

R. A. Stegemann

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Hong Kong, November 14, 2001

Mr. LEUNG Kam Tim  
Senior Amenities Assistant  
Ma On Shan Park  
No. 12 On Chun Street  
Ma On Shan, Shatin  
New Territories, Hong Kong

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Re: Providing effective public service with regard to Ma On Shan Park's Adult Training Course.

Dear Mr. Leung,

I would like to thank you for our chat this past Monday and offer the following for your further consideration and action.

According to the rules clearly stated at each station of the multi-station adult training course children under the age of thirteen are not permitted on the course. Nevertheless, this past Saturday, when I asked a woman and her girl child to leave the course, because her child was clearly not thirteen, and the woman herself was not using the course as designated, I was met with resistance on the part of both the woman and a Ma On Shan Park staff member, whose assistance she had solicited. By the time I left the course an hour later, there were no less than five

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mothers with their children on the course. Moreover, during my 1 and 1/2 hour work-out I was forced to contend with soccer balls, motorized toys, and various child's play of many different sorts. Might I add that since I began using the course about two weeks ago, hardly a day has passed during which children or children in the accompaniment of adults have not appeared on the course.

Clearly, either I have been misled into believing that the course which I have chosen for my physical training is not an adult course, or the rules of Ma On Shan Park are not being properly enforced.

Though flexibility is important in all human relationships, there are times when dangers are present for which too much flexibility is not wise. If properly used, an adult training course should provide a place at which an individual can engage in sustained, uninterrupted, physical activity for long periods. The presence of children impairs responsible individuals from engaging in such activity, because they must be on the constant look-out for their welfare. Whereas this danger does not exist when children are accompanied by adults, the presence of accompanied children attracts other children, who are not, and thus leads to the same difficult end. Even when accompanied by adults children do not use the course for the purpose which it is intended -- rigorous exercise in a large variety of prescribed ways with frequent repetitions. As a result both the parents and their children become a hindrance to healthy exercise.

If it is your desire to provide a public training course for adults, then I would like to recommend some of the following changes in the way the training course is marked, supervised, and maintained.

- Change the wording of the signs to reflect the intended purpose of the course: "Adults only. Children and children in the accompaniment of adults are not permitted. Please do not interfere with the exercise of those individuals engaged in sustained, physical work-outs."
- In order to encourage orderly training assign a number to each station. This will encourage users to move from station to station in a set pattern, and thus enhance rigorous, sustained activity on the part of all users.
- When adults are present on the course, make an announcement over the park's public address system warning children and children in the accompaniment of

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- their parents to stay clear of the course area.
- Encourage park employees to remind users, especially children and their parents, not to enter the training course area. By virtue of their uniforms park employees are a symbol of authority and can help to ensure that users obey park rules.
  - Provide classes for adult users, who wish to use the training course, but do not know how. This is especially true for retirees and youth, who have forgotten or have never engaged in regular physical activity.
  - Encourage staff not to water the stations themselves, only the vegetation around them.
  - Spray the area regularly to inhibit the overwhelming presence of mosquitoes.

It is my sincere hope that some or all of these suggestions are followed. Certainly all of them would encourage the kind of physical activity for which the training course is apparently designed.

Sincerely,

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