 PM

**To:** Ken Jones; Jill Mulkern; Matthew Coleman

**Subject:** Re: another Baxter Woods question

Thanks for letting us know about the trash. Unfortunately, we are regularly cleaning up after people and removing campsites in Baxter Woods and throughout many parks and open spaces in the city.

Our Rangers will swing through and get this.

Take care,

Ethan

Notice: Under Maine law, documents - including e-mails - in the possession of public officials or city employees about government business may be classified as public records. There are very few exceptions. As a result, please be advised that what is written in an e-mail could be released to the public and/or the media if requested.



Ethan Hipple &lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

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## Baxter Woods Comment

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Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>  
To: Logan Puck <logpuck@gmail.com>  
Cc: Justin Costa <jcosta@portlandmaine.gov>

Tue, Jun 4, 2019 at 12:39 PM

Thanks for the comments Logan. We are working on a compromise proposal right now, to allow a limited amount of off-leash dog activity there.

Keep an eye on [Parks Commission agendas here](#) if you'd like to attend a meeting. Ultimately, any change to an ordinance will need to be considered and approved by City Council.

I will share your comments with the Parks Commission.

Take care,  
Ethan  
**Ethan Hipple**  
Deputy Director  
Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department  
City of Portland  
212 Canco Rd, Suite A  
Portland, Maine 04103  
207.808-5400  
[ehipple@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:ehipple@portlandmaine.gov)

[www.portlandmaine.gov](http://www.portlandmaine.gov)  
Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Tue, Jun 4, 2019 at 12:15 PM Logan Puck <logpuck@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Deputy Director Hipple,

I was distressed to learn of the proposal to prohibit off-leash dogs from entering Baxter Woods. My family and I have lived in the Woodford's Corner area for three years now and we bring our dog to Baxter Woods four to five times a week. It's a great place for both us and our dog to exercise and socialize with others. I have made many good friends with other people who walk their dogs at Baxter Woods. I even regularly schedule walks with someone who I met at the park because both us and our dogs get along so well.

Baxter Woods is an ideal space for off-leash dogs. The wooded setting gives dogs the ability to run, meet other dogs, and explore, thus stimulating their minds, senses, and bodies. Additionally, having the dogs on a walking path gives them a purpose and thus reduces potential conflicts. I try to avoid fenced in dog parks with no real walking paths, such as the one on Valley Street, because the dogs get bored and often end up fighting with each other. Moreover, dogs that are leashed tend to become fearful and defensive when coming across one another as opposed to when they have the freedom to run away.

In addition, walking an off-leash dog is much more convenient for myself and many others who have infants and toddlers. Pushing a stroller through the park while also holding onto the dog with a leash can be quite an unwieldy experience. The elderly and people with disabilities may also have trouble walking their dogs on a leash and, therefore, Baxter Woods serves as an excellent space for them to take their dogs, exercise, and socialize with others.

Finally, most of the people I see in Baxter Woods are fellow dog walkers. Making it an unfriendly space for dog owners could turn the park into an unfrequented area that serves as an ideal space for individuals who want to

drink alcohol and do drugs out of view of the public and law enforcement.

I hope you will reconsider this proposal. Baxter Woods is a special space that promotes community, health, and well-being. Please don't take that away from us. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Logan Puck

83 Woodford St  
Portland, ME 04103



Ethan Hipple &lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

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## Baxter Woods - Off Leash Hi Tech Smartphone App Solution

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Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>  
To: Joel Bolton <joelbolton@gmail.com>

Fri, Jun 7, 2019 at 11:09 AM

Hi Joel,  
Thanks for the email and the out of the box thinking!

We'll certainly look at that along with our other options. Right now we are considering a compromise to allow off-leash dogs during certain hours. There will be more info coming on that as the next public meeting gets closer. It's currently scheduled for July 18--[keep an eye on the Parks Commission Agenda here](#).

Take care,

Ethan

**Ethan Hipple**

Deputy Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

City of Portland

212 Canco Rd, Suite A

Portland, Maine 04103

207.808-5400

[ehipple@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:ehipple@portlandmaine.gov)

[www.portlandmaine.gov](http://www.portlandmaine.gov)

Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Thu, Jun 6, 2019 at 5:11 PM Joel Bolton <joelbolton@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Ethan,

My wife and I are part of the "dog community" at Baxter Woods. Through the years we've had three Golden Retrievers. All have enjoyed off leash privileges there. As responsible dog owners... which seem to be the vast majority who bring dogs to Baxter... we clean up after our dog. We certainly leash up our dogs if we see others in the park who may be fearful of dogs, when we see small children, track teams running, or other groups enjoying the park. In our 15+ years of near daily trips to Baxter with hundreds of interactions of dogs (if not thousands actually), it is rare occurrence to see a dog act in a vicious manner to other dogs. And I don't think I've ever seen one vicious interaction with a human in those years. Good dogs bring together and good neighbors. Most all seem committed to respecting the underlying vision of Mayor Baxter's park. And I echo the many, many public comments that speak much more eloquently than I can as to how important Baxter is to providing a safe, beautiful space where dogs can be off leash for the exercise they crave without having to drive and further pollute our climate with carbon.

That said, I especially want to commend and acknowledge the signage placed in the park, especially the "Dog Ownership" signs. It's dignified language clearly states the expected behavior and spirit of park enjoyment by all that we as dog owners are responsible for. If all dog owners heed that sign, there should be no problem keeping Baxter an off leash park.

SOLUTION????? I would encourage the Council to consider a low-cost, hi-tech solution. How about putting Smart Lights (solar powered and wi-fi driven) at the various entry points to the park. Those lights when activated would indicate to dog owners the need to "leash up". Any school group, after school group, track team, or anyone sensitive/fearful of dogs who are entering the park could trigger the Smart Lights from their smartphone app... sort of like how I can control my Nest thermostat remotely. Dog owners who use the park could also receive an alert notification that they should "leash up". The alert would time out after perhaps 30 minutes or 1 hour if the "sensitive/fearful" group or individual fails to deactivate the alert or "renew" it. Might be worth exploring. Certainly the technology exists for this. And I suspect the City might even be able to engage

our school computer science programs in a competition to create this, and/or I've bet that many of us who want to keep Baxter off leash would fund a Leash Alert app.

