

# A WOOF in the Park



It won't be long before Boston has its newest sanctioned dog recreation park ready for canine play! At a ground breaking for the off-leash dog space in Dorchester's Ronan Park on Saturday, Sept. 19, Boston Mayor Thomas Menino congratulated the Friends of Ronan Park for their commitment to bringing the dog park so close to fruition.



City Councilor Maureen Feeney, Jay Bowen from the Animal Rescue League of Boston, Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, and Friends of Ronan Park member Paige Davis break ground for the new Ronan Park Dog Recreation Space in Dorchester while a local resident and chum look on.



It was a day for smiles as construction of the Ronan Park Dog Recreation Space was officially begun.

Paige Davis, a Friends of Ronan Park (FoRP) member and primary advocate for the dog park, reminded the gathered neighbors that the value of such a place goes far beyond the benefit of canine exercise. According to Davis, studies of dog parks indicate that the human activity helps to keep parks safer. The dog parks become a crossroads for all segments of a diverse urban neighborhood, like Ronan Park's, to meet around a common interest. Boston Parks Department Commissioner Antonia Pollak echoed those sentiments as she described Paige as "tenacious" in her commitment to the project.



## Community Outreach Group for Landscape Design



COG designer Charlotte Fleetwood (in red visor) joins neighbors at the ground breaking. Fleetwood continues to meet with the FoRP as the design liaison with Crosby Schlessinger Smallridge, the landscape architecture firm detailing the project.

COG's designer Charlotte Fleetwood began her design consultation with the Friends of Ronan Park in September 2007. Her concept for the dog park, developed closely with FoRP, was approved in 2008 by the Boston Parks and Recreation Commission. However, what seemed like great news came with a hefty price tag. While the FoRP were encouraged to proceed with park planning, they were also expected to raise the majority of funds to install and maintain the park. "It was a discouraging moment," said Davis, but her tenacity prevailed. She contacted the Animal Rescue League of Boston which had been a supporter of Peter's Park, Boston's first dog recreation park in the South End, and asked for help. "There was an element of serendipity at work. Jay Bowen at the Animal Rescue League forwarded our proposal to the Frank Stanton Foundation which had just finished conducting its own research into the social benefits of dog recreation parks. They were looking for a hands-on project to support just like ours," said Davis.



Paige Davis, Friends of Ronan Park member and advocate for the dog park, couldn't have been happier to see lots of neighbors, pets, and City officials come out to celebrate the future dog recreation space.



Thanks to the Friends of Ronan Park, the City of Boston and the Boston Parks Department, the Frank Stanton Foundation, the Animal Rescue League of Boston, COGdesign, Crosby Schlessinger Smallridge, and others in the community who contributed to this project, construction begins this fall.

**Watch for the ribbon cutting in spring 2010!**