



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING REGARDING REVIVING THE "RED SHIRTS" PROGRAM

WHEREAS, In the 1980s and 90s, Mayor Thomas M. Menino created the "1994 Summer of Opportunity" initiative, which included hiring 1,000 youth to work with the city's cleanup crews and help renovate baseball diamonds in city parks, and teaching 250 teenagers carpentry and construction skills. The program was known informally as the "Red Shirts," composed of highly visible city workers deployed in neighborhoods to address day-to-day quality of life issues; *and*

WHEREAS, The Red Shirts assisted in a range of municipal tasks, including emptying city trash barrels, sweeping sidewalks, shoveling hydrants, reporting abandoned vehicles, and removing debris from vacant lots, among other small but high-impact services. By 1994, the initiative had organized twelve crews of teenagers, each assigned to different city neighborhoods. These crews were responsible for cleaning local business districts, sidewalks, and municipal properties, contributing to the city's maintenance and fostering community pride; *and*

WHEREAS, The presence of Red Shirts offered a proactive and responsive city workforce visible in communities, helping to strengthen neighborhood trust in municipal government and allowing for real-time response to constituent concerns; *and*

WHEREAS, A revived and reformed Red Shirt program may be able to assist and supplement full-time employees who work tirelessly to deliver high-quality city services. The City has been working to address long term issues related to staffing shortages despite increased demand, which has led to some service delays—particularly in high-density communities; *and*

WHEREAS, Reviving a modern version of the Red Shirts program could create employment opportunities, bolster inter-departmental response capacity, and improve neighborhood cleanliness, safety, and livability, especially as summer months bring heightened need for street-level service delivery; **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT**

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to explore the feasibility of reviving the Red Shirts program as a neighborhood-based quality of life task force to support constituent services

citywide. Representatives from the Mayor's Office, the Office of Neighborhood Services, Office of Workforce Development, Public Works Department, Boston Centers for Youth & Families, and other relevant agencies shall be invited to testify.

Filed on: June 25, 2025