

# Minutes of February 12 Meeting

Written by Michelle Jones

## **Question and Answer Session:**

Current Status: Unleash the Beach founder Georja Umamo and attorney Bruce Favish are currently working with City of Santa Monica employees to investigate the creation of a pilot program for an off leash dog park. There is a grey area as to regulations, as Santa Monica is a State Beach run by the City. The City of Santa Monica staff has met with State Superintendent Ron Schaefer, who will put forth his position in a forthcoming letter. Depending on his position, Unleash the Beach may ask Santa Monica City Council members to intervene. Currently, the City Council members who have openly declared support of Unleash the Beach are Kevin McKeown, Bobby Schriver, Herb Katz, and, more recently, Richard Bloom and Ken Genser. Mayor Pam O'Connor and Robert Holbrook also voted to try to implement the pilot program. With all of them in favor, we are hoping for their strong advocacy with the state, should that become necessary. We will also seek approval from Heal the Bay, the Coastal Commission, and the Environmental Task Force. Our State Representatives are Sheila Kuehl and Fran Pavley, who may be able to help out on the legislative level.

On Feb. 28 there is an Environmental Task Force meeting at 7:00 p.m. at the Ken Edwards Center (1527 4<sup>th</sup> Street). The Task Force, headed by Mark Gold of Heal the Bay, will be deciding what recommendation to give or not give to the City Council regarding the dog beach. We have asked two scientists to attend on our behalf– Dr. Betty Olsen, Professor of Social Ecology, Biochemical Engineering, Civil Engineering, and Environmental Toxicology at UC Irvine and who is one of the top environmental toxicology experts, and Dr. Anthony Marino, Principal Geology who was in charge of the Tetra Tech independent study of the Long Beach dog park project. They have both graciously agreed to travel from Irvine and Long Beach to attend on behalf of Unleash The Beach. We ask that local dog owner/guardians come to hear the debate and show your support of the cause.

Unleash the Beach is in the process of filing the 501C3 (non-profit status) paperwork. Thanks to the help of Ian Landgreen, we will be represented by the law firm of of Loeb and Loeb, who have agreed to help us pro bono. This will help us to raise funds and defray costs of operation.

The Venice dog advocacy group FREEPLAY, is working with Mike Gordon for approval for a dog beach area on Dockweiler Beach. He has introduced legislation for a pilot program there. In the Palisades, Palidog is also working on approval for a dog beach area.

A discussion about hours of operation for the Santa Monica pilot program was initiated. Currently, the feeling is hours will vary depending on the time of year. We may suggest starting the pilot program with part time hours such as before 10:00 a.m. and after 4:00 p.m. We currently have 77 volunteers who have signed on to help monitor the area and are accepting sign ups of more people who could commit to one hour per week to monitor and clean the beach during the pilot program. Eventually requiring a special dog licence to use the beach could help defray the costs of maintaining the beach.

The meeting ended by creating Committees to handle the following:

**Outreach-** This group will look at ways to increase awareness of Unleash the Beach, which will increase our membership and volunteer base. Should we need advocacy quickly, we will have a large group to call on.

**Letter Writing Group-** This group will decide how and when to respond to negative press that has been cropping up in the *SMDP* and *Ocean Park Gazette*, and possibly create a form letter to answer basic negative criticism.

**Sponsorship-** Each person was asked to come up with two possible sponsors to approach. This will impress the City and State should we have possible sponsors lined up in advance to defray costs of operation for the Dog Beach. What can we offer sponsors in return for support? Sponsorship committee will look at ways of finding financial support through sponsors and other means.

**Beach Monitors-**This is an ongoing sign up for when the pilot program begins.

So, for those who were not at the meeting, please write back and let us know your willingness to sign up for one of these committees. Please include your phone number.