



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

CLERK OF COMMITTEES

September 8, 2010

REPORT OF THE RULES SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
William A. White Jr.	Chair	Present	
Dennis M. Sullivan	Vice Chair	Present	
Walter F. Pero	Ward Four Alderman	Present	
Charles Sillari	Jr.	Present	
Frank Wright		Present	
John Long	City Clerk	Present	
John M Connolly	Alderman At Large	Present	
Maryann M. Heuston	Ward Two Alderman	Present	
Peter Forcellese		Present	
Rebekah L. Gewirtz	Ward Six Alderman	Present	
Robert McWatters		Present	
Sean T. O'Donovan	Ward Five Alderman	Present	
Thomas F. Taylor	Ward Three Alderman	Present	
William M. Roche	Ward One Alderman	Present	

Review of the State's new Open Meeting Law and its impact on the rules and operating procedures of the Board of Aldermen and its committees.

The revised Open Meeting Law went into effect on July 1, 2010 and is being administered by the Attorney General's Office. For now, the law is using interim regulations, with final interpretations expected in October, therefore, until that time, everything is open to interpretation. Under the revised law, email may be considered an open meeting, depending on how many people are a party to it. A general rule of thumb that might be applied is that there is the potential of violating the open meeting law "when a quorum knows what a quorum thinks". Mr. Long said that the clerks are not part of the public body, however, a violation could occur when a clerk lets the other members of a body know how a vote on an issue is going. Mr. Long discussed proposed changes to the Board's rules with respect to the new open meeting law and MinuteTraQ leading to a discussion regarding the time-frame for submitting Board orders and the process for compiling the BOA agenda. Aldermen raised concerns regarding the deadline for item submissions, the possibility of controversial items being held off to the last minute and departments getting items put on the supplemental agenda.

Chairman White made the following requests:

- Clarification regarding if it is a violation for one member of a body to send an item to another member of that body for the purpose of co-sponsoring the item.
- Clarification regarding the rights of the public to video tape or audio tape a meeting.

- Explore methods for posting supplemental BOA agenda items on the “wheel”.

2010-188826 - Asst. City Solicitor Submitting an Opinion Re: Anonymous Items Placed on This Board’s Agenda.:

No discussion.

RESULT: PLACED ON FILE
