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January 23, 2026

Liz Breadon, President
Boston City Council
1 City Hall Plaza
Boston, MA 02201

Re: Boston City Council Rules 2026-2027: Proposed Amendments

Dear Council President Liz Breadon,

In advance of passing the permanent Boston City Council Rules for Municipal Years 2026 and 2027, I am writing to respectfully propose some amendments to the rules. Below are my proposed amendments with explanations for the amendment and the proposed redline:

Throughout the Rules:

Amendment: Strike “he or she”/“his or her”/etc. and insert “they”/“their”/etc.

Purpose of amendment: More inclusive language rather than gendered language.

Rule 15:

Amendment: Language to clarify the rule’s intended purpose that is to prevent duplicate dockets in the same year.

Purpose for amendment: There has been a lack of clarity around the use of Rule 15, and this lack of clarity can get in the way of the Council’s ability to do its job. A subject, topic, issue, concern, etc. that is before the Council can change significantly in a year’s time. New filings may be necessary to reflect changes in situations, available information, unanticipated concerns or consequences, and subtopics regarding the matter at hand. It is important that the Council has the ability to adapt as a matter evolves over time, and is not inadvertently prevented from doing so by a docket on a certain matter that was filed at an earlier time when the matter was at a different stage; the lack of clarity in the rule’s current language about the distinction between duplication versus evolution of filings does not allow for evolved filings and therefore inadvertently prevents the Council from adapting over the course of a year.

Precedence/need for amendment: Councilors have had their filings “rule fifteened” despite significantly evolved language and/or different subtopics from a previous filing, even as recently

as the previous municipal year. This was due to the lack of distinction between duplication and necessary updates due to subject matters changing over the course of the year.

Proposed redline:

Rule 15. Only for the purpose of preventing duplication, in the event that an ordinance, order, resolution, petition, amendment, authorization, agreement or motion concerning the same or similar subjects are filed with the clerk for consideration by the council, the clerk, in consultation with the council president, shall cause to have entered on the agenda only that resolution or order which was first filed. The name of the sponsor(s) to the similar resolution or order may be added as a sponsoring member to the resolution or order which is placed on the agenda if at the same meeting. Such action, however, shall not preclude any member from offering an amendment to the resolution or order. This rule shall not apply to filings whose content is on a different subtopic under the same or similar subject as a previous filing, or whose content has evolved due to changes in said same or similar subject as time has gone on; the council's ability to adapt via new filings as situations, available information, unanticipated concerns or consequences, and subtopics develop over time is preserved.

Rule 34, Rule 35, and Rule 35A:

Amendment: Adding “public testimony sessions” to the kinds of events committees can hold.

Purpose of amendment: To empower committee chairs to hold public testimony sessions on dockets. There are many hearings where there are lots of people who are interested in testifying, and it is difficult to fit all the public testimony, panel opening statements, and Councilor questions into a three-hour session. This addition to the kinds of events committees can hold will allow for a distinct time for public testimony when necessary.

Precedence: Public testimony sessions held by the Committee on Ways and Means have been successful, well-attended by community and Councilors, and necessary during budget season. All committees should be able to hold this kind of session.

Proposed redline for Rule 34:

Rule 34. No meeting, policy briefing, working session, or hearing, or public testimony session of any committee, except the committee on ways and means, in accordance with the limitations of the state's open meeting law, shall be called upon less than forty-eight (48) hours notice (exclusive of legal holidays, Saturdays, and Sundays), unless otherwise allowed by the president in accord with the limitations of the state's open meeting law, from the time the council staff shall have electronically transmitted the notices and invitation letters or dispatched them by special messenger; provided that meetings of the committee of the whole may be held for a specific purpose(s) at the call of the president, at the completion of council business and prior to final adjournment of any meeting of the council without such notice. Only that specific item(s) for which a committee of the whole meeting, working session, or hearing, or public testimony session has been called

shall be in order at such meeting, working session, ~~or hearing, or public testimony session.~~

