

For April 2, 2013

This is Erin Dunn from the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce for Community Comment.

One of my favorite memories of living in New York City was taking my Boxer to Central Park every morning before work and meeting with the Dog Group. We had off leash play time for the dogs and lasting friendships for the owners.

Fortuna needs a dog park. For lots of different reasons. And because of those needs, we are creating a dog park collaboration between the City, private industry and the Chamber of Commerce. It will be a big win all the way around. Not just for the dogs, but for local owners, tourists and businesses.

I was part of a group a few years back that worked unsuccessfully to get a dog park in Fortuna. The stars simply were not aligned at that time. The City wasn't ready to collaborate and the dog park group—Bark for a Park—wasn't ready for compromise.

Our current effort has those elements and more. The Chamber's Tourism & Marketing committee understands the importance of marketing to dog owner travelers. One of our committee members attended a seminar about dog at a CalTravel conference last year and all of the data point to increased tourism for towns that have dog parks.

We have motels that are dog friendly. And having a dog park gives us the opportunity to advertise and market Fortuna in an entirely new way--To dog owners!

One of the businesses involved in our collaboration—and one that had been reluctant about the project in years past—had an unsolicited endorsement last month for a dog park in Fortuna. A salesman who passes through Fortuna a few times a month—and travels with his dog—told them that he wished Fortuna had a dog park because he would prefer to stay and shop here but he ends up staying in McKinleyville each time because they have an off-leash area for his dog.

Someone from the City told us about a dog park in Harbor Oregon (that's just south of Brookings). So this past weekend my boyfriend and I took a road trip with Buzz & Bertie (our two Boston Terriers) to Harbor to check it out. Simple construction?—yeah. Effective?—the dogs had a great time and so did we. A result of collaboration? A resounding yes.

The very large property is owned and maintained by the State of Oregon—it's part of a state park. They mow the lawn and pick up the garbage. The fence was erected as part of an Eagle Scout project—he did the construction with supervision and someone donated the materials. The dog owners have provided plastic patio chairs and jugs for water.

With an addition of a dog park we will have one more amenity for our area. A dog park will help with tourism, even job recruitment and add to the good feelings about Fortuna. We CAN make this happen! Buzz and Bertie thank you for your time.

This has been Erin Dunn of the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce.