

As your At-Large Councilor, I have championed open government and transparency since the day I was elected. One of my first requests upon joining the Council was to update our policy to ensure that all meetings (including committees) are recorded and made accessible online. I also submitted a proposal requiring quarterly reviews of executive-session minutes so we all can remain informed about ongoing litigation.

For the past four years, I have shared meeting agendas along with my thoughts and invited your feedback each week because your input matters. You are the people I serve.

I have also consistently advocated for publicly posting job openings, including positions on boards and commissions, and I share every job posting I receive with my constituents. With that in mind, I want to provide you with an update regarding a recent open-meeting-law decision.

A few months ago, the mayor attempted to bypass the election process for Malden's representative on the Northeast Metro Tech School Committee by placing his nominee on the City Council agenda. This would have circumvented the established procedure, which requires a joint appointment by the City Council and School Committee when a vacancy occurs.

The School Committee was also not aware that the item had been added to the council agenda. In light of the Open Meeting Law, I immediately contacted the council president and several colleagues (less than a quorum) to express my strong opposition and requested that the item be removed. Unfortunately, it remained on the agenda.

Ultimately, I was pleased that a majority of the Council agreed the proper process needed to be followed. The matter was referred to the Personnel Committee with a note that the School Committee must be involved. The appropriate procedure was then followed, including public interviews, and the School Committee voted publicly on the candidate who would represent Malden.

During this process, concerns were raised with the City Solicitor that I may have reached a quorum while communicating with colleagues. The City Solicitor determined that I had not reached a quorum and therefore had not violated the Open Meeting Law. However, Councilor Sica challenged that determination and referred the matter to the state. I had no objection and supported the decision, because we are all here to learn. If I had violated the quorum requirements, I wanted to know so I could improve.

The state recently issued its decision and determined that a quorum had been reached. I learned that a quorum can be created through a chain reaction of communications. A couple of councilors contacted me, and even though we may not have discussed the specific issue, the appearance that we might have done so was sufficient.

The City Council has faced situations like this before, but this serves as an important reminder of how easily a quorum can be reached. However, I want to be clear: I will not be bullied or coerced into remaining silent when I see actions that undermine our democracy—especially

when they seek to take a vote away from the people. You can always count on me to speak up, speak out, and use my voice to protect your rights.

This is something you can expect from me if I am honored enough to be your next Mayor. I am running for Mayor of Malden and humbly ask for your vote and support in joining our team. You can reach us at <mailto:Teamkch2025@gmail.com>
Karen Colón Hayes- The People's Mayor!