Only a committee chair may schedule a meeting, policy briefing, working session, ~~or hearing, or public testimony session~~ or reserve time on the council's calendar for a meeting, policy briefing, working session, ~~or hearing, or public testimony session~~ to be scheduled. Notice of all scheduled meetings, policy briefings, hearings, working sessions, ~~and public testimony sessions~~ shall be posted by the clerk indicating the date, time and place in accordance with the requirements of the open meeting law. In addition, the notice shall include the item(s) or subject(s) to be discussed. Electronic notice shall be delivered to each councilor and other interested parties by council staff. The chair and members of any committee shall speak and question witnesses for not more than ten minutes at a time. The conduct of members of the public at council meetings, and committee meetings, policy briefings, working sessions, ~~and hearings, and public testimony sessions~~, including those present to testify, shall be governed by Rules 41, 42 and 43 and shall be enforced by the council staff assigned to the meeting, policy briefing, working session, ~~or hearing, or public testimony session~~.

In the event a hearing is expected to last three or more hours, the chair shall allow members of the public, in the order in which they sign up, to offer testimony at the beginning, middle and end of the hearing. It shall be at the discretion of the chair to determine the appropriate time and how many individuals shall testify at the beginning and during the hearing with the remaining individuals being allowed to testify at the end of the hearing.

No committee, unless authorized by an order of the council, shall incur any expense, including, but not limited to, advertising and stenographic costs. Committee chairs requesting interpreter services will work with the staff director, recognizing there are budgetary limitations, to arrange for such services at the time the meeting, policy briefing, working session, ~~or hearing, or public testimony session~~ is scheduled. No committee meeting, policy briefing, working session, ~~or hearing, or public testimony session~~, except the committee of the whole, the committee on rules and administration, and the committee on ways and means, shall be conducted on the day of any regular meeting of the council. No committee, except the committee of the whole, committee on ways and means, or committee on rules and administration shall be allowed to schedule or conduct a meeting, policy briefing, working session, ~~or hearing, or public testimony session~~ on the same day and time as a previously scheduled meeting, policy briefing, working session, or hearing of another committee.

No committee will hold any hearing, policy briefing, working session, ~~or~~ meeting, **or** public testimony session after the last regular council meeting of the municipal year.

Proposed redline for Rule 35:

Rule 35. Each item listed on the weekly agenda that is to be reported out of committee must be accompanied by a report. The committee chair shall draft the report with the assistance of central staff committee liaisons. Committee liaisons will be responsible for keeping minutes of committee hearings, working sessions, meetings, ~~and~~ policy briefings, **and** public testimony sessions in accordance with open meeting and public records requirements. Minutes shall include the following information: name of the committee, title of the event (meeting, working session, hearing, policy briefing, **public testimony session**), date, time of the call of the event, start time, end time, location, subject, committee/council members present, a summary of the discussion held, any decisions made, next steps to be taken, or votes taken, a list of all correspondence, documents, or exhibits presented at the event, and items requested by councilors. The minutes are to be prepared by the committee liaison and presented to the chair for review and signature and filed within a reasonable timeframe of the conclusion of the hearing, meeting, policy briefing, ~~or~~ working session, **or** public testimony session, but in no case later than the committee's next hearing, meeting, policy briefing, ~~or~~ working session, **or** public testimony session on the relevant topic, except if a more suitable timeframe is determined by the council president or central staff director. Reports of the committee chair or the committee must contain the following information: docket number, title, date referred, sponsor, date(s) of hearing, meeting, policy briefing, ~~or~~ working session, **or** public testimony session (where applicable), a discussion of the provisions of the legislation, summary of information received at the hearing, meeting, policy briefing, ~~or~~ working session, **or** public testimony session, and in the case of amended or substituted language, a discussion of the changes and the impacts on the original legislation, and the rationale for the recommended action.

The committee chair may issue an interim report to provide to the council information received regarding the topic or the status of a docket. This interim committee report does not recommend a final disposition of the docket, and will not dispose of the docket. The interim report will be filed in the same manner as all other documents. It will be filed as part of the Reports of Committee portion of the agenda, and will be placed on file. The docket remains in the assigned committee until final disposition.

