BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Government Operations
Gabriela Coletta Zapata, Chair

One City Hall Square 5th Floor, Boston, MA 02201 ◊ Phone: (617) 635-3040 ◊ city.council@boston.gov

REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

June 11, 2025

Dear Councilors,

The Committee on Government Operations was referred the following docket for consideration:

Docket #1187, Communication was received from Eneida Tavares, Chair of the Board of Election, regarding the Citizen Petition to create an Office of Inspector General.

This matter was referred to the Committee on June 4, 2025.

Summary of Legislation
Docket #1187, is a citizen's petition to place a nonbinding public opinion advisory question on the ballot for the November 4, 2025 municipal election. The petition proposes placement on the ballot of the following question: *"In the interest of government accountability, transparency, and accessibility, should the City of Boston establish a municipal independent Office of Inspector General?"* Pursuant to **M.G.L. Chapter 53, Section 18A**, a nonbinding public opinion advisory question may be placed on the ballot for a regular municipal election by vote of the governing body no later than thirty-five (35) days before the election, or upon the submission of a citizen-initiated petition that satisfies applicable statutory requirements. In the City of Boston, the "governing body" includes the City Council and the Mayor.

Under the statute, a citizen-initiated petition signed by at least ten (10) registered voters may be submitted to the governing body for consideration and approval. Where such a petition is approved by the governing body at least ninety (90) days before the election (*Wednesday, August 6, 2025*), the question shall be placed on the ballot for the upcoming municipal election. The petition submitted under Docket #1187 was signed by 29 registered voters. The Board of Election Commissioners examined the petition submitted and deemed the signatures sufficient to satisfy the signature requirement of at least 10 registered voters.

If the Council does not act on Docket #1187 by August 6th, petitioners may still seek to qualify the question for ballot placement; however, through an alternate process outlined in **Chapter 53, Section 18A** that requires collecting additional signatures from at least ten percent (10%) of the City's registered voters. This process would allow the question to be placed on the ballot without approval of the City's governing body but involves a significantly higher administrative burden. Timely approval by the City Council will support the petitioners in their advocacy for placement of the proposed question on the ballot this November.

Summary of Amendments
The proposed ballot question was amended by inserting the words "oversight" and "fiscal responsibility"; striking the words "office of"; and re-wording for clarity. As amended, the ballot question shall read:

"In the interest of accountability, transparency, accessibility, and fiscal responsibility, should the City of Boston establish an independent municipal Inspector General to provide governmental oversight?"

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Committee Chair Recommended Action

As Chair of the Committee on Government Operations I recommend moving the listed docket from the Committee to the full Council for discussion and formal action. At this time, my recommendation to the full Council will be that this matter **OUGHT TO PASS IN A NEW DRAFT.**

Gabriela Coletta Zapata, Chair
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