

Massachusetts General Laws Annotated

Part I. Administration of the Government (Ch. 1-182)

Title VII. Cities, Towns and Districts (Ch. 39-49a)

Chapter 40. Powers and Duties of Cities and Towns (Refs & Annos)

M.G.L.A. 40 § 21D

§ 21D. Noncriminal disposition of ordinance, by-law, rule or regulation violations

Currentness

Any city or town may by ordinance or by-law not inconsistent with this section provide for non-criminal disposition of violations of any ordinance or by-law or any rule or regulation of any municipal officer, board or department the violation of which is subject to a specific penalty.

Any such ordinance or by-law shall provide that any person taking cognizance of a violation of a specific ordinance, by-law, rule or regulation which he is empowered to enforce, hereinafter referred to as the enforcing person, as an alternative to initiating criminal proceedings shall, or, if so provided in such ordinance or by-law, may, give to the offender a written notice to appear before the clerk of the district court having jurisdiction thereof at any time during office hours, not later than twenty-one days after the date of such notice. Such notice shall be in triplicate and shall contain the name and address, if known, of the offender, the specific offense charged, and the time and place for his required appearance. Such notice shall be signed by the enforcing person, and shall be signed by the offender whenever practicable in acknowledgment that such notice has been received.

The enforcing person shall, if possible, deliver to the offender a copy of said notice at the time and place of the violation. If it is not possible to deliver a copy of said notice to the offender at the time and place of the violation, said copy shall be mailed or delivered by the enforcing person, or by his commanding officer or the head of his department or by any person authorized by such commanding officer, department or head to the offender's last known address, within fifteen days after said violation. Such notice as so mailed shall be deemed a sufficient notice, and a certificate of the person so mailing such notice that it has been mailed in accordance with this section shall be prima facie evidence thereof.

At or before the completion of each tour of duty, or at the beginning of the first subsequent tour of duty, the enforcing person shall give to his commanding officer or department head those copies of each notice of such a violation he has taken cognizance of during such tour which have not already been delivered or mailed by him as aforesaid. Said commanding officer or department head shall retain and safely preserve one copy and shall, at a time not later than the next court day after such delivery or mailing, deliver the other copy to the clerk of the court before which the offender has been notified to appear. The clerk of each district court and of the Boston municipal court shall maintain a separate docket of such notices to appear.

Any person notified to appear before the clerk of a district court as hereinbefore provided may so appear and confess the offense charged, either personally or through a duly authorized agent or by mailing to the city or town clerk of the municipality within which the violation occurred together with the notice such specific sum of money not exceeding three hundred dollars as the town shall fix as penalty for violation of the ordinance, by-law, rule or regulation. Such payment shall if mailed be made only by postal note, money order or check. Upon receipt of such notice, the city or town clerk shall forthwith notify the district court clerk of such payment and the receipt by the district court clerk of such notification shall operate as a final disposition of the case. An appearance under this paragraph shall not be deemed to be a criminal proceeding. No person so notified to appear before the clerk of a district court shall be required to report to any probation officer, and no record of the case shall be entered in any probation records.

If any person so notified to appear desires to contest the violation alleged in the notice to appear and also to avail himself of the procedure established pursuant to this section, he may, within twenty-one days after the date of the notice, request a hearing in writing. Such hearing shall be held before a district court judge, clerk, or assistant clerk, as the court shall direct, and if the judge, clerk, or assistant clerk shall, after hearing, find that the violation occurred and that it was committed by the person so notified to appear, the person so notified shall be permitted to dispose of the case by paying the specific sum of money fixed as a penalty as aforesaid, or such lesser amount as the judge, clerk or assistant clerk shall order, which payment shall operate as a final disposition of the case. If the judge, clerk, or assistant clerk shall, after hearing, find that violation alleged did not occur or was not committed by the person notified to appear, that finding shall be entered in the docket, which shall operate as a final disposition of the case. Proceedings held pursuant to this paragraph shall not be deemed to be criminal proceedings. No person disposing of a case by payment of such a penalty shall be required to report to any probation office as a result of such violation, nor shall any record of the case be entered in the probation records.

If any person so notified to appear before the clerk of a district court fails to pay the fine provided hereunder within the time specified or, having appeared, does not confess the offense before the clerk or pay the sum of money fixed as a penalty after a hearing and finding as provided in the preceding paragraph, the clerk shall notify the enforcing person who issued the original notice, who shall determine whether to apply for the issuance of a complaint for the violation of the appropriate ordinance, by-law, rule or regulation.

As used in this section the term “district court” shall include, within the limits of their jurisdiction, the municipal court of the city of Boston and the divisions of the housing court department of the trial court.

The notice to appear provided for herein shall be printed in such form as the chief justice of the municipal court of the city of Boston shall prescribe for said court, and as the chief justice of the district courts shall prescribe for the district courts. Said notice may also include notice of violations pursuant to [section eleven C of chapter eighty-five](#), [section eighteen A of chapter ninety](#), [section one hundred and seventy-three A of chapter one hundred and forty](#) and [section sixteen A of chapter two hundred and seventy](#). Any fines imposed under the provisions of this section shall enure to the city or town for such use as said city or town may direct. This procedure shall not be used for the enforcement of municipal traffic rules and regulations. Chapter ninety C shall be the exclusive method of enforcement of municipal traffic rules and regulations.

#### Credits

Added by St.1977, c. 401, § 2. Amended by [St.1987, c. 609, §§ 1, 2](#); [St.1988, c. 199, § 8](#); [St.1989, c. 649, § 1](#); [St.1990, c. 470](#); [St.1992, c. 133, § 370](#); [St.1993, c. 182, § 4](#).

#### [Notes of Decisions \(4\)](#)

M.G.L.A. 40 § 21D, MA ST 40 § 21D

Current through the 2015 1st Annual Session and Chapter 43 of the 2016 2nd Annual Session