

# Albuquerque Model City Council Curriculum

## Model City Council: Lesson 3

**Lesson Topics:** Making improvements to the city by passing a bill in the City Council

**Aim:** To read a city ordinance and related newspaper articles (with scaffolding); to consider how improvements to the city have been made in the past.

**Skills to be Addressed:**

- Using structure and vocabulary to read and understand a difficult text (a city ordinance)
- Use background knowledge to read and understand a newspaper article.
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**Objectives:**

Students will:

- analyze the structure of a city ordinance, using that structure to understand its meaning.
- integrate information from the ordinance to understand a newspaper article about the ordinance.
- understand how a proposed project is brought into existence in the city via city council legislation and mayoral administration.

**Common Core Standards Addressed:**

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.5  
Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.4  
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9  
Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.10  
By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

**Timeframe:** One 60-minute period.

**Materials:**

- Computer(s) with access to Internet that can be displayed on a screen.
- Dog Park Bill history, handout. Also at
- Dog Park bill (pdf.)
- Journal Dog Parks #1
- Journal Dog Parks #2

# Albuquerque Model City Council Curriculum

## Procedure:

### I. Reading a city bill

*What can a city councilor do to make his district or his city better?*

*In 2005, City Councilor Eric Griego took his dog, Zorro the Wonder Mutt, to one of the city's two dog parks to let him run. There he met some of his constituents. Constituent is the name of someone who is represented by an elected official. (The constituents of a district are all the citizens that live in that district. "Constituents" means parts of a whole.)*

*Councilor Griego's constituents showed him how rundown the dog park was because so many dog owners were bringing their dogs to the park. The councilor realized the city, and his district, needed more dog parks.*

*He introduced a bill at a City Council meeting that listed reasons for more dog parks and that determined rules for what he called off-leash areas in parks. City councilors talked about the bill, suggested a change (called an amendment), then voted yes on that amendment. They voted to send the bill to a committee that dealt with finances in the city, where councilors and council staff could think about what the costs would be to set up more off-leash areas and how the city could pay for those costs. After the committee further amended the bill with language about how the parks would be paid for, it sent the bill back to the City Council as a whole. It was amended again, then voted on as amended, and it passed. A bill needs only a majority of councilors to vote for it for it to pass. In this case, only one councilor voted against it. The bill was then sent to the mayor, who signed it, and it became a law in the city.*

Show on screen:

<https://cabq.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=1259045&GUID=1808F86F-7F05-4E12-B4EA-683A31163B3B&Options=ID|Text|&Search=dog+park> or

Dog Park Bill history (handout). Click on 4-40fin.pdf to download the resolution, which is also available as a pdf in the Lesson 3 resources.

*Many of you have been to a dog park? What did you observe?*

*We're going to look at this bill – it's called a resolution, but in Albuquerque, a proposed ordinance, or "resolution" are all called bills. Let's see if we can make sense of it. Hand out "Dog Park bill.pdf" or download it from the link above.*

*This is hard reading. It uses a vocabulary we're not familiar with. But like any kind of reading, the more familiar you are with what the words mean, and the structure of the writing, the easier it is to read.*

*First: what do you notice? What else do you notice?*

*Let's break it down into its constituent parts (what does constituent mean?)*

*What's the bill's number? (R-04-40)*

*What kind of a bill is this? (A resolution. That's probably what the R stands for.)*

## Albuquerque Model City Council Curriculum

*Who sponsored the bill? (Councilor [Eric] Griego)*

*What's the title? (Adopting policies governing off-leash dog exercise areas...)*

*What are all these "whereas-es?" (reasons for the resolution)*

*What do you think is the best reason?*

*In line 24, it gets a little complicated. Lines 24 through 25 reads: "Be it resolved by the Council, the governing body of the City of Albuquerque...." OK, so now we're getting to the resolution, that is what they're "resolving."*

*Then it says, Section 1. Is there a Section 2? (No.)*

*How is Section 1 broken up? (Into different policies, 7 in all).*

*Let's look at the first policy. Read it out loud, slowly, talking about the meaning of each part. This is where the vocabulary's new to us, so we have to work to understand it.*

- *Development procedures – what could those be?*
- *Design guidelines – what could that mean?*
- *Location criteria – what are those?*
- *Space criteria – how are those different from location criteria?*
- *Set forth in Administrative Instruction – what does that mean (the administration, or the city government overseen by the mayor will decide these things.)*

*OK, so here you see how the legislative branch, the City Council that approved this resolution, will end up working with the executive branch, which the mayor administers, to accomplish the intent of the resolution.*

*Look at Policy 2. Who has already found some good places or sites for dog parks? (a committee of citizens and staff). There's a date listed in this section; why is it necessary? (because it sets a deadline for something to get done.)*

*In Policy 3, there's a promise or guarantee. What is it? (that the new dog parks won't disrupt any other park activities. That's good for skateboarders to know.)*

*What about Policy 4? What's the promise there? (When new parks are developed or renovated – fixed up – a dog park area will be offered as an option.)*

*Policy 5 has to do with funding. How will the city pay for people to design the dog parks and people to build the dog parks? (impact fees, developer dedications, public improvement districts, city general obligation bonds, and federal, private, and state grants, or any other means acceptable to the city.)*

*Without going into detail, there are a lot of different sources of income for these parks: private and public. The impact fee – charging people for using the dog park -- is discussed in Policy 6.*

*In Policy 6, they talk about how they would figure how much to charge people, if they had to charge people for maintaining the parks. How would they do it? They would analyze the cost*

## Albuquerque Model City Council Curriculum

*per acre to maintain it. Each year, the department that was in charge of the dog parks would keep track of whether that was the right amount to charge.*

*What's Policy 7 about? (finding a large area for dogs to run in the East Mountains). Did they do that? (don't know – maybe we can find out.)*

*So you just took something really hard to read, studied its structure, learned some new vocabulary, and made sense of it. Congratulations.*

### II. Reading Related Newspaper Articles

*Let's look at another piece of writing, this time a newspaper article, and see if it's easier to understand.*

*Read the handout, Journal: Dog Parks #1, "Underused Parks May Go to the Dogs," (also at <http://www.abqjournal.com/news/metro/150723metro02-27-04.htm>). When was it written? (February 27, 2004, after the bill came out of the Finance Committee and before it went to the City Council for a vote.)*

*Did you learn anything new from the newspaper article that you didn't from reading the bill? (could be: ratio of dog parks to people parks, that other U.S. cities are creating dog parks, some possible locations for dog parks, that dog parks can solve discipline problems for dogs)*

*The article mentions a companion bill. What was in the companion bill? (allowing the city to impose a fee for the dog parks).*

*So it looks like they merged the two bills, because the fee language is in the final resolution.*

*Here's a second newspaper article, Journal: Dog Parks #2 ("Bill's Passage Unleashes Search for Dog Parks," (also at <http://www.abqjournal.com/news/metro/158188metro03-17-04.htm>) written after the bill or resolution passed. What new information can you learn from this article? (that one person voted against it, because he thought people parks were the first priority. Also, the administration will either 1) increase the cost of a pet license, charge a fee to enter the parks, or issue permits to people that use the dog parks).*

*Which do you think is the best idea? Also, the article says it will take two years to find, evaluate and choose the parks and that people will be able to voice their opinions on where the parks should be.*

*Which is easier to read, a bill or a newspaper article?  
That's one reason we have newspapers.*

### III. Planning Presentations on Council Districts.

Students meet in groups to work on their presentations about their council district.

### IV. Possible Homework:

## **Albuquerque Model City Council Curriculum**

- Work on presentations.
- Visit a dog park with your dog.