

# Exhibit O — The 2020 *Szabo v. South End Rowing Club* Dispute: What Happened & Why It Matters

**Purpose.** Provide brief, sourced background on the 2020 lawsuit involving SERC and the governance takeaway: **discipline must be anchored to written rules and careful process** to avoid reputational and legal risk.

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## Factual background (short, sourced)

- **Case & parties.** In early 2020, San Francisco resident **Tibor Szabo** filed suit naming **South End Rowing Club**, the **City and County of San Francisco**, and SERC officer **Jim Bock** as defendants. The case was removed to federal court as **Szabo v. City and County of San Francisco, No. 3:20-cv-01041 (N.D. Cal.)**. [Justia Dockets & Filings](#)
- **Docket posture.** The docket reflects rapid early motion practice and scheduling but **no published merits ruling** against SERC; a **pre-settlement conference** was set in May 2020, consistent with early resolution. [Justia Dockets & Filings+1](#)
- **How it ended.** There is **no public judgment awarding damages** to Szabo against SERC on the federal docket. In a later sworn declaration filed by Szabo in another matter, he states: “**South End Rowing Club paid me \$6,500 to settle.**” (Quoted and sourced in a contemporaneous summary piece that links the parties, docket, and declaration.) [svgm.io https://www.svgm.io/p/the-2020-szabo-v-south-end-rowing](#)

**Bottom line:** The record indicates an **early settlement** and **no court finding** of liability on the merits—but the matter still imposed **real cost and risk** on the Club. [svgm.io+2Justia Dockets & Filings+2](#)

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## Governance takeaway for the Board (applies here)

1. **Written-rule anchor.** The safest—and fairest—discipline is tied to a **specific written by-law/rule/procedure** that was in force at the time, clearly communicated to members, and applied even-handedly. Proceeding on **uncodified expectations** or “logical extensions” invites challenge and expense (as the Szabo matter’s costs illustrate). [svgm.io](#)
2. **Process integrity.** Follow the Club’s **published procedures** to the letter (identify the complainant; conduct **joint** complainant-member interviews; assemble a complete

evidence packet). Clean process reduces allegations of bias/retaliation and limits exposure. [svgn.io](https://svgn.io)

3. **Proportionality & prospective policy.** When conduct is **non-codified, first-time**, and **no harm** is shown—as here—favor **education + prospective rulemaking** over punitive measures. That approach aligns with the Code’s “**benefit of the doubt**” principle and minimizes litigation risk. [svgn.io](https://svgn.io)

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### **Requested use of this exhibit (closed session)**

- Treat this exhibit as **context** for why the Club should hew to **written rules** and **strict process** in disciplinary matters.
- Apply the same discipline standard here: **withdraw** the suspension (or **convert** to a neutral, non-disciplinary reminder) and, if desired, **adopt a clear prospective door policy** by formal vote with member notice.

*Offered for governance context only. This exhibit does not assert or adopt the truth of any party’s allegations in the 2020 matter. It admits no identity, conduct, or intent in the present case.*