Kind regards,  
Joel Bolton - April Fry & Camper  
149 Ashmont St.  
Portland  
207.221.7600



Ethan Hipple &lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

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**Fwd: Baxter Woods**


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Allison Carroll &lt;acarroll@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

Fri, Jun 7, 2019 at 1:51 PM

To: Amy Segal <amybellsegal12@gmail.com>, Ana Lagunez <analagunez@gmail.com>, Brian Batson <bbatson@portlandmaine.gov>, Caitie Whelan <caitie.whelan@gmail.com>, Chelsea Malacara <chelsea.malacara@gmail.com>, Colette Bouchard <coletteb1821@gmail.com>, Craig Lapine <craig@cultivatingcommunity.org>, Cynthia Loebenstein <cloebenstein@yahoo.com>, Dory Waxman <mermaidst@gmail.com>, Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>, Marie Gray <mariegray263@aol.com>, Matt Coleman <mcoleman@portlandmaine.gov>, Michael Mertaugh <michaelmertaugh@gmail.com>, Nathan Robbins <npalmer.robbins@gmail.com>, Sally Deluca <sld@portlandmaine.gov>, Zack Anchors <zack.anchors@gmail.com>

Another comment from the public for your records.

Take care,

*Alli Carroll*

Senior Administrative Officer  
 City of Portland, Parks, Recreation & Facilities  
 212 Canco Road, Suite A, Portland, Maine 04103  
 207.808.5428

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Peggy Akers** <kizzypax@maine.rr.com>  
 Date: Thu, May 23, 2019 at 7:02 AM  
 Subject: Fwd: Baxter Woods  
 To: <parkscormission@portlandmaine.gov>

Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Peggy Akers <kizzypax@maine.rr.com>  
**Date:** May 22, 2019 at 2:56:26 PM EDT  
**To:** parkscormission@portlandmaine.gov  
**Subject:** Baxter Woods

How disappointed I felt after the long meeting last month when so many of us shared our thoughts and feelings and concerns about changes in the leash law in the park. It seemed that emailing was more important than the passionate voices of the neighborhood dog walkers.

I have had the privilege of walking in that park for over twenty years and meeting so many wonderful friends and dogs. I am a nurse practitioner who works hard to help folks age in place. Older residents walk with their pets there daily and meet friends and comrades. They keep active both physically and mentally. It is a joy to

talk together while our dogs run and play.

I have read what Mr Baxter wrote and knowing that he was a big dog **lover** as are other members of his family...I do not believe this is what he was wanting for the use of the park. You have closed the Western Cemetery which was a most special place to be with dogs. I remember how fun it was to watch nuns and teens talk and laugh together as their dogs played. Now you will try and take this joy from us.....please please listen to all our voices. Evergreen cemetery is open for non dog folks and it is so beautiful. Let us have our one little corner of Portland.

Thanks for listening

Peggy Akers

[187 Concord street](#)

[Portland, Maine 04103](#)

207 232 7695

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Ethan Hipple &lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

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**Question: July 18th Parks Commission Meeting...**

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D Leland &lt;lelanddm@gmail.com&gt;

Tue, Jun 11, 2019 at 8:10 AM

To: "Lesperance, Marc" &lt;Marc.Lesperance@anthem.com&gt;

Cc: "sld@portlandmaine.gov" &lt;sld@portlandmaine.gov&gt;, "ehipple@portlandmaine.gov"

&lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;, Parks Commission &lt;parkscommission@portlandmaine.gov&gt;, Anne Callender &lt;anne@whipplecallender.com&gt;

**Ethan and Sally,**

I was negligent in not thanking you! I do appreciate our friendly conversation in the coffee shop. Thanks so much.

– Dawn

On Sun, Jun 9, 2019 at 10:02 AM Lesperance, Marc <Marc.Lesperance@anthem.com> wrote:

Sally, Ethan: First off thanks for meeting with Dawn and me on Friday, 5/31. We appreciate the extra effort the Parks Department is putting into the desired ordinance change for Baxter Woods. As we discussed briefly on 5/31, I am following up on our request to be allowed the opportunity to present PowerPoint slides at the 7/18 Parks Commission meeting, in support of off-leash dog-walking and our community of family walkers at Baxter Woods.

Since 5/31 I've reviewed the Ch.18 City Code Ordinance covering Parks Commission meetings, and see the following from Ch. 18:

*(8) Adopting reasonable rules for the conduct of its meetings, which rules shall include provisions for public comment.*

*(Ord. No. 50-83, 6-20-83; Ord. No. 70-09/10, 10-5-09; Order 203-13/14, 5-28-2014; Ord. No. 116-14/15, 1-5-2015)*

I haven't see anything in Ch. 18 or anywhere else in the City Code that precludes the Commission from granting anyone the right to make a presentation. Nor does our request seem unreasonable or improper given the impact of the ordinance change. But digging deeper into the City Code I found the Council's Rules of Procedure for conducting meetings – with the following provision noted that does allow the City Council to grant additional time for public comment:

*8. Persons addressing the Council on an item prior to start of deliberation on such item by the Council shall be permitted to speak only once on an item, and shall limit their remarks on each item to three (3) minutes. **From time to time, the Presiding Officer may grant an extension of this three (3) minute requirement.***

I would imagine the Parks Commission meetings would have the same or more generous allowances for public comment – especially as the proposed ordinance change in Baxter Woods will directly impact the daily devotions of over 1,000 Portland residents. We are seeking no more than 10-15 minutes of continuous presentation time at the 7/18 Parks Commission meeting, for which 5 or more people will gladly relinquish their public comment time.

We respectfully ask again that the Parks Commission allow us this additional time beyond the 3 minute allotments to present at the 7/18 meeting.

Thanks, Marc

**Marc Lesperance**, [103 Candlewyck Terrace, Portland, ME 04102](#)

**Tel:** 207-774-6584; **Cell:** 207-329-4953; **Work:** 207-209-0517

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Ethan Hipple &lt;ehipple@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

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**Baxter Woods**

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Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>  
To: Teresa Valliere <tvallier@maine.rr.com>

Mon, Jul 15, 2019 at 9:02 AM

Thanks Teresa,  
We will add to the record!  
Take care,  
Ethan

**Ethan Hipple**  
Deputy Director  
Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department  
City of Portland  
212 Canco Rd, Suite A  
Portland, Maine 04103  
207.808-5400  
[ehipple@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:ehipple@portlandmaine.gov)

[www.portlandmaine.gov](http://www.portlandmaine.gov)

Portland, Maine | Yes. Life's good here.

On Mon, Jul 15, 2019 at 7:49 AM Teresa Valliere <tvallier@maine.rr.com> wrote:

Hello Ethan and Parks Commission,

I'm hoping I can still offer my perspective on the **proposed leash law change for Baxter Woods** up for discussion this week. Unfortunately, I cannot attend the meeting due to conflict.

