

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS TANIA FERNANDES ANDERSON, JULIA MEJIA,
SANTANA AND WORRELL



CITY OF BOSTON

IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND TWENTY FIVE

RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF BOSTON CITY COUNCILORS

- WHEREAS,** The Boston City Council is the legislative body of the municipal government, established to represent the people of Boston and serve as a counterbalance to the executive authority of the Mayor; *and*
- WHEREAS,** The role of a City Councilor is often misunderstood, despite its profound impact on neighborhood development, citywide funding, and municipal accountability; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Boston's City Councilors are charged with drafting and passing local ordinances that regulate and shape daily life in the city, from tenant protections and environmental policy to public health and equity initiatives; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Councilors are responsible for reviewing, amending, and ultimately approving the Mayor's annual operating and capital budgets, governing approximately \$9 billion in taxpayer resources and determining funding levels for schools, housing, public safety, infrastructure, and more; *and*
- WHEREAS,** City Councilors convene oversight hearings, working sessions, and public forums to scrutinize city departments, evaluate policy outcomes, and ensure that public services are equitable, efficient, and accountable; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Each Councilor serves as an advocate for their constituents, fielding service requests, resolving neighborhood issues, guiding residents through city processes, and securing tangible improvements to local quality of life; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Boston's City Councilors hold formal power to vote on land use decisions, including zoning changes during council meetings, and can make recommendations on large-scale development proposals, particularly under Article 80 review processes through BPDA and ZBA hearings; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Councilors approve key appointments made by the Mayor, including department heads and commissioners, thereby helping to ensure checks and balances within the city's executive functions; *and*

WHEREAS, Although Councilors do not directly manage city departments, their leadership is instrumental in convening agencies, proposing legislation, and negotiating solutions that meet the needs of their districts; *and*

WHEREAS, Councilors are also take on the responsibility for community organizing and civic infrastructure, hosting town halls, forming resident advisory councils when necessary, conducting outreach in multiple languages, and building participatory pipelines for historically excluded communities; *and*

WHEREAS, City Councilors are expected to show up consistently in their communities, not just in City Hall chambers but at block parties, vigils, school functions, tenant meetings, and neighborhood cleanups, as visible and accessible stewards of local government; *and*

WHEREAS, The Boston City Council includes 13 members, nine district-based Councilors and four At-Large members, with a President elected internally every two years to guide its proceedings and ensure its independence; *and*

WHEREAS, District Councilors represent approximately 70,000 to 80,000 residents each, and are expected to be not only legislators but also mediators, negotiators, educators, and coalition-builders; *and*

WHEREAS, Boston City Councilors are charged with legislating, approving budgets, advocating for constituents, and shaping citywide priorities, but are not provided with dedicated research analysts, limiting their ability to advance data-driven, community-informed solutions; *and*

WHEREAS, Councilors must evaluate the impacts of city programs and funding, yet lack access to real-time district-level data dashboards, making it difficult to assess service equity, housing outcomes, or enforcement gaps transparently and effectively; *and*

WHEREAS, Council offices lack modern, centralized case management software or systems, resulting in inefficient tracking of constituent services, missed follow-up or outreach opportunities, and barriers to identifying systemic issues through constituent trends; *and*

WHEREAS, There is no city-funded Participatory Governance infrastructure supporting Council offices, such as discretionary engagement budgets, multilingual outreach support, or stipends for advisory councils or civic associations participation, thereby constraining deep democratic engagement, especially in underrepresented communities; *and*

WHEREAS, Incoming Councilors receive limited onboarding in municipal law, zoning, budget analysis, and department procedural rules, leading to steep learning curves that reduce legislative efficacy and institutional continuity; *and*

WHEREAS, Unlike the Mayor's Office, the City Council lacks an independent legal, planning, or fiscal analysis team, placing Councilors at a structural disadvantage when proposing legislation, scrutinizing development, or negotiating budget allocations; *and*

WHEREAS, No centralized, public platform exists for participatory lawmaking or structured resident input on legislative proposals, depriving Councilors of streamlined, equitable ways to co-develop policy with constituents; *and*

WHEREAS, These structural gaps limit the Council's ability to be proactive, timely, and transformative in meeting the needs of over 70,000 constituents per district and diminish its power as a co-equal branch of city government; *and*

WHEREAS, In order for the Boston City Council to function as an effective legislative body and true partner in democratic governance, Council supports must be modernized and upgraded to include dedicated Council administration data science research team, centralized case management systems, real-time district data access, participatory governance infrastructure with a fully equipped budget analysis team, independent legal analysis team, and structured civic engagement tools, ensuring Councilors can meet the scale and complexity of their duties with equity, accountability, and efficiency; *and*

WHEREAS, A stronger public understanding of the scope, power, and limitations of a City Councilor's role is essential for civic participation, accountability, and co-governance in Boston's neighborhoods; ***NOW, THEREFORE BE IT***

RESOLVED: That the Boston City Council formally affirms its commitment to public education regarding the duties, functions, and authority of Councilors, and encourages ongoing civic learning, institutional transparency, and accessible engagement to ensure every Bostonian knows how their local government works, and how to shape it. And that the Boston City Council calls for the modernization of its operational infrastructure to include enhanced staffing, data tools, and civic engagement systems, ensuring Councilors are equipped to serve their constituents effectively, legislate with integrity, and uphold their role as an accountable, accessible, and fully empowered legislative branch.

Filed on: June 25, 2025