



CITY OF BOSTON
Municipal Lobbying Compliance Commission

Minutes
Wednesday, July 17, 2019, 4:30 P.M.
Boston City Hall – Piemonte Room – 5th Floor
One City Hall Square, Boston, MA 02201

Commission Members Present: Sammy Nabulsi Chair, Stephanie Everett, Vivien Li, Christine O’Donnell representing City Council President Andrea Campbell and City Clerk Maureen Feeney

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

Call to order at 4:34 P.M.

Sammy Nabulsi, Chair of the Commission, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone in attendance and first order of business was to review and approve the minutes of the June 26, 2019 and July 1, 2019 Commission Meetings.

Motion to approve the June 26, 2019 Meeting Minutes offered by Vivien Li and seconded by Maureen Feeney, City Clerk. All in favor.

Motion to approve the July 1, 2019 Meeting Minutes was offered by Sammy Nabulsi and seconded by Vivien Li. Amendment was offered by Sammy Nabulsi to amend the minutes to include Christine O’Donnell as Acting Clerk during the Commission Meeting. This was also seconded by Vivien Li. July 1, 2019 Meeting Minutes were approved as amended. All in favor.

Vivien Li inquired about public access to Lobbying information as posted on the city’s website and thanked the City Clerk’s office staff for all of their efforts. Creating a FAQ section would be quite helpful for the general public as well. Posting of meeting minutes and agenda items online would further the objective of the city’s efforts on transparency.

Discussion ensued pertaining to the letter from Foley Hoag relative to the city’s Lobbying Registration and Regulation Ordinance. Sammy Nabulsi indicated that the Commission is charged with enforcing the city ordinance as it exists right now and the Commission cannot initiate the process to offer amendments as described in the Foley Hoag letter.

In the spirit of full disclosure, Vivien Li stated that she received an award from the Boston Society of Architects and is an Honorary Member of the organization. As noted, the Boston Society of Architects is a signatory to the Foley Hoag Letter.

City Clerk Maureen Feeney presented a Letter from Foley Hoag to the Commission for informational purposes (attached as part of the minutes) and to reiterate the ambiguities that exist currently in the city ordinance. The Letter from Foley Hoag was filed in the City Clerk's Office on July 15, 2019 at 10:55 AM and it was addressed to Mayor Walsh and City Council President Andrea Campbell.

City Clerk Maureen Feeney also stated a memo was sent to the city's Law Department suggesting regulations and/or amendments to the city ordinance. The Letter from Foley Hoag was received with great enthusiasm as it proposes changes that the City Clerk has been advocating since the effective date of the city ordinance on April 16, 2019. The city ordinance has many "gray areas" and this letter provides a much needed basis for clarification and persuasive arguments in support of amending the city ordinance.

City Clerk Maureen Feeney agreed with Commission members that the effort to amend the city ordinance is not the purview of the Commission. Amendments to the city ordinance can only be filed by the Mayor and/or any City Councilor for consideration.

Sammy Nabulsi and Vivien Li agree that enforcement is currently premature due to the ambiguity of the city ordinance and the Commission can only enforce the ordinance as it is now.

Vivien Li stated that the letter from Foley Hoag is helpful to understand a perspective that could enhance the city ordinance in the future.

Stephanie Everett agrees that the Commission can only enforce the current city ordinance as written and the Commission must be mindful that we do not utilize any language as written in the letter from Foley Hoag.

Vivien Li inquired about publicly posting the Letter from Foley Hoag as part of the approved meeting minutes online and available copies during Commission meetings for those in attendance during meetings. City Clerk Maureen Feeney stated that meeting minutes and any relevant documents will be posted online as a resource for the general public.

Update on Regulations

Sammy Nabulsi indicated that he has had conversations with the city's Law Department relative to creating Commission regulations and a draft could be possibly available to Commission members at the next scheduled Commission meeting.

Possible topics for draft regulations:

- *Expenditures (needs to be defined)
- *Fee Waivers (employees of organizations)
- *Reporting Criteria
- *Enforcement/Investigation Process
- *Discretionary Actions
- *Amending Reports already filed
- *Defined Reporting Periods

City Clerk Maureen Feeney indicated to Commission members that reporting information is very scant on reports filed as of today. Reporting documents will be shared with Commission members at next scheduled meeting as we prepare to create regulations.

There will be no fee waivers issued in 2019 until the Commission approves regulations and Vivien Li stated that fees “may” be waived by City Clerk as stated in city ordinance not “will” waive.

Sammy Nabulsi suggested that “Update on Regulations” remain as an agenda item on Meeting Agendas for the next few Commission meetings to ensure review and discussion.

Vivien Li continued discussion relative to city ordinance and its intent. Was the city ordinance deliberately vague and broad to expand transparency on city level? Regulations will provide a framework for clarification and become a helpful tool for those that need to fulfill the requirements of the city ordinance.

Stephanie Everett suggested that the vagueness of the city ordinance provides an opportunity for the Commission to address concerns through regulations.

Sammy Nabulsi will continue efforts with the Law Department for a draft of proposed regulations by the end of August and review draft regulations at September Commission meeting. A public comment period will be incorporated as well for feedback prior to Commission approval of regulations.

The next Commission meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, July 31, 2019 at 4 P.M.**

Motion to adjourn offered by Stephanie Everett and seconded by Maureen Feeney. All in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 5:46 P.M.

Minutes approved by the Commission at its meeting of July 31, 2019