

Offered by Councilor Rob Consalvo and Maureen Feeney



## CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

### ORDER FOR A HEARING REGARDING THE CREATION OF A COMMUNITY MEDIATION PILOT PROGRAM

- WHEREAS,* City government is the place that many citizens go to have their problems solved. In many cases, however, the problems do not have an easy solution that a city agency can solve. Often times, the problems are between neighbors on a street, a condominium complex or an apartment building. Some of these complaints range from loud stereos, barking dogs, loud exotic birds, property boundaries, parking or even foul language just to name a few; and,
- WHEREAS* Residents often call on elected officials and city government to step in and try to solve these differences. In many cases, the city can't solve the dispute between two parties and it is often suggested that they take the problem to court or to the police department. This is ineffective as it takes an enormous amount of time, bogs down the court system and, if the parties hire a lawyer, it can be costly; and,
- WHEREAS,* One way to possibly address these types of issues is through a community mediation program. Mediators, or impartial third parties, assist individuals in finding a mutually acceptable solution to their problem. Mediators do not blame, judge who is right or wrong, or make decisions about what should happen; and,
- WHEREAS,* According to the National Association for Community Mediation (NACM), a recent survey indicated that 82 percent of Americans would prefer using a mediator to resolve a dispute instead of going to court; and,
- WHEREAS,* Community mediation programs have shown to be successful across the nation, and the number of programs have grown. Ten years ago, it is estimated that there were approximately 150 community mediation centers; today there are more than 550. NACM indicates that there are close to 20,000 active volunteer community mediators and 76,000 trained citizens. Mediation conducted by trained volunteers reduces the pressure on the court system and offers disputants information and referral services as well; and,

*WHEREAS,* Some states have been very active in supporting community mediation statewide, including New York, Michigan, North Carolina, New Jersey and Nebraska. The Massachusetts Office of Dispute Resolution & Public Collaboration builds capacity for conflict resolution and prevention and facilitates collaboration and consensus-building within public entities and across sectors statewide; and,

*WHEREAS,* Many cities, including Chicago, Phoenix, San Francisco, Baltimore, Denver, Long Beach, Charlotte and Albuquerque offer mediation services in conjunction with non-profit entities or directly through municipal services; and,

*WHEREAS,* There are many non-profit institutions, Colleges and Universities and law schools in Boston that could partner with the City to help create this program at little or no cost to taxpayers; NOW THEREFORE BE IT

*ORDERED,* That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss the creation of a community mediation pilot program.

Filed on: April 7, 2009