Here's why I think the current rules should remain in place

- Within a 15 min walk of Woodfords Corner there are 8 public green spaces, many underutilized. Baxter Woods is the only one where dogs can run off-lead and many dog owners use the space appropriately.
- The city comp plan promotes walkable neighborhoods, but to get to an "off-leash" dog park should Baxter rules change, people like myself will have to drive to one of the 2 dog parks in the city. This is a waste of gas and time for many people.
- The city wants people to use the green spaces - keeping parks active keeps them safer. The only folks in Baxter Woods in the early mornings are the dog walkers and some joggers.
- In the 17 years I've been walking there in the early mornings, I have never seen any problems with dogs interfering with kids, joggers, etc, nor have I ever seen people with small children in the park in those hours
- All the owners in the early morning have voice control of their dogs
- I hear and see birds within the woods every day (except deepest cold winter days) - birds are clearly nesting there. There are plentiful woods in the back of Evergreen, and there are multitudes of birds there as well and dogs are allowed off leash. I trust the birds figure it out.
- How this will be enforced if it should pass? Will the city waste resources monitoring something that doesn't require monitoring?
- I doubt Governor Baxter leashed his dogs on his walks in the woods. I read the materials presented from the city website, and believe the intention is to prevent the cutting of trees or removing the water features. There is no language about leashing dogs.

If the decision is to make a change, I propose that the rule be dogs off-leash, under voice command, until 9 AM all year round.

Thank you,

Teresa Valliere, LCSW, LADC, CCS

**Valliere Counseling and Professional Support**  
phone 207.233.9276

**MAILING LIST**

<http://valliereco.com>

FMI about counseling, supervision, training or consultation, please contact me at [tvallier@maine.rr.com](mailto:tvallier@maine.rr.com)

<http://Therapists.PsychologyToday.com/rms/68128>

**Office: 57 Revere Street #1**  
**Portland, ME 04103**

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Teresa Valliere  
[tvallier@maine.rr.com](mailto:tvallier@maine.rr.com)



Allison Carroll <acarroll@portlandmaine.gov>

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## Baxter Woods off leash policy

1 message

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**Kasey Little** <kasey.r.kraft@gmail.com>

Tue, Jul 16, 2019 at 3:56 PM

To: parkscommission@portlandmaine.gov

Thank you for considering my comment on the Baxter Woods off leash policy. I currently live at [20 Riverview St.](#) and strongly wish that Baxter Woods continues to allow dogs off leash. We bring our dog, Appa, to Baxter Woods most days of the week. This gives him a great and stimulating opportunity to exercise, and it's one of the most pleasant places we can go because it's almost entirely shaded. We enjoy meeting other people and dogs there. He is well behaved, and we are responsible dog owners who always pick up behind him. It is important to us to respect and appreciate the natural setting and wildlife habitat.

Please do not change the off leash policy. This area is our favorite place to walk our dog, and if this policy is changed, it would significantly decrease how often we would visit.

Thank you,

Kasey Little



Allison Carroll <acarroll@portlandmaine.gov>

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## Baxter woods

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**Audrey Bergeron** <audrey.b.bergeron@gmail.com>  
To: parkscommission@portlandmaine.gov

Wed, Jul 17, 2019 at 12:32 PM

To the Portland Parks Commission,

I would first like to thank you for the time and effort that you put in to help make Portland a great place to live. I understand that you do this as volunteers and appreciate your conservation efforts.

I attended and spoke at the meeting about the Baxter woods proposed leash law changes on April 4th. I have seen the updated compromise proposal and would like to ask you to focus on the big picture: conservation of areas for wildlife and maintaining parks for the people of Portland to enjoy. I think that the plan to revitalize a section of the woods that appears favorable for birds is a great idea. This area can be fenced off and monitored to see if the bird population grows.

However, I am asking you to reconsider enacting a leash law in the rest of Baxter woods. Such a policy change would negatively impact the lives of hundreds of people who use this space on a regular basis. There is also no guarantee that this would help to increase the number and types of birds in Baxter Woods. The study the Parks Dept has commissioned is not conclusive on this and even explains that much of the area does not meet the environmental requirements for ground nesting birds such as more sunlight and underbrush. Add to that the impacts of global warming, Forest Ave traffic, and the development of Stevens Ave. My fear is that the proposed policy changes will have no impact on the birds and will only diminish the number of people who enjoy this space. My suggestion would be to hold off on implementing any leash law changes until the habitat restoration area can be completed and shown to result in an increase in the bird population in this area.

Thank you for your time.  
Audrey Bergeron  
14 Florence St Apt 2

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## Baxter Woods leash law - unintended consequences of change

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Carolyn Ehringhaus <carolyn.ehringhaus@gmail.com>

Tue, Jul 16, 2019 at 12:08 PM

To: parkscommission@portlandmaine.gov, JST@portlandmaine.gov, Ethan Hipple <ehipple@portlandmaine.gov>

I have been walking in Baxter Woods daily since moving to my home on James Street in 2002. As an almost-retired senior, I now spend two or three hours per day in the woods in the late morning and early to mid-afternoon.

My previous letters on the proposed leash rule change focused on a broad range of topics related to these woods and off-leash dogs. At this time, I would like to talk about unintended consequences: e.g., by requiring dogs to be leashed, rather than solving problems, a host of more serious issues may emerge.

As a senior female, I am worried about maintaining the level of safety that has been a prime feature of these woods. Currently, I know that if I fall or felt threatened by a human, eventually another dog owner will walk by. I also know that the woods are no longer a destination for drug dealers/users. I believe the presence of unleashed dogs and their owners has made these woods less appealing for these sorts of activities.

Second, dogs on leash are less predictable because they cannot use their normal social cues when interacting with other dogs. With all dogs on leash, some tend to become anxious and protective. As an example, my worst dog incident over the past 18 years has been with a pit bull who pulled away from his owner, running a distance to attack my dog. I have never encountered an unleashed dog who was this overtly aggressive.

Third, as winter approaches and the trails become icy, I suspect there will be many more calls to 911 due to falls and broken bones. I have had to let go of my leash more than once when my dog pulled just slightly during the winter months, as it becomes impossible to avoid walking on ice. I tend to walk during the "off hours," e.g., not during the before and after work crowd when the "compromise" for off leash may occur. In order to be compliant with the change, I would have to always hang on to the leash. I am not eager to fall on my elbow or hip, given my bone density results, and I know that most of us have to give full concentration to navigating ice.

Finally, suicide among all ages has risen, and our senior population is especially vulnerable. These woods and the dog walking community provide socialization for owners as well as dogs. I have talked with several senior women who say they will not be able to go to the woods any longer if their dogs have to be on leash, as maintaining balance while walking along paths with roots and stones plus holding the leash (and frequently a poop bag) will be too difficult. Some of these seniors cannot walk far; they sit on the benches and watch their dogs play off leash (and many cannot afford to hire a daily dog walker). Falls and death are linked statistically in this age group, as is isolation and suicide. Again, please consider the unintended consequences of this new requirement.

