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CITY OF BOSTON
Municipal Lobbying Compliance Commission

Minutes
Thursday, April 22, 2021, 2:00 PM
Virtual Meeting held remotely via Google Meet
Due to COVID-19 Pandemic

Commission Members Present: Sammy Nabulsi, Chair; Vivien Li, Linda Champion, City Clerk Maureen Feeney and Christine O'Donnell representing City Council President Matt O'Malley

Others Present: Assistant City Clerk Alex Geourntas, Clerk to the Commission

Call to order at 2:04 PM

Sammy Nabulsi, Chair of the Commission, opened the virtual meeting by welcoming everyone.

Motion was offered by Vivien Li to amend the March 18, 2021 Meeting Minutes to include text welcoming the Commission's newest member, Linda Champion and seconded by Sammy Nabulsi. All in favor.

Motion to approve the March 18, 2021 Meeting Minutes as amended was offered by City Clerk Maureen Feeney and seconded by Vivien Li. All in favor.

Review of Draft Online Form for Lobbying Complaints

City Clerk Maureen Feeney updated Commission members about the creation of a secure email folder where complaints would be sent. Access to this folder would be allowed for a limited number of individuals. Commission would receive the list of names that would have access.

Sammy Nabulsi referred to the Commission's Lobbying Regulations where it states that complaints would be filed with the City Clerk's Office. Any investigation would need to be authorized by the Commission. Review of complaints for validity would be a first step.

Linda Champion and Vivien Li agreed that complaints should be filed with the City Clerk's Office only. Commission should not have access to any complaints prior to any investigation taking place. Screening of complaints to ensure proper jurisdiction would take place as well.

City Clerk Maureen Feeney requested the Commission to clarify complaint process in terms of dismissing complaints based on incomplete information and documentation. Can City Clerk do this after due diligence?

Linda Champion agreed that complaints must be responded to by the City Clerk especially if they are incomplete and to verify any information submitted. Complaint process should be easy to understand and complaint form should be available in several languages.

Vivien Li described complaint process as a learning experience for all of us.

Commission members in agreement that a secure folder with limited access to certain individuals relative to complaints. While the City Clerk can make a determination on initiating an investigation, legal interpretation is a serious concern since City Clerk and Assistant City Clerk are not attorneys and consulting with city's Law Department would be one avenue to pursue.

Commission members reviewed a sample online complaint form as a first step towards creating a final version. Questions remain on anonymous complaints and regulations may need to be amended since they seem to discourage anonymous submittals.

Vivien Li stated that the city ordinance mandates transparency of lobbying in Boston and regulations would need to be amended to allow for anonymous filing of complaints.

Commission members agreed that at the next meeting the Commission will continue its review of the online form and Vivien Li will present an update on the additional research that was conducted relative to online forms utilized by other departments.

City Clerk Maureen Feeney also asked Commission members to consider the possibility of utilizing investigators from other city departments and/or Commissions? Fair Housing or Law Department could be possibilities or third party vendors?

Motion to adjourn was offered by Vivien Li and seconded by Linda Champion. All in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 4:04 PM.