

MASSACHUSETTS SUPREME JUDICIAL COURT

Attorney General v. Mystic Valley Regional Charter School

SJC-13769 · No. SJC-13769 · Decided March 11, 2026

SUMMARY

The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court held that Commonwealth charter schools, including Mystic Valley Regional Charter School, are subject to the Massachusetts public records law. The court concluded that such schools qualify as authorities established by the General Court to serve a public purpose under G. L. c. 4, § 7, Twenty-sixth. The court affirmed the Superior Court judgment on the pleadings requiring Mystic Valley to respond to public records requests.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Georges, J.; Budd, C.J.; Gaziano, J.; Kafker, J.; Wendlandt, J.; Dewar, J.; Wolohojian, J.
JURISDICTION	Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court
DECIDED	March 11, 2026
DOCKET	SJC-13769
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Appeal from judgment on the pleadings in a declaratory judgment and public-records enforcement action; the Supreme Judicial Court transferred the case from the Appeals Court on its own initiative.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	De novo review applies to the allowance of a motion for judgment on the pleadings and to the statutory-interpretation question whether Commonwealth charter schools are subject to the public records law. The court accepts well-pleaded factual allegations of the nonmoving party as true and draws reasonable inferences in that party's favor.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published opinion of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court
PARTIES	Mystic Valley Regional Charter School v. Attorney General

TOPICS

- statutory interpretation
- plain meaning rule
- motion for judgment on the pleadings
- administrative law
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

administrative law

education law

public records

civil procedure

statutory interpretation

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether a Commonwealth charter school qualifies as an agency subject to the Massachusetts public records law.
2. Whether a Commonwealth charter school is an authority established by the General Court to serve a public purpose under G. L. c. 4, § 7, Twenty-sixth.
3. Whether the charter school's operational independence, corporate characteristics, limited statutory designations as governmental entities, or asserted compliance burdens exclude it from the public records law.

HOLDINGS

1. Commonwealth charter schools, including Mystic Valley, are agencies subject to the Massachusetts public records law and must respond to public-records requests under G. L. c. 66, § 10.
2. A Commonwealth charter school's operational independence and corporate characteristics do not remove it from the public records law.
3. The expressio unius maxim does not exclude Commonwealth charter schools from the public records law where applying it would defeat the statute's evident purpose.
4. Financial burden and interference with educational operations do not excuse compliance with clear statutory disclosure obligations, although the public records law provides mechanisms to mitigate undue burden.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“For the reasons explained below, we conclude that Commonwealth charter schools, including Mystic Valley, are “agencies” subject to the public records law.” (2)

“A Commonwealth charter school is an “authority established by the general court to serve a public purpose” within the meaning of G. L. c. 4, § 7, Twenty-sixth, and is therefore subject to the public records law.” (17)

“Judgment affirmed.” (17)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Mystic Valley is a Commonwealth charter school operated under a charter approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and subject to continuing Department of Elementary and Secondary Education oversight. It receives public funding, provides tuition-free public education, and is governed by a board of trustees with authority over admissions, curriculum, personnel, and governance. Between January and November 2022, Mystic Valley refused multiple public-records requests, despite orders from the supervisor of public records and a directive from the Attorney General.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The Attorney General brought an action in the Superior Court after Mystic Valley refused to comply with public-records requests and orders from the supervisor of public records. The Superior Court allowed the Attorney General's motion for judgment on the pleadings and declared that Mystic Valley is a custodian of public records subject to G. L. c. 66, § 10. Mystic Valley appealed, and the Supreme Judicial Court transferred the case from the Appeals Court on its own motion.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Miele v. Foundation Med., Inc., 496 Mass. 171, 175 (2025)
- Attorney Gen. v. District Attorney for the Plymouth Dist., 484 Mass. 260, 262-263 (2020)
- Worcester Tel. & Gazette Corp. v. Chief of Police of Worcester, 436 Mass. 378, 382-383 (2002)
- Doe No. 1 v. Secretary of Educ., 479 Mass. 375, 376-377, 379 (2018)
- Commonwealth v. Fleury, 489 Mass. 421, 424 (2022)
- Curtatone v. Barstool Sports, Inc., 487 Mass. 655, 658 (2021)
- Garcia v. Steele, 492 Mass. 322, 326 (2023)
- Department of Community Affairs v. Massachusetts State College Bldg. Auth., 378 Mass. 418, 425-426 (1979)
- Spence v. Boston Edison Co., 390 Mass. 604, 607-608 (1983)
- Opinion of the Justices, 334 Mass. 721, 734-735 (1956)
- Kargman v. Boston Water & Sewer Comm'n, 18 Mass. App. Ct. 51, 55 (1984)
- Bank of Am., N.A. v. Rosa, 466 Mass. 613, 619-620 (2013)
- McCauley v. Superintendent, Mass. Correctional Inst., Norfolk, 491 Mass. 571, 585 (2023)
- Sisk v. Assessors of Essex, 426 Mass. 651, 655-656 (1998)
- Rosenbloom v. Kokofsky, 373 Mass. 778, 781 (1977)
- Friedman v. Division of Admin. Law Appeals, 103 Mass. App. Ct. 806, 807 (2024)
- Massachusetts Bay Transp. Auth. Retirement Bd. v. State Ethics Comm'n, 414 Mass. 582, 587-594 (1993)
- Globe Newspaper Co. v. Massachusetts Bay Transp. Auth. Retirement Bd., 416 Mass. 1007, 1007 (1993)