Baxter Woods has been invaluable in providing community to many neighbors, free of charge, walkable from home for many. Baxter Woods offers ineffable value to our local community, as noted by the overwhelming reaction against changing the off leash policy. The "compromise" of early morning and late evening off leash hours is unacceptable given that it penalizes anyone whose schedule does not fit these hours; unlike the beaches, the woods are quieter during the daytime hours, especially on weekdays.

I would argue for monitoring and collecting baseline data regarding bird nesting before any changes are established. I would also encourage enforcement of current rules and an attempt to educate prior to making a change, as new users come into the woods without appreciating its history. Finally, I would remind you to beware of internet trolls who seem to derive pleasure from inflaming any rational discussion of the situation.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Ehringhaus  
11 James St.



Allison Carroll <acarroll@portlandmaine.gov>

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## Baxter Wood Off-leash Policy

1 message

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**ksp@gwi.net** <ksp@gwi.net>

Wed, Jul 17, 2019 at 9:28 PM

To: parkscommission@portlandmaine.gov

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing you as I will not be able to attend the 7/18/2019 meeting to discuss the policy as I am working.

I would like you to know that I am in favor of the off-leash policy. I have walked my dogs there for 14 years and I have had no problems. My worst encounters with others in the woods have been runners & bikers who have almost run me over, not my dogs. So if you require dogs be on leash then you will need to also deal with the runners and the bikers. Are you prepared to deal with all that will come out of changing the policy of Off-leash dogs?

We lost the off-leash policy in the cemetery and now the cemetery is no longer as kept up as it was when the dog owners were allowed to walk. The same will happen to Baxter Woods.

I am saddened by the few overriding the many who enjoy the community that abides at Baxter Woods. I kind of think you will change the policy as there seems to be someone pushing this agenda and you don't really care about what facts are presented to you by the many who are wishing you to keep the off-leash policy.

The Valley dog park is not the same. There, all the dogs must interact. I have always walked my dogs at Baxter and rarely have seen other dogs or other people except for the runners and bikers on occasion. There are times at the woods when other many gather together.

Please take into consideration what I have presented.

Thank you very much,

Karen st. Peter



Allison Carroll &lt;acarroll@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

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**Fwd: Portland Reisent Letter:Baxter Woods**

1 message

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**Laura** <lzg@maine.rr.com>

Thu, Jul 18, 2019 at 10:46 AM

To: parkscommission@portlandmaine.gov

7.18.19

Hello - To Whom It May Concern at the Portland Parks Commission:

I am a Portland resident – residing on Hartley Street along Baxter woods. We have lived here for close to 8 years and Baxter woods was one of the most important reasons why we chose our home in this area of Portland. With my Husband, 2 boys and our 3-1/2 year old dog Bowie we visit, play, walk, run, in Baxter woods 2x daily!

This is by far the most important part of our day being together as a family and we know that Bowie has his time to be and play and meet up with other dogs along the way. He is so social and needs these small interactive play times as we walk along the trails. We have had nothing but wonderful interactions with others over the last 8 years.

As a woman, if I walk Bowie alone, I feel safe in these woods because I know that there are other dog walkers in the woods getting their nature walks in, loving the beauty and the quiet, running into friends that we have met over the years and chatting as we meet up and then walk together with our dogs.

There is a wonderful community of dog owners who visit from all over Portland who are responsible and caring. If Baxter became a leashed park - it would send folks elsewhere and when that happens the homeless move in - making it a prime spot for Alcohol, drug abuse and violent crime as it was for so much of its history.

Baxter Woods has become a cleaner, safer and more welcoming park because of the dog walking community. In terms of a bird sanctuary – it already is. It is important for Portland to receive the results from the bird count/study before making conclusions. Governor Baxter intended the legacy for Baxter Woods to be left for Portland residents - He walked his dogs off leash his entire life through these woods and I think he would agree to keep it a leash-less park.

Baxter Woods is our beloved sactuary, a place our whole family feels safe, where we can visit nature. It is clean, beautiful and so special. Our dog is the most happy when he is in Baxter Woods. Our family is so happy we can be together with our dog and meet up in Baxter woods daily with an amazing community of dog owners. Please keep Baxter Woods an Off-Leash Park.

Thank you,

Laura Zoulamis

[48 Hartley Street](#)[Portland, ME](#)

207.332.3211





Allison Carroll <acarroll@portlandmaine.gov>

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## Baxter Woods

1 message

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mark nakell <nakell@maine.rr.com>

Thu, Jul 18, 2019 at 11:14 AM

To: parkscommission@portlandmaine.gov

Hello. I am writing to add my voice to those NOT wanting rules requiring leashing dogs in Baxter Woods. For a dozen years, this has been my dog's favorite place to take a walk along the trails, to chase balls, and explore. It's conveniently in our neighborhood, offers a variety of paths for walking, and is usually only in use by a dozen people (most with dogs!). I'm about to get a new puppy, and I'm very much looking forward to continuing doing all of this. I have never witnessed anything in this park which was the least bit threatening to anyone.

Mark Nakell  
76 Mackworth Street  
Portland ME 04103



Allison Carroll &lt;acarroll@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

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## FYI: Baxter Woods Leash-law Proposal - Documents for Parks Commissioners to review prior to the 7/18 meeting...

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**Lesperance, Marc** <Marc.Lesperance@anthem.com>

Mon, Jul 15, 2019 at 1:34 PM

To: Parks Commission <parkscommission@portlandmaine.gov>

Cc: Anne Callender <anne@whipplecallender.com>, "Leland. Dawn" <lelanddm@gmail.com>

**To the Parks Commissioners:** Attached please find the [PowerPoint slides](#) we had intended to present at the 7/18 meeting, as they relate to your consideration of the Parks Department's leash-law proposal for Baxter Woods. Despite being assured that if we requested the opportunity to present under the auspices of an official community group, which we did through the Deering Center Neighborhood Association, as you should be fully aware - that request was denied. We are not sure who, why or under what authority this decision was made – but as we seemingly have no recourse otherwise, we will press on.

We are sharing the PowerPoint slides with the Commissioners, and will do our best to present them in their entirety on 7/18 - albeit not necessarily in the same order. We believe we effectively rebut all of the reasons the City has put forth for the leash-law proposal in Baxter Woods. Our hope is to convince enough Commissioners that this unprecedented leash law proposal is not acceptable and should be voted down.

Also attached is a [pdf of survey signatures](#) the three of us collected during random visits to Baxter Woods between late April to early July 2019. Applying statistical sampling calculations to the 400+ names collected, we estimate at 90% confidence that during this time there were over 1,000 unique users of Baxter Woods – 98% of whom support some sort of off leash dog-walking.

