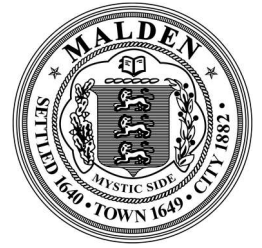


# City of Malden

## Massachusetts



November 24, 2020

Honorable Members of the City Council,

As you know, Malden has many longstanding traditions which are valuable to preserve in our community. One example is the tradition of selecting a President of the City Council. To help inform the public of the process for selecting a president, I submit this communication into the public record.

### **The Process**

The Rules of the City Council define the process for the selection of a City Council President. City Council rule 10.00, *Designation of Presiding Officer*, states that “Meetings of the City Council shall be presided over by a President, who shall be chosen annually from among its members.” In addition to the defined process there is also the longstanding tradition that the presidency goes to the longest serving member of the Council who has yet to serve in the role and has expressed interest in serving in that capacity. The benefit of this tradition is that it provides stability, builds trust, and provides members an opportunity to flourish and grow professionally in the role.

Since I joined the City Council in 2016, this tradition has been honored and has helped Councillors Murphy, Crowe, DeMaria, and Sica serve for the first time and grow in the leadership role. However, this tradition was cast aside in 2020 when it was my turn to succeed Councillor Sica as Council President. At the time I was told that I was too young and inexperienced to take on the leadership role of Council President, and that my drive to bring accountability to the Council had rubbed some members the wrong way. I was asked to step aside so that Council President Sica could serve a second term and that I would be allowed to serve in 2021. Hearing the feedback, I chose to trust my colleagues and stepped aside without any fanfare. In fact, showing no acrimony with being bypassed, I nominated Councillor Sica for her second term.

To my dismay, there is now another attempt to bypass my turn for President and deprive me of the same opportunity to grow in the role as Council President. Again, the reasoning that is given is that I have rubbed my fellow councillors the wrong way because of my advocacy to bring accountability and transparency to the City Council.

### **How did we get here?**

As a reminder to my colleagues and the public, before I joined the Council in 2016, meetings often featured yelling, racist and xenophobic diatribes, and a body incapable of controlling belligerent members. There was a toxic environment that was normalized and rarely challenged. It was so out of control that Mayor Christenson and his staff were banned from attending executive session meetings of the City Council. There was blatant disrespect for people of color, women, immigrants, people with disabilities, and any member of the public who did not fit the image of a straight, white, cis-gendered male.

Along I came, trusting and ready to be a bridge builder in our community. I had no idea of the politics going on behind the scenes, but I quickly learned that there was deep rooted disfunction in our body.

There are too many examples of abusive behavior to mention here in detail. I was appalled by the behavior and made the decision to root out the sources of this dysfunction. We as a body, and as a community, have greatly benefitted from my actions in that respect but we still have more work to do.

During my time on the council, I have consistently elevated and respected the diverse voices of our community. In 2016, the council passed a resolution in support of the Muslim community and we tried to pass an inclusionary zoning ordinance to help our residents age in place. There was a virulent backlash, and my colleagues and I were often slandered and libeled in the newspaper and online. I personally was only able to weather the storm with the help of our community and my colleagues, particularly Councillors DeMaria, Crowe, and Anderson. I thank them for their guidance during that difficult time of my life. I will not forget their roles as mentors early on.

We are been through a lot together and it has not been easy growing into my role as a public official. On top of the already challenging environment, I have chosen to be open and honest with the public about the fact that I am gay. Coming out is a lifelong process and I still get butterflies when I speak about myself in this manner. I choose to be true about who I am, not because it is easy, but because it is the right thing to do. Similarly, I have often chosen to take the harder, less politically expedient route, time and time again, because it is the right thing to do to ensure transparency, accountability, and public trust in the City of Malden.

As the City Council has grown, so have I. We have all improved together, and I look forward to continuing to develop with each of you. As Council President, my goal is to continue to lead this growth process through transparency, engagement with each and every one of you, and being fully inclusive of all voices. Working together as a team we can accomplish our shared and individual goals to improve the quality of life in our community.

I hereby respectfully submit my candidacy for President of the Malden City Council for the year 2021.

Sincerely,



Ryan O'Malley  
Councillor Ward Four