*From the Dorchester Reporter*

**New dog run at Ronan Park opens**

By

***By Mike Deehan, Special to the Reporter***
*May. 20, 2010*

Tails wagged and smiles beamed Saturday as four years of work came to fruition with the opening of the new Ronan Park Dog Recreation Space. Over 70 supporters accompanied about 25 canines, neighborhood residents and city officials to open the dog park to the public.

“When we first started this project in 2006, we were pretty modest,” said Paige Davis, one of the neighborhood’s strongest supporters of construction of the dog park and the current treasurer of the Friends of Ronan Park organization. “We said that if the dog park in the South End was the Hilton of dog parks, we’d be pretty happy with a Motel 6,” Davis said, “but I think we got the Park Plaza.”

Mayor Thomas Menino, Dorchester’s City Councillor Maureen Feeney and At-Large City Councillors Felix Arroyo and Ayanna Pressley attended the opening.

“Really, the city was only a passive bystander [in building the dog park]. It was the community that really drove this process and that’s what’s so impressive to me,” Menino said. “Because when the community drives a process we know that this park will be a park that’s protected for many years to come.”

Davis said that the park will be maintained by a corps of “ambassadors” who will have access to on-site maintenance equipment and will bear responsibility for keeping the area in good shape.
“There’s some trepidation in not knowing what’s going to happen but so far on day one everything is looking great,” Davis said. “The dog park is full of dogs and everyone is behaving and getting along and meeting each other, so I couldn’t ask for anything more.”

The park features a double-gated entrance way to prevent dogs from running off unleashed, a fire hydrant-shaped water fountain for refilling water dishes and a shade structure painted to resemble the famous gas tanks located just over the expressway from the park. Gravel covers the ground to prevent mud and several stones can be used for human sitting or, as was demonstrated by a few exhausted pooches Saturday, as canine lounge areas.

The new 6,000-square foot dog run is located in what was formerly a neglected corner of Ronan Park, just east of the basketball courts near the end of Juliette St. In May 2005, local resident and park activist John Beresford was killed in the park while attempting to stop a pair of muggers. Since the murder, the Friends of Ronan Park — a group Beresford helped to found — have worked with neighbors and city officials to build the park into one of Dorchester’s finer features.

“The community wants to have control of their beautiful park,” said Councillor Feeney. “I think this dog park is the first step of many steps to just ensure that the right people are using our parks.”
Boston Police Department Captain Richard Sexton told the crowd that the park has been a safe place for about two years since the BPD stepped up patrols in the area. Sexton added that any increase in park usage will help maintain that safety.

“The more people using the park, the safer it’ll be for everybody,” Sexton said.

The dog park was financed by a partnership between the city of Boston, local residents’ donations and a $180,000 grant from the Stanton Foundation, in association with the Animal Rescue League. The Boston Parks Department’s Small Changes grant program provided $30,000.

“Even before the dog park opened when I would see two dogs playing and the owners talking to each other and introducing themselves; it makes me really happy because I think the key to a successful community is just people knowing each other and recognizing each other,” Davis said.