We will try our best to manage the 3 minutes of individual time we are allowed at the meeting. We've already identified dozens of speakers who intend to use their time allowed in the City code. We will all argue that since there has NEVER been a leash-law in Baxter Woods, it is our belief that unless the City makes a compelling case for why one should be enacted now - there should not be a leash-law going forward. We are interested in hearing what truths the Parks Commissioners will accept or ignore, and whether the Commissioners believe the 73 year history and track record of Baxter Woods and the words and intentions of Gov. Baxter should be honored and respected going forward, or discounted and set aside to approve the leash-law proposal.

We look forward to meeting with you on Thursday.

Thanks, Marc

**Marc Lesperance**, 103 Candlewyck Terrace, Portland, ME 04102

**Tel:** 207-774-6584; **Cell:** 207-329-4953; **Work:** 207-209-0517

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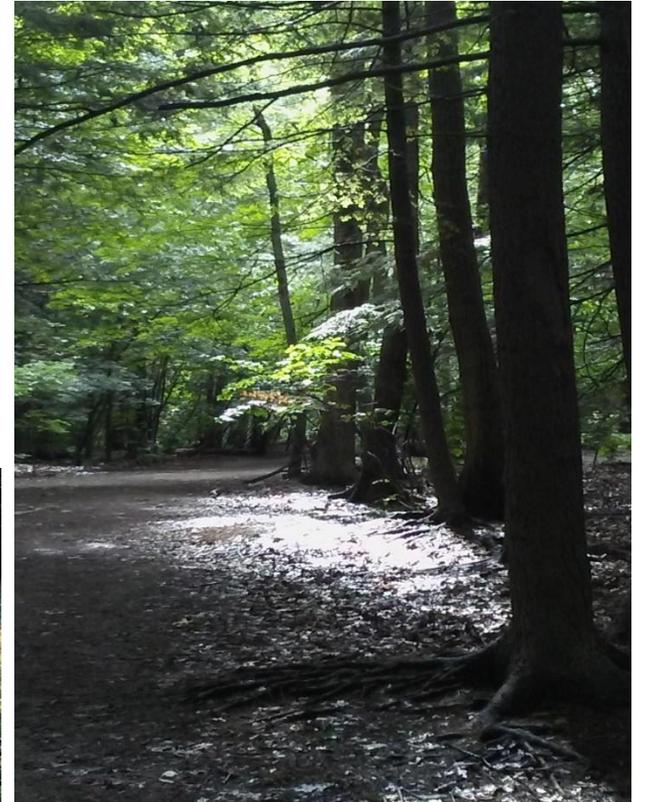
# Baxter Woods

## Preserving Our Way of Life



# This is Baxter Woods

- **It's beautiful** - Baxter Woods is more green, lush and gorgeous than ever
- **It's an active place** – Busy at times, Baxter Woods has hundreds of daily visitors: pedestrians, dog-walkers, runners, bicyclists, school groups & others
- **It's our favorite place to bring our dogs** – We have surveyed over 400 users of Baxter Woods – 98% supporting off-leash dog-walking. We know we can go elsewhere.



# This is Baxter Woods



- **It's our outdoor gym and place of daily devotion** - People come for exercise and to seek peace in the forest setting, a physical, communal and spiritual experience for so many
- **It's a diverse place** – school groups, daycare groups and neighborhood citizens regularly walk through the Woods to learn about and commune with nature, and meet friends, old and new
- **It's a place for adventure** - Winter snow and ice make walking a lot more interesting and challenging for people and dogs, dogs chase squirrels and kids play and build forts
- **It's a learning place** - Some folks train their pups to be good dog citizens, and in turn become better dog owners

# This is Baxter Woods

- **The City appreciates Gov. Baxter's legacy** - City Arborist Jeff Tarling is quoted as saying in 1998:  
*"Woods meant something different when the Baxters gave us this 50 years ago. We're governed by the same order they gave for keeping Mt. Katahdin — 'Forever Wild.' What role does a city forest play today?"*. Portland Monthly, Nov 1998, Herb Adams article
- **Gov. Baxter would love it as it is now** - We contend that what exists today in Baxter Woods is the role intended by Gov. Baxter.
- **Dog-walkers are Baxter Woods primary care-givers** - While the City does a lot, it is Baxter Woods frequent users who regularly care for, clean up and help maintain the Park for the community
- **Baxter Woods is alive and well** — it is a thriving, welcoming, safe environment for humans and all types of wildlife



# Baxter Woods - a lovely legacy with a troubled past...

- **Gov. Baxter gifted Baxter Woods to the people of Portland** - as a legacy being passed down...

*“I want it to remain and to be used about as it is now...” Portland Sunday Telegram, 4/14/1946*

- **What happened in Baxter Woods?** From the 1950's and into the 1960's Baxter Woods sadly became a dirty and disreputable place, with this headline from 1960 - “Baxter Woods Beauty Spot?”...

*“...100 truckloads of junk, old tin cans and noisome rubbish were taken away.” Portland Evening Express on 9/28/1960*

- **It kept happening** - Through the 70's, 80's and into the 90's more local articles were published about trash being hauled out of Baxter Woods and other problems there: **Garden Club clears Baxter Pond** *Press Herald, 7/23/1970*; **Vandalism, Litter in Baxter Woods** *Evening Express, 5/8/1973*; **Brentwood Street Resident Organizes Woods Clean-up** *Press Herald, 6/3/1988*

- **In the 1990's the pattern changed** - The national trend of increasing dog ownership beginning in the 1990's has helped to transform Baxter Woods into what it is today...

*“City officials) take heart in the growing number of neighbors and regular dog walkers who keep an eye on the woods and occasionally organize mass cleanups.” Portland Monthly, Herb Adams, Nov 1998*



# How has Baxter Woods evolved recently?

*Dog owners:*  
**Please keep Baxter Woods friendly for all**

**DID YOU KNOW** this park was founded as a bird sanctuary and municipal forest for educational and recreational uses? Help us keep this a **safe place for all types of users**, our pets, and the wildlife that lives here, too.

**MAYOR BAXTER WOODS IS A MULTI-USE PARK.** Respect and watch out for other park visitors who might include children, students, runners, cyclists, track teams, bird watchers, and cross-country skiers.

**A little respect goes a long ways.** With your cooperation, we'll work to keep Baxter Woods open for everyone, pets included. Without your help, we may have to restrict dogs to on-leash only. Portland's fenced-in dog parks (Quarry Run and Valley Street) may be preferable for those looking for a larger off-leash range.

For everyone's safety and the well-being of wildlife, dogs need to be leashed or under strict voice control and within 50 feet of owner at all times. Keep your pet in close proximity vs. out of sight and out of voice control.

**Carry a bag for dog poop,** pick up after your dog and dispose of it in the trash. Never toss it into the woods, a ditch or down a storm drain.

