



Boston City Council

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Councilor At-Large

Communication Regarding Late Files and Council Process

I am filing this communication to raise serious concern about a repeated pattern in the Council chamber involving objections to late-file matters before they are read into the record, explained, or considered by the full body.

For months, Councilor Sharon Durkan has repeatedly objected to late files in a way that has delayed legislation, blocked oversight requests, and interfered with the Council's ability to conduct its work in a timely and transparent manner.

Late files are an established part of the Council's rules and process for matters that arise after the Monday 10 a.m. filing deadline and could not have been reasonably anticipated. Council business does not stop after the agenda is posted. Issues arise on Monday afternoon, Tuesday, and Wednesday morning, and Councilors are able under the rules to bring those urgent matters forward, explain why they are time-sensitive, and allow the body to decide whether to take them up.

Framing every late file as an Open Meeting Law violation is wrong. A blanket objection before the matter is even read does not protect the process. It blocks the process.

What makes this even more concerning is that these objections have not been applied consistently. Late-filed personnel orders and other late-filed matters have moved forward, while oversight filings from Councilor Flynn and me, including time-sensitive 17F orders, have been blocked. The same rules should apply to everyone, no matter who filed the matter or what the issue is.

It is also concerning that this behavior has been allowed to continue. The Council President has a responsibility to run a fair and orderly meeting and protect the integrity of the body's process. When repeated objections are used to block certain Councilors before their filings are even heard, and that behavior is allowed to stand, it undermines the work of the entire Council.

This repeated obstruction delays legislation, blocks oversight, and interferes with the Council's ability to get answers during budget season. This is especially concerning when 17F orders are involved, because they are intended to produce timely answers from the Administration within 7 days. Delaying those requests defeats the purpose of the filing and limits the Council's ability to make informed budget decisions.

Councilor Durkan has every right to disagree with a filing, debate it, or vote no. But automatic objections that prevent colleagues and the public from even hearing what is being filed undermine the work of the Council and delay the people's business. When procedure is used in a way that appears personal, petty, or targeted, it is unprofessional and damaging to the integrity of the body.

Boston residents deserve a Council that follows its rules, respects the process, allows debate, and applies the same standards to every member of the body.