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## PRESS RELEASE

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# Options debated during dog park meeting

The debate over where and how to construct the city's first dog park continued today with several salient facts being shared but ended without an ultimate resolution.

A City Council sub-committee recently organized to examine the hotly contested issue met for more than two hours at Government Plaza with Mayor Cedric Glover, representatives of the Shreveport Dog Park Alliance, Caddo Parish Sheriff Steve Prator and a handful of concerned citizens.

A brief presentation by Shelly Ragle, Director of Shreveport Public Assembly and Recreation, reaffirmed that the cost to build a dog park at Charles and Marie Hamel's Park would greatly exceed the \$280,000 the City has available for the project thanks to the Red River Waterway Commission. The City has estimated it would take about \$580,000 to build a basic park at that location, while two independent contractors offered estimates of \$640,000 and \$680,000.

"What you have here is a set of circumstances that cannot be effectively pursued without the infusion of hundreds of thousands of dollars from the City of Shreveport," Mayor Glover said in response to his steadfast refusal to comply with the City Council's resolution to sign the agreement with the Waterway Commission. That agreement commits the City to picking up the tab on the additional costs to build the dog park.

Mayor Glover also stressed his strong objection to the unprecedented wording in the resolution that "requires" him to sign the cooperative endeavor agreement, as opposed to the usual wording that "authorizes" him to sign such legislation. This removes his executive discretion and places citizens at risk for spending money on projects that are not necessarily in the best interests of the entire City, Mayor Glover said.

The dog park alliance filed a lawsuit against the Mayor, claiming it is his duty to comply with the council's directive to sign the agreement to build the dog park at Hamel's. A state judge in May ruled in favor of the alliance and the case is now being appealed.



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“We have spent far too much time, energy, money and goodwill dealing with this issue. It’s time to get rid of the lawyers and get back to maintaining the current working relationship we have with the Red River Waterway Commission,” Mayor Glover said.

The Mayor and his staff support using existing park space to establish a dog park. This is a best practice followed by other cities, including Baton Rouge and Monroe. Another location that is gaining favorable traction is Stoner Beach. A dog park at that location is estimated to cost \$300,000 and would also be eligible for funding from the Waterway Commission.

The Stoner location also has the benefit of being near a Sheriff’s Department substation, creating the potential to have security provided by those deputies as well as possibly having parish inmates available to provide routine maintenance at the park. The deputies currently only patrol the Red River, so any additional or expanded patrols would have to be authorized by the Parish and Sheriff Prator.

Mayor Glover also said the council should either rescind the legislation requiring him to sign the agreement - paving the way to have the lawsuit dismissed -- or present a plan to pursue the Hamel’s location along with details to fund it as a capital project.

The dog park subcommittee scheduled another meeting for Dec. 10 at 2 p.m. at Government Plaza.

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