*Mayor Baxter*

City of Portland • Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

- **44%** of American families now have a dog
  - Dog-walking is more popular than ever, and reflects our love of nature, community and our pets. [Dog-walking Facts](#)
- **Steady growth** - As one senior, life-long Baxter Woods dog-walker has noted – the number of people and pets using the Woods has steadily and imperceptibly grown over the years
- **Facebook** - Our community has a Facebook Page – Responsible Dog Owners of Baxter Woods, with 300+ users
- **Annual clean up days** - Coordinated by dog-walkers have made Baxter Woods cleaner and reduced trash in the Park
- **Daily clean up efforts** – Dog-walkers keep the forest mostly poop-free, not totally, but better than ever
- **Illicit activity is less frequent** - Campers, drug-users and night-time partying incidents are down
- **A little respect goes a long way** - The Baxter Woods dog-walking community has worked with the City and the Deering Center neighborhood to help make Baxter Woods a safer, healthier and more beautiful place. Respect goes two ways.
  - **The Parks Department didn't work with the Deering Center Neighborhood Association** to schedule a public meeting prior to the ordinance change roll-out.
  - **The City didn't communicate** the proposed ordinance change to the Baxter dog community until just before the 4/4 Commission Meeting, or even now before the 7/18 meeting
  - **The City Parks Department and Parks Commission denied** this community groups request to formally present this PowerPoint at the 7/18 meeting.

# Why is the City proposing to change the leash law?

**Despite the transformation of Baxter Woods from a dirty, dangerous place to the treasured beautiful urban forest that it is, the City cited four reasons for the leash law ordinance change in Baxter Woods:**

- 1. Complaints-Dog/Human Safety Issues** - The Parks Department has received 16 complaints from 12 different people (4 of whom are connected to the Parks Commission, not the public) over the past 6+ years
- 2. Bird Habitat** - A study contracted for by the City contends that dogs are “likely having a negative impact on the habitat for ground-nesting and ground-feeding wild birds and the associated trees and shrubs.”
- 3. Other places to walk dogs** - There are many other “more appropriate” places for off-leash dog-walking in Portland
- 4. Deed** - Allowing dogs to be off-leash “could be” a violation of the Deed governing the City’s administration of Baxter Woods “as a sanctuary for wild birds”

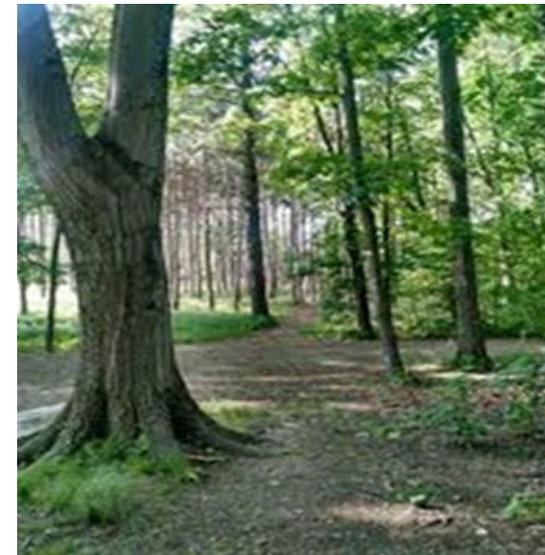
Portland, Maine



Yes. Life's good here.

From the Parks Department’s July 2019 memo: This compromise proposal was crafted after careful consideration of public comments at the April 4, 2019 meeting and further consultation with Maine Audubon and members of the community group Responsible dog Owners of Baxter Woods... so a compromise policy was developed that would consist of the following:

- **April 1 through July 31, annually: Dogs on 8-foot leash at all times (to coincide with migratory bird nesting season).**
- **August 1 through March 31, annually: Dogs permitted off-leash and under voice control from 5am to 9am, and from 5pm to 10pm. From 9am to 5pm, dogs must be on 8-foot leash.**



# Our rebuttal to the City's proposal to impose a full-time leash law

## 1. Complaints about off-leash dogs, Human/dog safety issues...

- 60% of the written comments received by the City **support off-leash as-is**
- Average of less than **3 written complaints per year**
- Only 16 written complaints over the past 6+ years
- Complaints and overall negative events in Baxter Woods represent just a **tiny percentage of the thousands of hours of weekly Park use**



# Rebuttal continued...

## 2. City claims dogs are impacting the bird habitat...

- **No actual observations** – The study cites no incidents or evidence of dogs negatively impacting the bird or any other habitat in Baxter Woods. <https://portlandme.civicclerk.com/Web/Player.aspx?id=92&key=-1&mod=-1&mk=-1&nov=0>
- **Key baseline assessments are missing** – The study was intended to establish a baseline health report of Baxter Woods related to the adjacent Stevens Square project, but key study tasks were not completed, **no bird or wildlife counts, no water quality analysis, no sound or light quality baselines.**
- **What is clearly cited in the study?** 81% of Baxter Woods is just not suitable for wild birds due to the low amount of sunlight getting through the hemlock upper canopy.

*“Nearly all stands have moderate to full canopy cover of mature trees...which limits the light available for forest regeneration. While attractive from a visual perspective, the lack of understory cover limits the habitat for species that nest and forage in the lower canopy layers. Old field, shrub, and young saplings, and important habitat type for some species, represent less than 3% of the area.”* From p. 25 of the study

- **Baxter Woods is too small for ground-nesting birds** - At 30 acres in size is just too small a forest for ground-nesting birds, that prefer forests >250 acres in size. Too much forest edge as well.

*“This stand provides habitat values of mature mixed hardwood-conifer forest, but has a minimal understory and ground cover layers favored by some species, and species characteristic of larger forest blocks are unlikely to nest here.”* From p. 43



- **No other parks in Portland compare to Baxter Woods for off-leash walks** - Baxter Woods is by far the best acreage, most ideal park setting and the most popular woodland Park in Portland
  - Access** - Other sites are just not accessible to elderly Deering Center pedestrians for off-leash walks
  - Parking** - Most other locations have no parking at all or inadequate parking
  - Terrain Issues** - All other sites have difficult terrain, with lots of roots and steep, rocky paths
  - Ticks** - All other sites have prevalent nuisance issues such as ticks, fleas, poison ivy, and mosquitos
  - Acreage** - Only 6 other forest/woodland Parks in Portland, and Baxter Woods accounts for 10-15% of that acreage
  - Park Perfection** - None of the other sites have the gentle sloping of Baxter Woods trails or offers the solitude
- **Deering Center Neighborhood** – Many residents specifically moved to this neighborhood because of Baxter Woods
- **Added drive time for off-leash walks** – City shouldn't force working people and retirees and dogs into cars

