



City of Boston, Massachusetts
Office of the Mayor

MICHELLE WU

April 30, 2024

TO THE CITY COUNCIL

Dear Councilors:

This is the response to the 17F: Order requesting certain information under 17F re: State Receivership of Boston's Election Commission. (**Docket #0906**).

Sincerely,

Michelle Wu
Mayor of Boston



City of Boston, Massachusetts
Office of the Mayor
Michelle Wu

April 17, 2025

TO THE BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Dear Councilors:

I am writing to provide you with an update following the November 5, 2024 state election. As you are aware, during the election, a number of precincts were not supplied with a sufficient number of ballots, which led to some voting locations running out of ballots for a period of time. The ballot shortages were exacerbated by technical issues with the voting machines and communication systems issues, which hindered reporting of issues and delayed timely delivery of additional ballot supplies.

After the election, the Secretary of the Commonwealth appointed an investigator, who met with and received information from the City. As a result of this investigation, the Secretary's Office issued a Report and Order in February, which contained the investigator's findings and laid out the terms the City is required to meet for compliance, including several deliverables to ensure smooth administration of elections moving forward. The Order is attached and can be found [here](#).

The Order lays out the directives regarding updates to the Department's operations and procedures, including collaboration with the State's appointed Designee, as follows:

- The Election Department shall deliver ballots equal to the number of voters to each precinct and shall submit a plan for doing so to the Secretary for approval.
- The Election Department shall create and get approval for a plan to ensure real-time communication between poll workers and the Election Department.
- The Election Department shall create and get approval for a plan for contacting every precinct throughout election day to get information about turnout, ballot supply, and machine issues.
- The City, in consultation with the Secretary, will develop and revise its comprehensive poll worker training program.

- The City, in consultation with the Secretary, will provide a comprehensive plan for pre-election, election day, and post-election preparation and administration.
- The “Secretary shall appoint, after consultation with the City, an individual or individuals ([] the ‘Secretary’s Designee’) to assist the Boston Election Department in the preparation and administration of elections through and including the election cycle held 2026.”
- After the 2026 state election cycle the Secretary will conduct a review of whether the Agreement and Order shall be extended.

The Secretary recently appointed a Designee, Michael J. Sullivan, previously the Director of the Office of Campaign and Political Finance and City Clerk in Newburyport. We look forward to working with Mr. Sullivan, given his experience and expertise, along with other staff from the Secretary of the Commonwealth’s Election Division.

Since November, with guidance from the Secretary’s Office, the City has been taking short, mid, and long-term actions to implement operational improvements in the Elections Department. This has included drafting internal and external communication plans and protocols for ballot quantity decisions, and will also include city-wide departmental engagement plans, updated poll worker and volunteer training materials, amongst other things. In the event that there is a special election in District 7, the Elections Department will prepare to administer that election consistent with the steps laid out in the following paragraphs, the timing of any vacancy, and applicable law.

We have made some structural changes within the City organizational chart to help provide the Elections Department the executive attention, change management expertise, and resources it needs to be successful. The Department has moved from reporting to the Law Department and now sits under the City’s People Operations and Administration Cabinet, where it has direct organizational support and management from the Commissioner of City Records, Paul Chong. The Commissioner of City Records oversees other key administrative and operational functions of the City including public records and the Registry, and has expertise in organizational change management within complex regulatory and operational environments. The Law Department will continue to provide legal guidance and support as it does for every City department.

Furthermore, the City hired a Process Improvement Manager dedicated to the Elections Department by re-purposing an existing role. This additional resource has been helping to document and standardize processes within the department, and will assist in implementing operational changes needed to modernize and improve the functioning of elections in Boston.

This February, the City hired The Elections Group (TEG), a nationally recognized, non-partisan consulting firm to provide the City with on the ground support and short-term recommendations that can be implemented over the next few months. With

their help, we have begun to analyze and implement structural, organizational changes to ensure the Elections Department has additional administrative and operational expertise.

TEG has spent the last two months working both onsite and remotely, meeting with stakeholders within the Elections Department and across City agencies. The Elections Department and TEG have already worked together to develop standard operating procedures to address the two key issues from the November 2024 election: protocols for ballot delivery and communication between precincts and the Elections Department. The Elections Department is exploring leveraging existing City technology and protocols for rapid citywide communication during municipal elections. Additionally, we are exploring the procurement of other new technology tools to aid these processes. Consistent with the Secretary's Order, the Elections Department, along with the other departments and outside experts identified above, alongside the Secretary's Office and Designee, is working diligently to develop concrete and effective communication plans to address the issue of unanswered calls from poll workers, which will be finalized, trained on, and shared publicly prior to the election.

As we continue to implement the approved plans for organizational, technology, and process improvements, the Elections Department will continue to work with the Secretary's Designee to ensure clear coordination in following through with the Order. The Elections Department will also make regular reports on this progress at public meetings of the Boston Election Commission, the materials from which will also be shared publicly. Additionally, we look forward to providing updates to the City Council at a hearing for Docket #0585, and we will continue to share any significant updates as they arise. Effective, transparent, and smooth elections are critical to Boston's healthy democracy. We look forward to your continued collaboration as we make these improvements to our Elections Department and voting experience for voters across the city.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michelle Wu".

Michelle Wu

Mayor of Boston