

Offered by City Councilors Julia Mejia, Tania Fernandes Anderson, Arroyo, Bok, Breadon, Flynn, Worrell and Coletta



**CITY OF BOSTON
IN CITY COUNCIL**

**ORDER FOR A HEARING ON GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY,
TRANSPARENCY, AND ACCESSIBILITY OF DECISION MAKING
PROTOCOLS IN CITY GOVERNMENT**

- WHEREAS,*** Sherry Arnstein, writing in 1969 about citizen involvement in planning processes in the United States, described a “ladder of citizen participation” that showed participation ranging from non-participation to full citizen control, where the people handle the entire job of planning, policy making and managing a programme; and
- WHEREAS,*** The City of Boston creates numerous resources for housing, education, public safety, public health, zoning, and more, but these resources are often inaccessible for individuals most directly impacted by the systemic issues these resources were created to help overcome; and
- WHEREAS,*** Protocols and procedures in the City of Boston, established either through the city charter, legislative action, or as a result of the discretion of city officials, has created a civic culture where only those with the most privileged access are able to play an involved role in all aspects of decision making; and
- WHEREAS,*** In a survey of attitudes towards the City's COVID-19 response, just 9% of residents surveyed 'strongly agreed' that their voice was heard and represented in policy decisions and nearly a quarter of respondents ‘strongly disagreed’ that their voice was heard and represented in policy decisions; and
- WHEREAS,*** Section 35 of the Boston City Charter states that “All heads of departments and members of municipal boards, including the board of street commissioners, as their present terms of office expire (but excluding the school committee and those officials by law appointed by the governor), shall be appointed by the mayor without confirmation by the city council”; and
- WHEREAS,*** For a large number of departments and agencies in the City of Boston, including the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Equity and Inclusion Cabinet, and the Budget

Office, the City Council and the people of Boston do not have any say in determining the qualifications for those positions or in identifying qualified candidates; and

WHEREAS, While the Council budget process allows for public testimony, many budget processes, including its working sessions and the determination of the spending of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, is done without consistent collaboration with the community and the Council; and

WHEREAS, In November of 2020, the Boston City Council held a hearing on public hearings as they relate to Government Accountability and Accessibility in the hopes of learning more about the process of making Council decision-making more accessible and accountable to the people; and

WHEREAS, Since then, the City Council has created a Committee on Government Accountability, Transparency, and Accessibility, whose stated goal is to review the efficiency, effectiveness, and accessibility of City operations and programs; and

WHEREAS, More work needs to be done to ensure that the Boston City Council, the Mayor's administration, and every department and agency in the City of Boston are creating accountable, transparent, and accessible decision making protocols;
NOW THEREFORE BE IT

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing on Government Accountability, Transparency, and Accessibility of Decision-Making Protocols in City Government. Representatives from the City of Boston, as well as community advocates are encouraged to attend.

Filed in Council: January 9, 2023