

**OFFERED BY COUNCILORS EDWARD M. FLYNN, BREADON, CULPEPPER,  
FITZGERALD, MEJIA, MURPHY, WEBER, AND WORRELL**



## **CITY OF BOSTON**

**IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND TWENTY SIX**

### **PETITION FOR A SPECIAL LAW RE: AN ACT RELATIVE TO 17F REFORM**

**WHEREAS**, Transparency is a critical piece of maintaining both public trust and civic engagement in a democracy, by displaying values of good government, accountability, and openness. Pursuant to Rule 17F of the Council rules and Boston City Charter, a formal request for information may be submitted by a member of the Boston City Council. These requests are used to obtain records, reports, data, or other information from the Mayor’s administration and City departments in order to support the Council’s oversight and legislative responsibilities. Rule 17F has not been amended since 1982; *and*

**WHEREAS**, According to the City Charter, the administration is responsible, “to answer written questions relating thereto at a meeting to be held not earlier than one week from the date of the receipt of said questions.” There is no timeline that currently exists, or deadline for the Mayor to provide a response, only that they can be summoned after seven days. At the time of writing this Home Rule Petition, twelve 17F requests have gone unanswered, with the earliest 17F order filed on January 28, 2026, over 100 days ago. There are an additional seventeen 17F requests that went unanswered from 2022-2025; *and*

**WHEREAS**, While the City Charter indicates that the administration needs to answer a 17F request within seven days of receipt, there are no parameters enforcing this rule besides the possibility of a summons. Councilors file 17F requests to seek information relevant to the constituents they serve, it’s critical that Councilors, and therefore their constituents, receive the relevant information they have requested to address quality of life, public safety, public health, and inform legislation; *and*

**WHEREAS**, Currently, the City Council can request the presence of the Mayor to answer a 17F in-person at a Council meeting if the order was not answered within seven days - an enforcement measure of which there is no known modern precedent. At this time, with twelve unanswered 17F requests, it is wholly appropriate to establish a more enforceable measure that will ensure that questions are answered; *and*

**WHEREAS**, Concerns remain that a 17F now only carries the same weight as a public records request. A 17F may, in some cases, facilitate a more direct or expedited exchange

of information than a public records request, particularly when the matter involves active City Council oversight or departmental accountability; *and*

**WHEREAS,** Under current enforcement, a public records request holds more weight because the requester is guaranteed to receive a response within 10 business days, whereas a 17F is a power of the Council that, in practice, does not often provide information within the seven days that it requires. The inserted language outlining that the Mayor must provide the information or reasons in writing for withholding such information, further enforces that there will be a response from the City Administration within seven days; ***NOW, THEREFORE BE IT***

**ORDERED:** That a petition to the General Court, accompanied by a bill for a special law relating to the City of Boston to be filed with an attested copy of this Order be, and hereby is, approved under Clause One (1) of Section Eight (8) of Article Two (2), as amended, of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to the end that legislation be adopted precisely as follows, except for clerical or editorial changes of form only:

#### **PETITION FOR A SPECIAL LAW RE: AN ACT RELATIVE TO 17F REFORM**

SECTION 1. Section 1.17F, Chapter 376, of the Acts of 1951, as amended by Section 16, Chapter 190, of the Acts of 1982, is hereby amended by striking the first sentence, and in its place inserting the following language:

The city council at any time may request from the Mayor specific information on any municipal matter within its jurisdiction. The Mayor must provide the requested information or reasons for withholding such information, in writing, within 7 days. If not provided and filed with the City Clerk within 7 days, at the next regular Meeting of the Council, the Council shall suspend its business and may request the Mayor's presence to provide the requested information at a meeting to be held not earlier than 14 days from the date of the receipt of said questions, in which case the Mayor shall personally, or through a head of a department or a member of a board, attend such meeting and publicly answer all such questions.

#### SECTION 2.

The provisions of this act are severable and if any provision, or portion thereof, should be held to be unconstitutional or otherwise invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, such unconstitutionality or invalidity shall not affect the remaining provisions, which remain in full force and effect.

#### SECTION 3.

This act shall take effect upon its passage.

Filed on: May 20, 2026