

9

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The Tech

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By hand

Dear Madam Mayor and City Councillors:

As item six of today's City Manager Agenda gives multiple references to the City's E-government Committees; I wanted to highlight the lack of transparency associated with those committees.

The minutes of the committees are not generally available, and I was required to pay a fee to obtain copies of them. This is not how transparent government should operate, and the Council should take action to repair the City's transparency of operations.

I requested all E-gov minutes on Sept. 8 and was told by the Chief Information officer, "Those are not on the website." The minutes were not available for inspection at an in-person visit on Sept. 10.

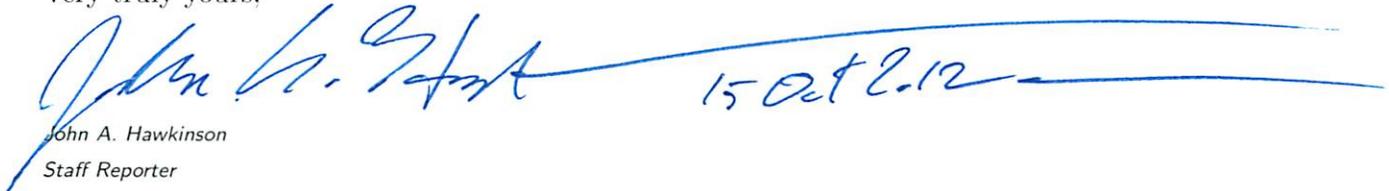
Upon followup, I was then told to make a formal request to the Law Department — that is improper, as the Mass. Public Records Law requires "no specific form" and generally requires a custodian to forward requests for records not in their possession.

The Law Department then required I pay a \$34 fee to obtain these minutes, and declined to waive the fee. 950 C.M.R. 32.06(5) states "*Every custodian, unless otherwise required by law, is encouraged to waive fees where disclosure would benefit the public interest.*"

The Law Department previously told me: "It is longstanding City policy that the City does not waive Public Records response fees." This is poor public policy. The Council should reverse this and encourage City employees to waive public records fees at their own discretion.

With respect to Manager's Agenda Item 6, the minutes I was provided, through mid-September, do not provide sufficient information to evaluate the Manager's appropriation request.

Very truly yours,


John A. Hawkinson
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