Valley Street



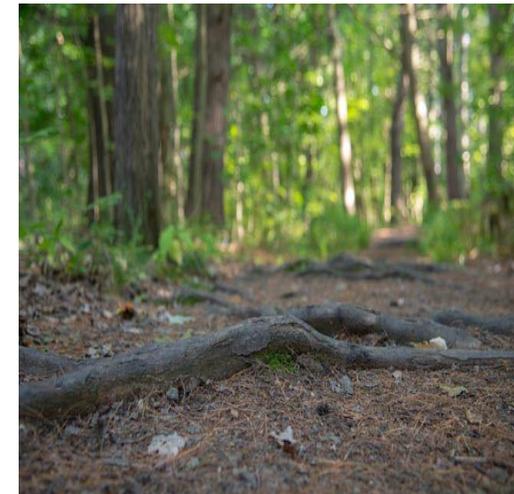
Canco Woods



Quarry Run



Pine Grove



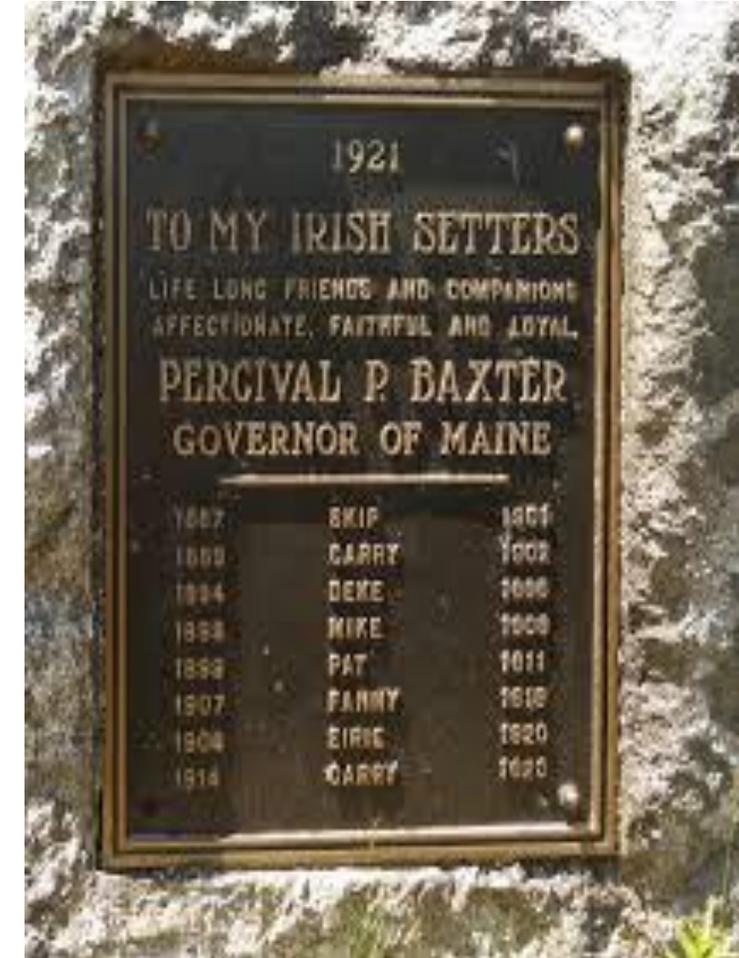
# Rebuttal continued...

## 4. Deed Issues, Part 1

- **Gov. Baxter** – the Governor gifted the Woods to the City in 1946, and lived until 1969, but never took action against the City for deed violations.
- **What a bird sanctuary actually was when the deed was signed** – historical definition from the 1940's and 50's is clear...

*“It has long been recognized that refuges and sanctuaries, in which no shooting is permitted at any time, are needed as resting places for game birds. Moreover, with the constantly increasing use of the land for lumbering, grazing, agriculture or settlement, it becomes a pressing necessity to set aside portions as “wilderness areas” in which all wildlife may work out its natural balance under the closest approach to undisturbed conditions...” Compton’s Encyclopedia, p.208 (1957)*
- **Gov. Baxter’s love of dogs, people and making Portland a more livable city...**
  - dogs were like family to him, much like many people and our dogs today
  - dogs are not precluded in the Deed, and there were no leash laws in 1946
  - Gov. Baxter adored horses too, but they are precluded from the Woods
  - Pedestrians are most often mentioned in the deed, and modern day pedestrians are very often dog-walkers!
  - Gov. Baxter lectured on the humane treatment of “free” animals
- Remember – **“Woods meant something different...50 years ago” ...**

### From Mackworth Island



# Rebuttal continued...

## 4. Deed Issues, Part 2

- Baxter Woods is **already a bird sanctuary** and has a lot of birds for its small acreage and urban setting...
  - **68 species sighted in Baxter Woods** by 30+ watchers, an increase of 14 species since April, and including the hermit thrush, various warblers and some species not listed at the site, e.g. Canada Geese observed recently at the pond... <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L5960768/last10>
  - **Evergreen Woods** – 139 species observed by 500+ watchers, forest is >5 times the size of Baxter Woods with far fewer dogs/people in it... <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L3026348/last10>
  - **Hinckley Park** (South Portland) - 151 species of birds observed by 400+ watchers in a 40+ acre Park with lots of off-leash dogs... <https://ebird.org/hotspots?hs=L5960768&yr=last10&m=>
  - **Baxter State Park** (Chimney Pond) - just 59 species observed at, a huge forest area with no dogs <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L966142>

Hairy Woodpecker



Chestnut-sided Warbler



Hermit Thrush



# Off-leash dog-walking is good

- Off-leash dogs and owners are **happier**... [1,4](#)
- Off-leash dogs are **less aggressive** than dogs under restraint... [2,4](#)
- Off-leash dogs and their people are **healthier, physically and mentally**... [1,3](#)
- Elderly walkers will be isolated from the Woods in winter months because leash-walks on ice and snow are unsafe
- Off-leash is an **accommodation** for the elderly/disabled
- **Off-leash is safer** in the long run...
  - leashes will likely increase impeding of runners, bikers, and skiers
  - leashes will likely lead to more dog fights
  - leashes will likely cause more injuries during winter walking

[1 http://digest.thefarmersdog.com/the-importance-of-letting-your-dog-sniff/](http://digest.thefarmersdog.com/the-importance-of-letting-your-dog-sniff/)

[2 https://infograph.venngage.com/p/241131/dog-walking-facts](https://infograph.venngage.com/p/241131/dog-walking-facts)

[3 https://www.petbacker.com/blog/facts/the-wonderful-statistics-and-facts-behind-dog-walking](https://www.petbacker.com/blog/facts/the-wonderful-statistics-and-facts-behind-dog-walking)

[4 https://positively.com/contributors/are-domestic-dogs-losing-the-ability-to-get-along-with-each-other/?fbclid=IwAR1nS-YRaNjfl6wLsjC3EwJsosx56-gNji8noRzi3VNxPxCYgF0nhliTNI4](https://positively.com/contributors/are-domestic-dogs-losing-the-ability-to-get-along-with-each-other/?fbclid=IwAR1nS-YRaNjfl6wLsjC3EwJsosx56-gNji8noRzi3VNxPxCYgF0nhliTNI4)



