OFFERED BY COUNCILORS ERIN J. MURPHY, EDWARD M. FLYNN, BREADON, CULPEPPER, FITZGERALD, LOUIJEUNE, MEJIA, PEPÉN, SANTANA, WEBER, AND WORRELL

CITY OF BOSTON
IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO REVIEW ANIMAL CONTROL ENFORCEMENT, LEASH LAW COMPLIANCE, DOG LICENSING, AND PUBLIC SAFETY IN THE CITY OF BOSTON

WHEREAS, the City of Boston, through Boston Animal Care and Control and applicable municipal and state laws, maintains clear regulations governing dog ownership, including leash requirements, licensing mandates, and public safety protections; and

WHEREAS, Boston law requires that dogs be kept on a leash and under control when off an owner's property, prohibits dogs from running at large, and mandates that all dogs over six months of age be licensed annually with proof of rabies vaccination; and

WHEREAS, additional laws require dog owners to properly dispose of animal waste and comply with state regulations related to humane treatment, including restrictions on tethering and provisions governing dangerous or aggressive dogs; and

WHEREAS, despite the existence of these clear and established laws, residents across the City continue to report concerns regarding off-leash dogs, unlicensed animals, and inconsistent compliance in public spaces; and

WHEREAS, numerous constituent complaints submitted through the City's 311 system, directly to Animal Control, and through calls and emails to City Council offices highlight ongoing challenges related to enforcement, response times, and clarity around jurisdiction and responsibility; and

WHEREAS, these concerns have also been raised through direct, in-person conversations with residents across neighborhoods, including both dog owners and those without dogs, reflecting a shared concern about safety, accountability, and quality of life in public spaces; and

WHEREAS, there remains public confusion regarding appropriate responses to dangerous dog incidents and the legal standards governing intervention, including recent high-profile regional cases that have raised concerns about the use of force and public safety protocols; and

WHEREAS, ensuring that animal control laws are not only well-written but also consistently enforced, clearly communicated, and adequately supported by staffing and resources is essential to maintaining safe and respectful shared public spaces;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDERED, that the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a public hearing to examine:

- The current enforcement of existing leash laws, including compliance and citation practices
- The rate of dog licensing across the City and enforcement of licensing requirements
- The volume, type, and geographic distribution of complaints, including 311 reports, Animal Control calls, and direct constituent communications to Council offices
- Response times, protocols, and jurisdictional responsibilities for Animal Control and other City departments

- Staffing levels, training, and resource allocation for Boston Animal Care and Control
- Public awareness and understanding of existing animal control laws and responsibilities
- Policies and procedures related to dangerous or aggressive dog incidents, including interagency coordination
- Opportunities to improve communication, education, outreach, and consistent enforcement of existing laws

AND BE IT FURTHER ORDERED, that representatives from Boston Animal Care and Control, the Boston Police Department, Inspectional Services Department, Parks and Recreation Department, and other relevant stakeholders be invited to testify, along with members of the public.

Filed on: April 14, 2026