

APPENDIX B:
SELECTED MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAWS

Chapter 140 § 157. Vicious dogs; nuisance; barking or other disturbance; annoyance to sick person; attacks on other dogs

If any person shall make complaint in writing to the selectmen of a town, the officer in charge of the animal commission or person charged with the responsibility of handling dog complaints of a city, or the county commissioners, that any dog owned or harbored within his or their jurisdiction is a nuisance by reason of vicious disposition or excessive barking or other disturbance, or that any such dog by such barking or other disturbance is a source of annoyance to any sick person residing in the vicinity such selectmen, officer in charge of the animal commission or person charged with the responsibility of handling dog complaints or county commissioners shall investigate or cause to be investigated such complaint, including an examination on oath of the complainant, and may make such order concerning the restraint or disposal of such dog as may be deemed necessary. Within ten days after such order the owner or keeper of such dog may bring a petition in the district court within the judicial district of which the dog is owned or kept, addressed to the justice of the court, praying that the order may be reviewed by the court, or magistrate thereof, and after such notice to the officer or officers involved as the magistrate deem necessary the magistrate shall review such action, hear the witnesses and affirm such order unless it shall appear that it was made without proper cause or in bad faith, in which case such order shall be reversed. Any party shall have the right to request a de novo hearing on the petition before a justice of the court. The decision of the court shall be final and conclusive upon the parties. Any person owning or harboring such dog who shall fail to comply with any order of the selectmen, officer in charge of the animal commission or person charged with the responsibility of handling dog complaints, county commissioners or district court, as the case may be shall be punished by a fine of not more than twenty-five dollars for the first offense and not more than one hundred dollars for a second or subsequent offense, or by imprisonment for not more than thirty days, for the first offense and not more than sixty days for a second or subsequent offense, or both.

Chapter 140 §173(a). Violation of dog control laws; non-criminal disposition

Whenever a complaint is sought in a district court for a violation of an ordinance or by-law, made under the provisions of section one hundred and seventy-three, the clerk shall send a written notice to the person complained against stating that such a complaint has been sought and will issue unless such person appears before such clerk and confesses the offense either personally or through an agent duly authorized in writing, or by mailing to such clerk, with the notice the fine provided herein. If it is the first offense subject to this section committed by such person within a calendar year, the clerk shall dismiss the charge without the payment of any fine; if it is the second offense so committed in such city or town in the calendar year the payment to the clerk of a fine of twenty-five dollars shall operate as a final disposition of the case; if it is the third offense so committed in such city or town in a calendar year payment of a fine of thirty dollars shall operate as a final disposition of the case; and if it is the fourth or subsequent offense so committed in such city or town in the calendar year the payment of a fine of fifty dollars shall operate as a final disposition of the case. Such payment shall be made only by postal note, money order or check. Notwithstanding the foregoing procedure and schedules of fines and subject, however, to all of the other provisions of this section, a city or town may, by ordinance

or by-law, provide for an alternative procedure and a different schedule of fines; provided, however, that no new schedule of fines shall contain a fine in excess of fifty dollars.

Proceedings under this section shall not be deemed criminal; and no person notified to appear before the clerk of a district court as provided herein shall be required to report to any probation officer, and no record of the case shall be entered in the probation records.

If a person notified to appear, as hereinbefore provided, fails to appear or pay the fine within twenty-one days of the sending of the notice, or having appeared, does not desire to avail himself of the procedure established by this section, the clerk shall issue the complaint and the procedure established for criminal cases shall be followed.

If any person fails to appear in accordance with the summons issued upon such complaint, the clerk of the court shall send such person, by registered mail, return receipt requested, a notice that the complaint is pending and that, if the person fails to appear within twenty-one days from the sending of such notice, a warrant for his arrest will be issued.