

ARTICLE 29
**DOG CONTROL BYLAW: EXPANDED DOG LEASH REQUIREMENT;
EXCEPTION FOR “OFF-LEASH” AREAS**

WARRANT COMMITTEE MEMBER: EMILY MCCABE

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Code of the Town of Medfield Chapter 100 Animals as follows (**bold language** is new; ~~strike out language~~ is deletion)

§ 100-5. Restraint of dogs.

Any persons owning or harboring a dog shall not suffer or allow it to run at large in any of the streets or public ways, or places in the Town of Medfield, or upon the premises of anyone other than the owner or keeper, unless the owner or occupant of such premises grants permission. No dog shall be permitted in any public place or street within the Town of Medfield unless it is effectively restrained by a chain or leash **not more than seven (7) feet in length**; ~~or is attended by a person able to properly control its actions.~~ **this prohibition shall not apply to posted “off-leash” areas that are listed on the Town’s website.**

§ 100-5a. Maximum number of dogs per Walker

Maximum number of dogs per walker is five (5) when in any public place or street within the Town of Medfield. Each dog must be restrained by a leash or chain not more than seven (7) feet in length.

§ 100-5b. Off Leash requirements

A dog may be off-leash within the confines of a Town-designated and posted “off leash” area, if effectively under voice control of the animal’s owner or *walker* provided that the dog shall be and remain, at all times, within said person’s field of vision.

§ 100-10. Definitions

As used in this Bylaw, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated:

AT LARGE

A dog ~~which is unaccompanied by a person able to properly control its actions or unrestrained by a leash or chain.~~

or do or act anything in relation thereto.

POSITIVE MOTION:

Move to amend Code of the Town of Medfield Chapter 100 Animals, as set out in the Warrant.

The Warrant Committee, by a vote of 7 in favor and 2 opposed, voted to recommend approval of the Select Board and Dog Control Bylaw Committee article to amend the existing Dog Control bylaw.

Warrant Committee Majority Report: *The Warrant Committee, by a vote of 7 in favor and 2 opposed, voted to recommend approval of the Select Board and Dog Control Bylaw Committee article to amend the existing Dog Control bylaw.*

The Select Board appointed a Dog Control Bylaw Committee in the fall of 2022. The Committee developed recommendations and presented their recommendations at a public hearing in September 2023. The Select Board have accepted the recommendations of the Committee and are proposing to change the current Dog Control Bylaw.

The warrant article proposes that every dog must be on a leash or restraint no more than seven (7) feet in length. It removes the phrase “or is attended by a person able to properly control its actions which has been commonly referred to as “voice control.” The proposed bylaw will also introduce a limit of five (5) dogs that can be walked at a time.

Anyone wishing to take their dog off leash would be able to do so in Select Board designated areas which they will control. At this time the off leash areas proposed include behind Wheelock, the North Field at the Medfield State Hospital, and the areas across from the hospital referred to as the sledding hill area. The Select Board will review the off leash locations periodically throughout the year.

The proposed changes to the Dog Control Bylaw do not address all of the issues that have been identified from the work of the Dog Bylaw Control Committee. The Warrant Committee believes this is a good first step in addressing the bylaw and looks forward to reviewing future recommendations of the Dog Control Bylaw Committee.

Warrant Committee Minority Report: *The minority expressed concern that the article is overly broad in its approach and consideration is needed to focus on specific areas of concern throughout the town. The minority expressed a belief that it should only focus on the specific problem areas such as the State Hospital.*

While the minority believes the article and the work of the committee is commendable and their efforts greatly appreciated for the concerns of citizens in town, the proposed changes ultimately end up painting a broad brush of change to the entire town rather than addressing key areas of concern. The minority would recommend the committee take a more surgical approach to correcting the wording in the bylaws for major areas of concern that would also allow for the enablement of more effective enforcement.