

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COMMISSION

In the Matter of a Complaint by

FINAL DECISION

Katherine Camara,

Complainant

against

Docket # FIC 2025-0055

Jeremi J. Johnson, Economic Development
Coordinator, Economic Development
Commission, Town of Watertown;
Economic Development Commission, Town
of Watertown; and Town of Watertown,

Respondents

October 8, 2025

The above-captioned matter was heard as a contested case on August 19, 2025, at which time the complainant and the respondents appeared, stipulated to certain facts, and presented testimony, exhibits and argument on the complaint.

After consideration of the entire record, the following facts are found and conclusions of law are reached:

1. The respondents are public agencies within the meaning of §1-200(1), G.S.
2. By complaint filed January 17, 2025, the complainant appealed to the Commission, alleging that the respondents violated the Freedom of Information (“FOI”) Act by denying her access to the January 16, 2025, meeting of the respondent Economic Development Commission (“EDC”). Specifically, the complainant alleged that she tried to attend such meeting, but that the doors to the building were locked. The complainant also requested that the Commission impose a civil penalty against the respondents.
3. Section 1-225(a), G.S., provides, in relevant part, that “[t]he meetings of all public agencies, except executive sessions . . . shall be open to the public.”
4. It is found that at 7:30 p.m. on January 16, 2025, the respondent EDC convened in-person for a regular meeting in a second floor conference room at Town Hall. It is found that the complainant tried to attend the meeting in person, but that the doors to Town Hall were locked.
5. It is found that by email dated January 17, 2025, the complainant asked the Town Manager’s office whether the January 16, 2025 meeting of the respondent EDC proceeded as scheduled, and staff confirmed that it had. It is found that the complainant did not notify the

Town Manager's staff, or any of the respondents, that she was locked out of Town Hall and was unable to access such meeting.

6. Rather, it is found that the first instance in which the respondents were notified that the complainant was unable to access the January 16, 2025 meeting of the respondent EDC was on February 17, 2025, when the respondents received notice of the complaint in this matter from the Commission.

7. At the hearing on this matter, the respondents conceded, and therefore it is found, that although they were unaware of it at the time of the meeting, the doors to Town Hall were locked prior to the commencement of the January 16, 2025 meeting of the respondent EDC, and that the complainant was not able to access the meeting.

8. Accordingly, it is concluded that the respondents violated §1-225(a), G.S., as alleged in the complaint.

9. Notwithstanding, the Watertown Town Manager appeared and testified in this matter about the town's efforts to investigate why the doors were locked and the steps taken to ensure that the public is not precluded from accessing meetings in the future.

10. It is found that, upon receipt of the complaint in this matter, the Town Manager undertook an investigation of the allegations set forth therein and determined that on the evening of January 16, 2025, three meetings were held at Town Hall, as follows:

- (a) Meeting of the Town Council – 5:30 p.m.;
- (b) Meeting of the Commission on Aging – 6:30 p.m.; and
- (c) Meeting of the respondent EDC – 7:30 p.m.

11. It is found that the Town Manager determined that there was a strong likelihood that a staff member who was assisting with the meeting of the Commission on Aging locked the building following the conclusion of such agency's meeting, and prior to the respondent EDC's convening of its meeting.

12. At the hearing on this matter, the Town Manager was apologetic to the complainant and expressed that he understood the seriousness of her complaint.

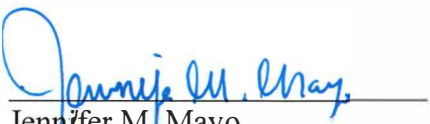
13. It is found that, as a result of the aforementioned events, on or about April 14, 2025, the Town Manager issued a written policy regarding procedures for locking and accessing Town Hall during regular business hours and after-hours. It is found that the policy provides for procedures applicable to scheduled meetings after the hours of 4:30 p.m. (when regular business hours conclude), responsibilities for staff who coordinate and attend meetings that convene after regular business hours, and the installation of signage at Town Hall directing members of the public to contact the town's police department by phone should any person be unable to access the building to attend a meeting. It is also found that the respondents are amenable to further review and revision of their policy in order to optimize the public's access to meetings and also expressed at the hearing that they might consider the installation of a doorbell system at Town Hall following the suggestion of the complainant.

14. Notwithstanding the conclusion that the respondents violated §1-225(a), G.S., of the FOI Act, based on the findings in paragraphs 10 through 13, above, consideration of the imposition of a civil penalty is not warranted in this matter.

The following order by the Commission is hereby recommended on the basis of the record concerning the above-captioned complaint:

1. Henceforth, the respondents shall strictly comply with the open meeting requirements of §1-225(a), G.S.

Approved by Order of the Freedom of Information Commission at its regular meeting of October 8, 2025.

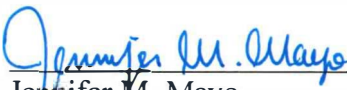

Jennifer M. Mayo
Acting Clerk of the Commission

PURSUANT TO SECTION 4-180(c), G.S., THE FOLLOWING ARE THE NAMES OF EACH PARTY AND THE MOST RECENT MAILING ADDRESS, PROVIDED TO THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COMMISSION, OF THE PARTIES OR THEIR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE.

THE PARTIES TO THIS CONTESTED CASE ARE:

KATHERINE CAMARA, 31 Cottage Place, Oakville, CT 06779

JEREMI J. JOHNSON, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION, TOWN OF WATERTOWN; ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION, TOWN OF WATERTOWN; AND TOWN OF WATERTOWN, c/o Attorney Paul R. Jessell, Slavin, Stauffacher & Scott, P.O. Box 9, Watertown, CT 06795



Jennifer M. Mayo
Acting Clerk of the Commission