



## Proposed Hunting and Animal Bylaw Amendments

Public Feedback

Received as of 6:00 p.m. March 10, 2024

Dear Select Board

I am writing to respectfully share my opposition to the subject proposed bylaw amendment. The basis for this proposal is stated as follows:

*Town owned properties that are considered appropriate for hunting are generally less than 100 acres and are also used for hiking, dog walking, equestrian activities, cycling, boating access and wildlife observation. This creates a density of use that could be unsafe for users of these properties.*

I disagree that there is a reasonable safety issue described here. The Town already has the ability to restrict hunting in portions of town-owned parcels where there might be a density of use. However, hunting is a legal, state-sanctioned activity and deserves its place in the aforementioned list of outdoor activities. A single 100 acre parcel is a massive area; it is unlikely the entirety of these parcels experience such density, and hunting spots are usually off the beaten path anyway.

Massachusetts already restricts the use of rifles in this state, to mitigate concern with urban densities – one can only use shotguns, muzzle loaders, or bows and arrows. Shotgun season is 2 weeks long (excluding Sundays), black power is another 2 weeks, however the large majority of the hunting season is archery, which goes from 10/7 to 11/30. Archery is obviously noiseless, and 50 yards is a pretty long shot with a bow and arrow. On a single 100 acre property, you could house quite a few hunters without disturbing the animals.

Logistics aside, I do not think that our community should be discouraging hunting as an activity. I understand that this is not everyone's cup of tea, and I have lived in West Newbury long enough to ascertain that it's not in vogue. However, the truth is that hunting is a wholesome activity that is highly beneficial to the community as well as the ecosystem.

Hunting teaches people how to connect with nature; how to sit still in a tree for hours, simply existing, meditating, and observing nature. Observing the birds, the plants, even the deer you aren't permitted to harvest. Hunting is about appreciation, and about conservation of habitats. Hunting teaches people where their food comes, and what the circle of life is about. It teaches a person to waste not, want not, because you can see right in front of you where it came from. And for many people, hunting is an affordable means of acquiring months worth of nutritious, all natural protein... These are people that would otherwise be relegated to the industrial food complex, where animals live meaningless lives outside of their natural habitats and provide little or no nutrition to the end user.

Last but not least, hunting is both beneficial and necessary for counteracting human impacts to the ecosystem. That might seem counterintuitive, but the reality is that continued development and urban sprawl are greatly reducing habitats for wildlife. This causes wildlife populations to exceed carrying capacities for a geographic area. In order to balance things out, populations are brought into check primarily through starvation and predation. When winter arrives, and food sources shrink, the animals die long, slow deaths of starvation, or otherwise succumb to predators which in turn overpopulate. Shooting animals might seem cruel on the surface, but is it more cruel than unmanaged wildlife populations starving until equilibrium is reached? Is it more cruel than the industrial food system, where animals are not permitted to enjoy their natural habitat, diet, and lifestyle?



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Should this article make it on the ballot, I do intend to share these thoughts at Town Meeting, as I have been a casual hunter since I was a young boy and it has added to my life, rather than subtracted from it.

Respectfully submitted.

Ross Capolupo

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Hunting by law walking on town property and hearing gun shots makes us very Leary of continuing. The dog by law is one that is way past due too many dogs walking free around the reservoir racing ahead of owners

Thanks  
Ivars jakobsons

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Good Morning, Select Board,

I am in favor of both these amendments. Pretty common sense.

Patricia Skibbee

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### **HUNTING by-law:**

I am in favor of the proposed changes with the exception of recommending that the fine outlined in Section 3 should be \$100. I propose the higher fine amount based on my family's personal knowledge that hunting is currently happening on town land. Our family has had a few "close calls" with firearms being discharged within 50' of where they were standing. If the fine was higher, perhaps hunters wouldn't be so quick to hunt where it's not allowed.

### **DOG BY-LAW:**

I am in favor of the majority of the changes proposed to the Dog By-law with the exception of the following:

Clause 2: should remain as currently written without the proposed modifications.

Clause 7.4. Method of disposal. Disposal shall be accomplished by transporting such feces to a suitable place for placement in a designated waste receptacle, or other suitable container which is regularly emptied by a refuse collector.

Lastly, does a "fixed, physical leash" mean that people may not use the retractable type leash? If so, perhaps more clearly defining that would be beneficial. Perhaps language as follows - "fixed, physical leash (no retractable leashes)".



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Catherine Marrone

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Greetings,

I am unable to attend the upcoming meeting, but I want to share my thoughts regarding the bylaw changes to restrict dogs on town properties (which I assume includes Mill Pond and Pipestave). I walk my two large dogs every morning there. It is one of my delights about living in West Newbury. They socialize well with other dogs and exercise much more than they could if they stayed on leash. During several years of doing so, I have never had a problem or seen a problem. Owners who are concerned about their dogs (whether being too aggressive or running away) naturally keep their dogs on leash. During my walks (typically between 7 am and 10 am), I have never seen a horse, nor have I witnessed any pedestrians with any concerns. My dogs certainly are not perfectly behaved; however, I appreciate that I live in a town that is open to these freedoms.

I frankly don't know your conversation or understand why this issue is coming forward. However, if you do decide to move forward with this change, I hope that you might include some nuance rather than taking this radical and heavy-handed approach. If certain times are an issue, then perhaps having set hours for leashes would make more sense. If this is a concern for horses, perhaps the times when there are horse gatherings should be the focus (I tend to avoid these times anyway).

Overall, this change saddens me and makes me question why this change needs to be made in this way. I think we can do better with this decision.

Thanks for your consideration,  
Greg Keller

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Hunting Bylaw

Good morning - My comment is that the fine in Section 3 should be \$250 for each offense. The amount of \$50 is too little to be a deterrent.

Thank you - Barry Fogel, 4 Upland Lane

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I support both proposed amendments. Thank you.

Kathy Mandeville

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Dear Select Board Members,

I think there should be an additional section for people with dogs staying at AirBnB/VRBO homes for extended stays in residential neighborhoods (not sure if they are required to provide any fees and/or proof of rabies vaccinations etc.)

Also, people with dogs that are renters at residential homes and ADUs.



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Thank you!

Maryann Czerepak  
[REDACTED]

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We are in favor of both amendments with one reservation, that is the penalty fee for weapon use on private property or Town property. Fifty dollars is a slap on the wrist and not a deterrent for disregard of the law.

If someone were to use any weapon on our property, which is surrounded by woods and not easily visible much of the year, we would not feel safe in our own home. Worse, if outside we could be hit. Not only would we want the person criminally charged, we would also expect them to lose their hunting license (assuming they had one to begin with) and pay a fine that would have a meaningful impact.

We need strong laws when it comes to weapons, for our community's safety and to remain one of the safest states in the country, particularly regarding firearm use.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Bridget & Bill White  
[REDACTED]

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As an older resident, I am not capable of running with my dogs on leash. Running and playing together in the fields gives them the exercise that I cannot give them. My dogs enjoy running with other dogs in and around Mill Pond and Pipestave Hill. We are respectful of others and my dogs are put on leash until we are clear that the other dog owners and their pets are okay.

I agree that dogs should be leashed on school grounds and buildings.

I respectfully request that you do not amend the Animal By-Law Section 3.3 to require that dogs must be kept on leash on trails and recreational areas.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my concern.

Claudia Woods Estin  
[REDACTED]