

Offered by Councilors Liz Breadon and Sharon Durkan



## CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

### ORDER FOR A HEARING ON STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AND FLOOD HAZARD MITIGATION IN THE CITY OF BOSTON

*WHEREAS*, Stormwater flooding, also referred to as inland or urban flooding, occurs when the volume of water on land exceeds the capacity of drainage systems, resulting in standing water in low-lying areas and flowing into below-ground spaces such as basements, garages, and subsurface infrastructure including subway stations; *and*

*WHEREAS*, The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) in May 2023 issued a report following analysis of flood claims from historic 2010 storms, finding that Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood maps are poorly predictive of where stormwater flooding is most likely to occur and that 96 percent of disaster claims arose outside of FEMA Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs) — known as 1 percent chance flood zones — leaving most residents unaware of their risk; *and*

*WHEREAS*, The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Flood Hazard Management Program (FHMP) is the Massachusetts State Coordinating Office for the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and provides technical assistance for participating municipalities to implement the NFIP; *and*

*WHEREAS*, The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) lead the Resilient MA Action Team (RMAT), which tracks implementation, monitoring, and maintenance of the State Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan (SHMCAP), the first five-year update to which will be released in Fall 2023; *and*

*WHEREAS*, The Boston Water and Sewer Commission (BWSW) is responsible for the City's network of catch basins and storm drains directing stormwater, and BWSW will implement a new stormwater management program in 2024 which includes a proposed separate stormwater charge to allow customers the opportunity to apply for credits and grants to reduce stormwater runoff from their properties; *and*

*WHEREAS,* Many low-income residents and tenants may be particularly vulnerable to property loss from flooding in basement locations without access to coverage, as the NHIP does not insure contents in basements; *and*

*WHEREAS,* In 2021, Congress adopted the Safeguarding Tomorrow through Ongoing Risk Mitigation (STORM) Act to provide funds for states to create hazard mitigation revolving loan programs, as well as to support zoning changes which encourage low-impact development; *and*

*WHEREAS,* Recommendations in the MAPC report include ensuring access to flood claims data to meet municipalities' needs of identifying and responding to flood risks; requiring flood history disclosure of properties; creating programs which provide financial and technical assistance to property owners at risk of flooding; providing more funding for stormwater management to repair aging infrastructure; and continuing to investigate causes and impacts of stormwater flooding; *and*

*WHEREAS,* The MAPC report also recommends that municipalities, planning commissions, and emergency management agencies analyze and incorporate flood data into stormwater management, hazard mitigation planning, capital investments, and other planning efforts; *and*

*WHEREAS,* Several states and municipalities have established programs providing retrofit support to property owners to protect homes before they are damaged by floods, such as through drainage reviews and installations, and the City of Boston should develop its own programs and prioritize support to low-income households; *and*

*WHEREAS,* Additional solutions at the local level may include stormwater regulations, floodplain overlay districts, low impact development requirements, and the adoption of rainfall standards which incorporate future projections applicable to the life of a proposed project to aid in the reduction of stormwater flooding; *and*

*WHEREAS,* It is crucial that the City of Boston adequately identify and proactively respond to flood risks and consider establishing programs that provide financial and technical assistance to mitigate the risk of flooding; *NOW, THEREFORE BE IT*

*ORDERED:* That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss stormwater management and flood hazard mitigation and that representatives of the City administration, state agencies, the Boston Water and Sewer Commission, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, and interested members of the public be invited to attend.

Filed on: August 25, 2023