# It's about the community...

- **Estimated 1000+** unique weekly users of Baxter Woods
- **Years of dedicated care** and cleaning of our public space
- **Commitment to long term preservation** of Baxter Woods
- **Consistent** with Gov. Baxter's intent
- **Best way to promote neighborhood** cohesion and public health
- **Bring new families** who are health-aware and community-minded to our area
- **Sets a precedent** for responsible partnerships going forward
- It's about a **spiritual expression** and **daily devotion** to nature and extended families of people and pets
- A place where kids and adults can learn how to **safely interact with dogs on and off-leash**

**JULY 18TH**  
**MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD**



**PORTLAND PARKS COMMISSION HAS BEEN ASKED TO VOTE ON A RECOMMENDATION TO CHANGE BAXTER WOODS OFF-LEASH POLICY**  
**THURSDAY, JULY 18 AT 5:00PM COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**THE BAXTER WOODS COMMUNITY OF DOG WALKERS DOES NOT WANT TO LOSE OUR ABILITY TO EXERCISE OURSELVES AND OUR PETS OFF-LEASH**

**OFF-LEASH PARKS ARE GOOD FOR DOGS, THEIR GUARDIANS, AND THE WHOLE COMMUNITY.**

**OFF-LEASH PARKS:**

- Promote good canine physical health and socialization, reducing nuisance behaviors and making dogs better canine citizens
- Discourage delinquent and criminal activity in parks
- Encourage people to exercise and stimulate social interaction with their neighbors
- Accommodate senior citizens and the disabled, who cannot always walk their dogs on leash
- Build a community of people committed to parks, community involvement and the environment

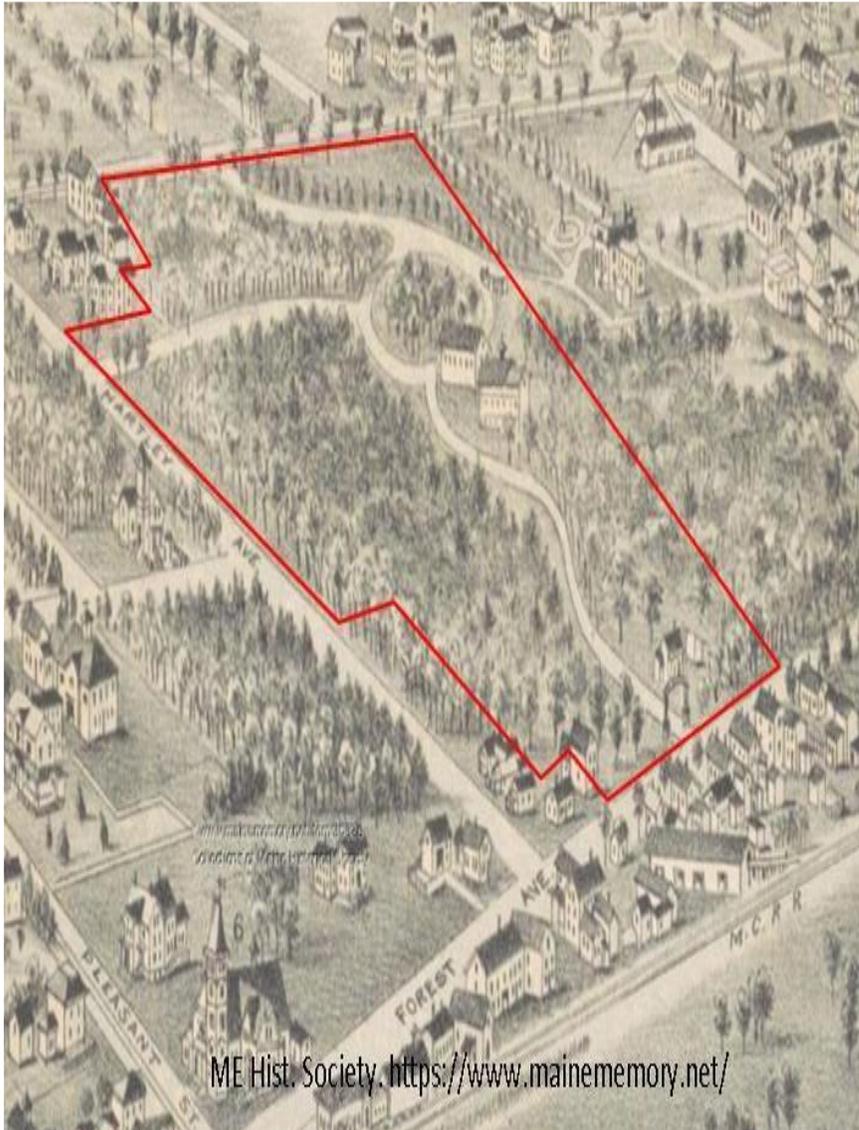
*Baxter Woods has been a safe, welcoming and healthy habitat for people, birds and other wildlife for several decades.*

**LEARN MORE:**  
[www.portlandmaine.gov/345/ParksCommission](http://www.portlandmaine.gov/345/ParksCommission)

**CONTACT:**  
[parkscommission@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:parkscommission@portlandmaine.gov)  
or YOUR CITY COUNCILOR  
with your comments

**ATTEND THE MEETING ON:**  
THURSDAY JULY 18TH

# The heart of Deering Center...



Deering Center is special, because of key features that include Baxter Woods, as described in

*Forest Ave. and Stevens Ave. – Historical Context, Scott Hanson, Sutherland Conservation & Consulting, August 2015:*

**“Perhaps more than any other neighborhood in Portland, Deering Center has the feel of a typical late nineteenth century small town downtown. The concentration of imposing civic and institutional buildings, small group of commercial storefronts, and interspersed residences with long streets of homes adjoining, gives Stevens Avenue this special character. The nearby Evergreen Cemetery and Baxter Woods Park add to the effect. Other areas in Deering once had a similar character, including Woodford’s, Morrill’s, and Allen’s Corners, but modifications to the streets in those locations to accommodate arterial traffic to the outer suburbs have altered their character and made them unsuited to pedestrian activities. Deering Center is still an entirely walkable neighborhood, which contributes greatly to its character.”**

Please do not disrupt the nature, character and culture of Baxter Woods, that is such a vital part of what makes Deering Center so special and unique in Portland today!

# Please preserve Deering Center's heritage and the thriving community in Baxter Woods!



Gov. Percival Baxter quoted at the time of his gift of Baxter Woods to the people of Portland, ***“I want it to remain and to be used about as it is now...”***

*Portland Sunday Telegram, April 14, 1946*