Proposed redline for Rule 35A:

Committee Hearings, Meetings, Policy Briefings, ~~and~~ Working Sessions, **and Public Testimony Sessions**

Rule 35A. Committee hearings refer to formal sessions of a committee at which representatives from the Administration, experts, or others from the public are invited to

discuss and answer questions regarding a particular docket or subject matter as articulated in the hearing order assigned to that committee. A public comment period is required and subject to Rule 34.

Committee chairs or a quorum of committee members may schedule a meeting for the purpose of discussing ideas related to committee work, particular dockets, or other topics within the subject matter of that committee. For committee meetings, public testimony is at the discretion of the Chair of the committee.

Committee policy briefings refer to less formal sessions in which a chair of a committee invites representatives from the Administration, experts and others from the public to participate in an open discussion about a particular policy issue. While there is no formal public comment period, members of the public are encouraged to attend policy briefings, and participate in the discussion.

Committee chairs may schedule working sessions for the purpose of revising legislation in committee, reviewing a proposed committee report, or to discuss with the committee the content of a piece of legislation. The committee chair may schedule a working session under the requirements of the open meeting law and process established in Rule 34. The purpose of the working session will be to discuss and deliberate on proposed changes to the legislation before the committee. The changes outlined at that working session would then be incorporated into the legislation, and included in the committee report regarding the legislation. More than one working session may be held on the same legislation and working sessions may be scheduled to review more than one piece of legislation at the same time. Subject to the will of the chair, working sessions may be scheduled to occur at times separate from the hearings, or directly afterward. While members of the public may attend working sessions, there will be no public comment period. Public participation and draft materials at working sessions shall be limited to councilors and chair invitees.

Committee public testimony sessions refer to formal sessions of a committee at which members of the public are invited to testify regarding a particular docket or subject matter as articulated in the docket assigned to that committee. Committee chairs may schedule public testimony sessions for the purpose of allowing council members to hear statements from the public and focusing on the public's positions on a particular docket or subject matter. Council members may provide opening and closing remarks.

Rule 36:

Amendment: Language to clarify committee chairship, vice-chairship, and membership for two years.

Purpose of amendment: To clarify that the assignments of a committee's chair, vice-chair, and members is concurrent with the two-year term of the City Council. The current language refers to no timeline/length of appointment, meaning that it could be interpreted incorrectly. The length of these assignments should be stated explicitly so that members of the public are aware that the assignments of a committee's chair, vice-chair, and members is for the current two-year term of the City Council.

Precedence: Rule 3 has this clarifying language, as it states, "The term of the City Council President shall be two (2) years, co-terminus with the term of the City Council."

Proposed redline:

Rule 36. All councilors shall be considered as members of each standing committee. The president of the council shall name those members of each committee, including its chair and vice-chair, who are authorized to vote on matters in the committee, **which shall be co-terminus with the two-year term of the City Council**. Communication shall be filed with the City Clerk detailing the named chairs, vice-chairs, and members who are assigned and authorized to vote on matters in each committee **for said two-year term**. All other members of each committee are not authorized to vote on such matters in the committee. A quorum of the committee shall be determined on the basis of voting members only.

The role of each committee shall be to provide a forum for in-depth review and analysis of all matters that come before city departments, boards, and agencies, and to provide a means for residents to address their concerns with regard to services provided by the city.

Committees shall focus upon: (1) public policy, (2) efficiency of service delivery, (3) equity with respect to that service delivery, (4) equity with respect to outcome and impact in order to address disparities, (5) cost containment, it being the goal of the city government to provide appropriate services while ensuring that public monies, which derive from our citizenry, are appropriated wisely and cautiously.

I believe these proposed amendments will better our body through empowering its members, providing additional tools, and clarifying the language of our rules. I respectfully request that you include these amendments in the City Council Rules for Municipal Years 2026 and 2027.

Sincerely,



Julia Mejia, Boston City Councilor At-Large