

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS BENJAMIN J. WEBER, JULIA MEJIA, ENRIQUE PEPÉN,
BREADON, DURKAN, FERNDANES ANDERSON, FITZGERALD, FLYNN, MURPHY,
SANTANA, WORRELL, AND LOUIJEUNE



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS LONG-TERM VACANT COMMERCIAL SPACES IN THE CITY OF BOSTON

- WHEREAS,** Vacant storefronts and commercial spaces are not only found in downtown Boston, but throughout many Boston neighborhoods, and extended vacancies can have negative impacts on our small businesses and neighborhoods; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Finding a new business to rent a vacant commercial space takes time and requires due diligence from the landlord, but some commercial landlords purposefully keep commercial properties vacant for extended periods of time instead of renting to another business for a variety of reasons including waiting for a national chain to rent the space for more money or inattention from an absentee landlord; *and*
- WHEREAS,** The Mayor’s Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion has provided assistance to small businesses including technical assistance to those hoping to open storefronts in Boston. To date \$9 million in SPACE grants have been awarded to 61 businesses, providing each with approximately \$200,000 in an effort to fill vacant storefronts; *and*
- WHEREAS,** The City should examine the reasons why commercial spaces are left vacant over long periods of time and work with both small business and landlords to have those spaces occupied where possible; *and*
- WHEREAS,** The City of Boston should also examine the feasibility of creating a disincentive for commercial landlords from keeping their properties vacant for a profit, especially those who are absentee landlords; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Cities such as Washington, D.C., San Francisco, and Oakland California have instituted vacancy taxes for properties purposefully kept empty by commercial landlords. A recent study by Harvard University’s Joint Center for Housing Studies found that such taxes reduce vacancies and rents for small business, but could have negative impacts on businesses and tenants in the long run; **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT**
- ORDERED:** That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss the state of long-term commercial vacancies in the City of Boston and that representatives from the Mayor’s Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion, the Boston Main Streets Foundation and others impacted by commercial vacancies in the City of Boston be invited to attend the hearing.