

City of Fall River Massachusetts RECEIVED
Office of the City Clerk

2023 JAN 27 A 11:02

CITY CLERK _____
FALL RIVER, MA

ALISON M. BOUCHARD
CITY CLERK

INÊS LEITE
ASSISTANT CITY CLERK

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL

TUESDAY, JANUARY 31, 2023 AT 5:15 P.M.

CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ONE GOVERNMENT CENTER

AGENDA

1. Citizen Input
2. *Open Meeting Law complaint filed by Patrick Higgins re: January 24, 2023 alleged violation by City Council

Alison M. Bouchard
Alison M. Bouchard
City Clerk

ADA Coordinator: Gary P. Howayeck, Esq. 508-324-2650



OPEN MEETING LAW COMPLAINT FORM

Office of the Attorney General
One Ashburton Place
Boston, MA 02108

RECEIVED

2023 JAN 25 P 2:09

CITY CLERK
FALL RIVER, MA

Please note that all fields are required unless otherwise noted.

Your Contact Information:

First Name: Patrick Last Name: Higgins

Address: P O Box 290

City: Northport State: AL Zip Code: 35476

Phone Number: 8662838301 Ext. _____

Email: patrick@openmeetinglawenforcer.com

Organization or Media Affiliation (if any): Patrick Higgins and Associates

Are you filing the complaint in your capacity as an individual, representative of an organization, or media?

(For statistical purposes only)

Individual Organization Media

Public Body that is the subject of this complaint:

City/Town County Regional/District State

Name of Public Body (including city/town, county or region, if applicable): Fall River City Council

Specific person(s), if any, you allege committed the violation: Joseph D Camara, President

Date of alleged violation: 01/24/2023

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Description of alleged violation:

Describe the alleged violation that this complaint is about. If you believe the alleged violation was intentional, please say so and include the reasons supporting your belief.

Note: This text field has a maximum of 3000 characters.

The Fall River City Council violated the open meeting law by voting to refer the open meeting law complaint regarding their Jan 3, 2023 meeting to corporation counsel without first reviewing the complaint. The public body does not have legal authority to refer the complaint to legal counsel until they have first met to review the complaint, as it is explained in the instructions that are attached to every open meeting law complaint issued by my office. "The public body may delegate this responsibility to an individual member of the public body, its counsel, or a staff member, but only after the public body has met to review the complaint."

What action do you want the public body to take in response to your complaint?

Note: This text field has a maximum of 500 characters.

All members of the Fall River City Council must attend an open meeting law training webinar, schedule can be found at: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/open-meeting-law-trainings>

Learn and comply with the open meeting law.

Review, sign, and submit your complaint

I. Disclosure of Your Complaint.

Public Record. Under most circumstances, your complaint, and any documents submitted with your complaint, is considered a public record and will be available to any member of the public upon request.

Publication to Website. As part of the Open Data Initiative, the AGO will publish to its website certain information regarding your complaint, including your name and the name of the public body. The AGO will not publish your contact information.

II. Consulting With a Private Attorney.

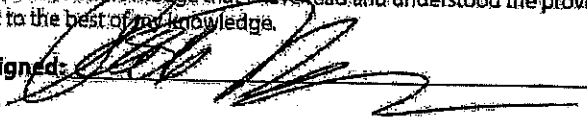
The AGO cannot give you legal advice and is not able to be your private attorney, but represents the public interest. If you have any questions concerning your individual legal rights or responsibilities you should contact a private attorney.

III. Submit Your Complaint to the Public Body.

The complaint must be filed first with the public body. If you have any questions, please contact the Division of Open Government by calling (617) 963-2540 or by email to: openmeet@ago.state.ma.us.

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understood the provisions above and certify that the information I have provided is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signed: _____



Date: 01/25/2023

For Use By Public Body	For Use By AGO
Date Received by Public Body	Date Received by AGO



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of the Attorney General
One Ashburton Place
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

OPEN MEETING LAW COMPLAINT FORM

Instructions for completing the Open Meeting Law Complaint Form

The Attorney General's Division of Open Government interprets and enforces the Open Meeting Law, Chapter 30A of the Massachusetts General Laws, Sections 18-25. Below is the procedure for filing and responding to an Open Meeting Law complaint.

Instructions for filing a complaint:

- o Fill out the attached two-page form completely. Sign and date the second page. File the complaint with the public body within 30 days of the alleged violation. If the violation was not reasonably discoverable at the time it occurred, you must file the complaint within 30 days of the date the violation was reasonably discoverable. A violation that occurs during an open session of a meeting is reasonably discoverable on the date of the meeting.
- o To file the complaint:
 - o For a local or municipal public body, you must submit a copy of the complaint to the chair of the public body AND to the municipal clerk.
 - o For all other public bodies, you must submit a copy of the complaint to the chair of the public body.
 - o Complaints may be filed by mail, by email, or by hand. Please retain a copy for your records.
- o If the public body does not respond within 14 business days and does not request an extension to respond, contact the Division for further assistance.

Instructions for a public body that receives a complaint:

- o The chair must disseminate the complaint to the members of the public body.
- o The public body must meet to review the complaint within 14 business days (usually 20-22 calendar days).
- o After review, but within 14 business days, the public body must respond to the complaint in writing and must send the complainant a response and a description of any action the public body has taken to address the allegations in the complaint. At the same time, the body must send the Attorney General a copy of the complaint and a copy of the response. The public body may delegate this responsibility to an individual member of the public body, its counsel, or a staff member, but only after the public body has met to review the complaint.
- o If a public body requires more time to review the complaint and respond, it may request an extension of time for good cause by contacting the Division of Open Government.

Once the public body has responded to the complaint:

- o If you are not satisfied with the public body's response to your complaint, you may file a copy of the complaint with the Division by mail, by email, or by hand, but only once you have waited for 30 days after filing the complaint with the public body. Mail may be sent to: The Division of Open Government, Office of the Attorney General, One Ashburton Place - 20th Floor, Boston, MA 02108. Emails may be sent to: openmeeting@state.ma.us.
- o When you file your complaint with the Division, please include the complaint form and all documentation relevant to the alleged violation. You may wish to attach a cover letter explaining why the public body's response does not adequately address your complaint.
- o The Division will not review complaints filed with us more than 90 days after the violation, unless we granted an extension to the public body or you can demonstrate good cause for the delay.

If you have questions concerning the Open Meeting Law complaint process, we encourage you to contact the Division of Open Government by phone at (617) 963-2540 or by email at openmeeting@state.ma.us.