

Ray Mueller

Board of Supervisors District 3 Candidate

Peninsula Dog PAC Questionnaire

1. Do you have a dog? If so, where are your favorite places to walk your dog on-leash and/or off-leash?

Yes. My dog is named Rocky, and we rescued him nine years ago. He is about 11 years old and is a Scottish Terrier mix. Rocky loves to run and play but is a bit leash aggressive, so we take him to off-leash dog parks in Menlo Park like La Entrada Middle School, Willow Oaks School, and Nealon Park. He also likes going on walks in our neighborhood in Menlo Park. Rocky is an important part of our family and travels with us, as well. When visiting my mother-in-law in Southern California, we also take him to the beach in Encinitas where he loves to play and walk. Rocky also loves to go on rides with me in my jeep. He loves to snuggle on the couch at night, and I love snuggling with him.

2. San Mateo County (SMC) has 24 parks encompassing over 16,000 acres with about 200 miles of walking trails. Although over 40% of SMC households have a dog, only approximately 8% of trails allow dogs on-leash and 3% of trails (just Quarry Park) allow dogs off-leash as part of a one-year pilot program. By comparison, environmentally conscious Marin and East Bay Parks allow dog access on 90% of trails.

Would you like to see dog access in SMC parks increase, stay the same or reduce? Are there particular trails or parks you believe should permit dogs on-leash and/or off-leash?

I would like to increase the areas set aside for dogs both on leash and off leash because the current percentage for on-leash areas is far too small. I would support identifying specific rural county parks that would allow, by default, dogs to be with the families on leash. With the understanding that there are some parks that must be shared with horses and protected wildlife, I would also work with stakeholders and residents to identify the appropriate areas in our parks for permanent off-leash areas while respecting the concerns

for shared areas in our county parks. To have a successful permanent on-leash and/or off-leash program, stakeholder and public input must be considered because our county parks are for everyone.

3. The Board of Supervisors (BOS), after over 5 years of study by the SMC Dog Work Group, voted 4-1 on November 9, 2021 to approve a one year pilot program to allow dogs off-leash on specific trails at Quarry Park and Pillar Point Bluff. If you had been on the BOS, how would you have voted? Please explain your position.

Yes, I would have voted for the pilot program. The pilot program was one of the most significant issues for Coastside dog owners. After five years, the study had significant public input supporting a pilot program, especially at Quarry Park, where families walk their dogs all the time. By having significant public input, the pilot program, especially for Quarry Park, had support from the residents, minimizing environmental impacts. I believe strongly in using pilot programs to figure out whether a course of action works and am glad that Quarry Park now allows dogs to be off leash on specific trails.

4. San Mateo County (SMC) has an ordinance (~100 years old) stating that no dogs, neither on-leash or off-leash, are allowed at County parks. The County has passed ordinances making exceptions to permit on-leash walking on some trails in several parks and off-leash walking (earlier this year) as a pilot program on some trails in one park (Quarry Park). Other Bay Area Counties and most SMC cities allow dogs on-leash as the default position. Would you support and vote to change the SMC ordinance to permit dogs on-leash as the default position for SMC Parks? Why or why not?

A blanket default for all parks is an outdated one size fits all approach. Instead, the County should identify which parks will allow dogs by default on leash and which will not allow, due to environmentally sensitive ecosystems and wildlife, such as Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, and/or trails within parks used by horses and riders, such as Wunderlich. These types of county parks should be identified, and specific ordinances should be considered, with public input, so that these parks can be enjoyed by everyone while providing environmental protection.

5. Is there anything else you would like voters to know about your position on recreational dog walking access?

I love dogs. I grew up with them. Dogs have always been an integral part of my and my family's lives. Therefore, I think there should be more recreational dog-walking access. Further, one trend that I've seen is that there are more service and therapy dogs that important canine companions for those who need support for emotional and physical needs. With more service and therapy dogs in our communities, we need to create spaces, now more than ever, so that people and dogs can access and enjoy our parks and other public spaces together.