



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
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June 24, 2026

VIA EMAIL ONLY

Ann Walker
[REDACTED]

RE: Open Meeting Law Complaint

Dear Ms. Walker:

This office received your complaint on May 13, 2026, alleging that the Quincy City Council (the “Council”) violated the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18-25. The complaint was originally filed with the Council on April 9, 2026. Council President Anne Mahoney responded to the complaint, on behalf of the Council, by letter dated May 1, 2026, following an extension of time granted by this office. The complaint alleges that during the Council’s March 23, 2026, meeting, the Council violated your rights under Articles 16 and 19 of the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights when a councilor interrupted your public comment to request that you address the Council as a whole, instead of individual councilors. For the following reasons, we decline to review this complaint.

The Division of Open Government’s review concerns compliance with the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18-25. The Open Meeting Law does not require that a public body allow public participation. Under the Open Meeting Law, the chair of the public body has discretion to decide whether to permit public comment and gives clear authority to the chair to conduct the meeting and to regulate who may speak to the body. See G.L. c. 30A, § 20(g) (“[n]o person shall address a meeting of a public body without permission of the chair, and all persons shall, at the request of the chair be silent.”); see also OML Declination 5-13-2026 (Lanesborough Select Board).¹ Indeed, if public participation is permitted, the chair may determine the method for receiving public comment, who may speak or otherwise participate during a meeting, and may set limitations on participation. See OML 2020-114; OML 2017-189. We do, however, encourage public bodies to allow for as much public participation as time and circumstances permit. See OML 2019-120; OML 2015-12; OML 2014-129; OML 2012-59.

¹ Open Meeting Law determinations may be found at the Attorney General’s website, <https://www.mass.gov/the-open-meeting-law>.

We note that the Supreme Judicial Court decision cited in your complaint explained that content-based restrictions on public comment may violate the portion of the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights protecting the right to assemble and the right to free speech. See Barron v. Kolenda, 491 Mass. 408, 409 (2023). However, the Division does not review and has consistently declined to review allegations concerning restrictions on public comment or compliance with the United States Constitution or Massachusetts Declaration of Rights. See OML Declination 5-13-2026 (Lanesborough Select Board); OML Declination 6-3-2025 (Worcester City Council); OML Declination 4-25-2024 (Westwood Charter Review Committee). Where the allegations raised in your complaint, even if true, would not constitute violations of the Open Meeting Law, we decline to review the complaint.

We now consider this matter closed. Please feel free to contact the Division at (617) 963-2540 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



KerryAnne Kilcoyne
Assistant Attorney General
Division of Open Government

Assisted by Andrew Guay, Legal Intern

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