

DRAFT Recommendations

To: Medfield Select Board
From: Medfield Dog Control Bylaw Committee
Re: Review ideas/recommendations for updating current dog bylaw
Date: 8/14/2023

The Dog Control Bylaw Committee was appointed by Medfield's current Select Board in March 2023.

Introduction:

The committee consists of seven members; Jill Radosta, a resident that abuts the MSH state property (dog owner), Kate Pittman, a veterinarian, lives near Wheelock School (owner of 2 dogs), Frank Moran, a resident that co-owns a dog walking business (dog owner), Neil Downing, lives near Dale School (dog owner), John Moon, a resident that lives off Granite Street (owns 2 dogs), John Thompson, a resident that lives in Woodcliff Estates (owns a dog) and Mark Farrell, a resident that lives off South Street Extension/Norfolk line (not a dog owner).

The committee conducted monthly meetings open to the public since March 2023 (with a total of 8 meetings as of 8/14/2023). The meetings/agenda/minutes were posted on the town website and covered in the "Medfield Insider". An email was created for public comment at DogControlBylawComm@medfield.net (as of 8/14/2023 – no comments have been received).

Scope/Focus:

The scope/focus of the Dog Control Bylaw Committee's efforts was to review the current dog-walking issues on the town's open spaces identified in the Charter as town-owned/controlled Medfield State Hospital property, to include the property south of Hospital Road, open space adjacent to the Wheelock School and the new Rail Trail.

The meetings focused on discussing the current "shared" open space use/issues pertaining to a series of unwanted encounters/incidents reported between people out walking dogs and other people out enjoying town's space. There have also been encounters between the dogs and other dogs also being walked.

The committee was formed to create ideas/recommendations to ensure that the town's open spaces are a resource that everyone can feel comfortable using without fear or trepidation.

DRAFT Recommendations

The committee has been asked to develop a set of recommendations for acceptance by the Select Board to be included as an Article for the 2024 Annual Town Meeting. The **DRAFT** recommendations are as follows:

On-Leash

- Dogs must be always leashed when on public property and the leash cannot exceed ten feet.
- Dogs must be leashed in all parking areas for their safety.
- Dogs must be always under the control of their owner (including off-leash areas)
- Dogs must be leashed when using the new Rail Trail, playgrounds, and any other areas posted “on-leash” such as Noon Hill, Rock Woods (has mixed use)

Off-Leash:

- Designated “Off-Leash” areas proposed: North Field at MSH, public fields (sledding hill) across from MSH on Hospital Road (excluding ball fields), behind Wheelock School (excluding soccer fields).
- Dogs in designated off-leash areas must be always under voice control and responsible party must have a leash for each dog and implements for waste removal.
- Dogs must respond to and obey verbal commands while walking in off-leash designated areas in respect to all visitors.
- Dogs must be always in sight of their owner/dog walker.
- Dogs must be on a leash before entering/exiting the designated area.

Other recommendations:

- Post Signs to educate visitors and provide a clear distinction of on/off-leash areas with rules/regulations.
- Designate temporary parking area during construction in off-leash designated areas. (i.e., MSH property)
- Mow fields for designated areas to be utilized.
- Town of Medfield to provide trash bins with assistance from community involvement.

The success of these recommendations will rely strongly on good communication, signage, education, and responsible open space users, both those that own dogs and those that do not.

Discussions with the committee members and participants that attended the meetings included topics such as what are other surrounding towns bylaws, dog parks, rules & regulations, potential modifications or expansion of the current off leash shared use, exploration of new off leash opportunities, effective signage, amenities in off leash areas, enforcement, communication, and public involvement.

The committee will be conducting a public hearing on Wednesday, September 20, 2023, beginning promptly at 7:00pm at the Chenery Room at the Town House and will also be accessible via zoom for those that cannot participate in person. This meeting will be recorded to capture feedback. Stay tuned for more information.