

DOG CONTROL BYLAW REVIEW COMMITTEE
MINUTES FEB 8, 2011
INITIAL MEETING

Meeting date: Feb 8, 2011 (Initial meeting)

Next Meeting: Monday Feb 14 11:00 AM Second Floor Conference Room
 Agenda to include results of bylaw research

Meeting called to order at 11:10 am

Attendees:

Susan Hogan, Dog Control Officer
George Moore, Animal Inspector
Michael Bouchard, Town Clerk (Chair)
Tom Delaney (absent)
Lt. James Cullen (absent)

Minutes:

- General discussion of the range of current dog complaints and problems. These can be summarized as barking, loose dogs, harassment (dogs chasing) and dog bites (approx 12 per year)
- General discussion of the tools provided by the current dog control by law (Chapter 128) and Regulations (Chapter 223) . Bylaw does cover known issues, but could be strengthened in the enforcement area (e.g. ability to issue fines). There is a relationship to the level of enforcement and the need for personnel to enforce.
 - Note: Chapter 128 erroneously refers to “chapter 233”
- Issues discussed:
 - Many of the public not aware that Groton has a dog control bylaw
 - Complaints must be in writing – even for nuisance complaints.
 - Appropriate in many cases (esp. bites, chronic problems)
 - Written can become non-contemporary (dog nuisances)
 - Written complaints can be dissuasive to some who are concerned of neighbors reactions. However people have a right to know who is complaining
 - Rabies is present in town as known by testing of raccoons. Rabies can spread to unvaccinated dogs. This is a major concern in a dog incident.
 - Groton Place , aka ‘The Dog Park’ – people use this area to let their dogs run loose. There are sanitary, nuisance and aggression issues at the park. The park is used by out-of-town dog/owners exasperating investigations. Tightening of dog ordinance may require behavior changes at the park.
 - Making the public aware of their dog responsibilities, the current bylaw and this committee’s effort to review the bylaw
 - We anticipate holding public hearings for input and review of dog bylaw and dog issues
 - Mike Bouchard elected chair of the committee
- Next Steps

- We will assign each member a representative town. The job is to review their dog control bylaw and identify items/issues that would be pertinent to enhancing Groton's bylaw.
- These three towns bubbled to the top in a quick scan of towns with "meaty" bylaws, with Chelmsford having the most extensive. It's somewhat telling that many towns do not have comprehensive dog bylaws. We wanted to reference towns with a similar character to Groton (i.e. not a city) . If you might be aware of a good bylaw, please send to my attention for distribution to the committee members.
 - Sue Chelmsford <http://www.ecode360.com/ecode3-back/getSimple.jsp?custId=CH1747&guid=8273561&all=true>
 - George ACO Investigate Animal Control Organization information
 - Jim Weston <http://weston.govoffice.com/vertical/Sites/%7B264E11B6-4A4A-4EC0-B631-35FE907B479E%7D/uploads/%7B15FE02BB-A8FF-4ACE-836D-C711CAA0D950%7D.PDF>
 - Tom Carver <http://www.carverma.org/documents/town/carverbylaws.pdf>
 - Mike will continue to search for a town to review
 - NOTE: Harvard, Acton Wellesley, Dunstable, Norton, Shrewsbury and Westford have minimal Dog Control bylaws. Dracut has an Animal Control Department.