

## Charge environmental impact fee for every dog

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To the editor:

Constructing a dog park in Margate can be a positive alternative to dog owners illegally using private and public property – especially our beaches – as an open, septic latrine for their dogs. The EPA deemed pet fecal waste a “nonpoint source of pollution” in 1991, which put it in the same category as oil and toxic chemicals. Proper containment and disposal of dog waste is critical for maintaining a disease- and toxin-free environment.

However, finding the proper location where the presence of dogs will not interfere with the quality of life of residents, obtaining the necessary NJDEP permits and developing a viable plan to pay for the park should have been accomplished long before Margate started construction.

It's neither feasible nor practical to pay for the dog park through dog registration fees as Margate Commissioner Campbell claims. Local dog registrations are de minimus. Margate's dog population grows significantly during the summer months. It would not be fair to force summer residents to register their dogs in Margate if they have them already duly registered in their hometown. Additionally, non-pet owning taxpayers must never be expected to pay the expenses for dog hobbyists.

Instead, Margate can by ordinance impose a modest yearly “environmental impact fee” on every dog housed or visiting the city. The fee would be \$15 per year. A dog must have a valid local or out-of-town registration and proof of rabies vaccination for the owner to obtain an environmental impact permit card.

The bright green card would be fastened to the middle of the dog's leash – unlike the dog's registration tag that is fastened to the dog's collar, where it is not visible and cannot easily be inspected. This electronic card would be used to open the security gate at the dog park and would allow dog owners to “walk” their dogs in accordance with local dog ordinances within the city limits.

Dog owners who fail to obtain the permit would be required to “walk” their dog only on their property. It would be illegal, punishable by a \$500 fine, for any dog to be “walked” in the public domain without proper display of the permit.

In addition to keeping with national efforts to reduce our own carbon footprint, requiring a dog-walking permit would help reduce the carbon paw print of our furry friends.

Doug Donato

Margate