

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS ED FLYNN, BREADON, COLETTA  
ZAPATA, DURKAN, FITZGERALD, PEPEN, SANTANA, WEBER,  
WORRELL AND LOUIJEUNE



## CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

### ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS ESTABLISHING A DRONE POLICY IN THE CITY OF BOSTON

- WHEREAS:** Unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), also known as drones, are pilotless flying devices or aircraft. In the past two decades, rapid advancements in technology have enabled the widespread use of drones, including in the military, agriculture, construction sectors, search and rescue operations, deliveries, law enforcement, journalism and recreation. As the usage of drones have become more common, public safety and privacy concerns have risen; *and*
- WHEREAS:** On October 22, 2024, a drone crashed into a light pole and fell into the crowd at Boston City Hall Plaza during a Celtics Watch Party, injuring two people. The drone was controlled by a CNN employee with valid FAA credentials; *and*
- WHEREAS:** In December 2024, two men were arrested and charged for flying drones in “hazardous air space” close to Logan Airport - a prohibited airspace for drones. Similar arrests have been made across the country, where drones were spotted too close to airports; *and*
- WHEREAS:** The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has several regulations on who can use drones, and how. Drone users must register their drones, and for commercial use, they must pass the FAA’s Aeronautical Knowledge Test to obtain a Remote Pilot Certificate. For recreational use, drone users are required to pass the The Recreational Unmanned Aircraft System Safety Test (TRUST), and restrictions include flying below 400 ft and registering the drone if it is over .55 lbs; *and*
- WHEREAS:** In Massachusetts, drones are allowed for commercial and recreational use, subject to the FAA UAS regulations. However, as it stands, local law enforcement is unable to enforce FAA regulations. There is currently only one state law - the Code of Massachusetts Regulations Title 302 (302 CMR 12.04) - concerning the operation of drones, which prohibits the use or operation of any air propelled power craft or hovercraft on or over any land or waterways of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR); *and*
- WHEREAS:** Massport has also installed over 200 “No Drone Zone” signs around Boston Logan International Airport, other Massport locations and over 50 parks. They continue to work with other municipalities to install signage along flight paths; *and*
- WHEREAS:** In the Massachusetts State House, Representative Bruce J. Ayers of Quincy is currently leading the effort on regulating drones over airports and flight paths (H.

1585 *An Act Relative to Air Traffic Safety*) as well as a no fly zone over the airspace of all school facilities in the Commonwealth (H. 3618 *An Act regulating the flight of unmanned aircraft/drones in the airspace over all early early, elementary, and secondary education facilities in the Commonwealth*); and

**WHEREAS:** In the City of Boston, under the Surveillance Oversight Ordinance, there are rules governing how the Boston Police Department (BPD) can use UAS technologies for surveillance. However, the City does not have any regulations or guidance on the individual use of drones/UAS technologies; and

**WHEREAS:** In January this year, a Canadian company “Draganfly” announced that it secured a waiver from the FAA that enables its small unmanned aircraft (sUA) to conduct operations over human beings and moving vehicles. The permissions cover a prescribed flight route over the city of Boston, and the FAA waiver “allows flights over individuals who are not direct participants in the UAV operation”, and “enables UAV operations over moving traffic, which is critical for urban deployment scenarios”; and

**WHEREAS:** Across Massachusetts, there are a handful of towns and municipalities that have implemented drone regulations. This includes the City of Belchertown, the City of Chicopee, the Town of Holyoke, who require a permit, written permission, and/or have an ordinance utilizing existing land use regulations to control drone operations; and

**WHEREAS:** Drones can pose a significant threat to airplanes, those aboard, and public safety, especially in busy urban settings. They can also create noise disturbances, cause physical harm to residents, and violate privacy. There are over a million drones registered with the FAA across the country, however, there are also many illegal and unregistered drones. It is critical that stronger regulations are put in place to protect residents from this emerging technology; and

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDERED:**

That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing to discuss establishing a Drone Policy in the City of Boston. Representatives from the Boston Police Department, Boston Parks Department, Massport, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, and other relevant and interested parties shall be invited to attend.

**Filed in Council: May 7, 2025**