

Somerville Dog Owners Group  
Questionnaire for Candidates for 2005 Municipal Elections

Name: Rebekah Gewirtz

Office for which you are seeking election: Ward Six Alderman

1. How many times a month do you visit Somerville parks and/or playgrounds? Please list the parks you visit, and, for each park, the number of times per week and the reason(s) you visit.

I visit Somerville parks more often in the spring and summer—probably 2-3 times per month. The Powder House Park is closest to my house so I often visit that area to walk on the grounds. I wish there were more parks/open space in Ward 6! The Summer St. Shaft is an example of an area that could have been a wonderful park/open space had it been acted upon earlier.

2. Somerville City Ordinance, 12-51, “Dogs in Parks and Playgrounds,” leaves it to the discretion of the Commissioner of Public Works to post “No Dogs Allowed Signs at city parks. Do you know of any parks under the jurisdiction of the City that are *not* posted “No Dogs Allowed”? If so, which ones?

I do not. I think this is a big issue in Somerville. As I go door knocking it has become clear that there are so many people in the city with dogs. Somerville must become more accommodating to dog owners—it’s a quality of life issue.

3. If elected in November, what will you do in the upcoming term to improve the equitable distribution of open space in order to serve the many and diverse needs of Somerville residents?

I will work with the Somerville Dog Owners Group to create an area where dog owners can go with their dogs without fear of breaking the law. I think we need a dog run, for sure. There used to be an area by the Tufts field where people could bring their dogs. I would talk with Tufts administration to see if there was a way to reopen the area and explore other possibilities, as well—including making dog times in certain parks in the city.

4. In 2005, the City Clerk mailed out a brochure about responsible dog ownership along with dog license renewal applications. 2005 was also the fifth year that the Animal Control Department and the Health Department participated in the state-wide Annual Rabies Vaccination Day. What else do you think the City of Somerville can do to promote responsible dog ownership?

I think the city should support, in whatever way possible, the Somerville Dog Owners Group and entertain ideas from group members regarding responsible dog ownership. I will work to implement other good suggestions about responsible dog ownership in collaboration with the group.

5. Do you own a dog/dogs?

I no longer own a dog. My Westie died earlier this year—he lived to be 17!

*If you answered “no” to question 5, please skip to question 6.*

5a. Please provide your dog(s) name(s) and describe a typical day in the life of your dog(s).

5b. How many times per week does your dog get a leash walk off his territory (i.e. off your property)?

5c. How many times per week does your dog get to play off-leash with other dogs (not including dogs in the same household)?

6. In your opinion, what is the place of dogs in our families and communities?

I think dogs have an incredibly important role to play in our community. Dogs bring people together walking down the streets and they can provide unparalleled companionship. I miss my dog a lot and can empathize with people who feel frustrated that dog ownership isn't more valued by city government. If I'm elected I will work with you to change this.

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