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March 27, 2023

To: Members of the Chicago City Council via email

Dear Council Members:

The League of Women Voters of Chicago is providing to you, the present Council Members, the **attached recommendations** for changes to the City Council Rules in order to initiate a conversation for the new Council, which will take office in May.

As stated in the joint statement with the Better Government Association dated March 20, we **strongly urge a robust and public discussion of potential changes, with the adoption of any formal rules and committee assignments left until after the newly and re-elected Council members take their seats in May.**

As a starting point for this beginning conversation and consideration, we hope that the spirit of the following provision from the Cook County Board's Rules will be adopted by the Council and reflected in its Rules:

Article III, Sec. 2-101. - Purpose.

{b) It is the purpose of this division:

- (1) To provide appropriate procedures and organization for the Board of Commissioners to conduct its business in an orderly and efficient manner;
- (2) To protect the right of all Commissioners to participate fully in the legislative process;
- (3) To foster accountability in County government; and**
- (4) To promote openness and maximize participation in the business and affairs of the Board.**

Emphasis added. Part I - General Ordinances, Chapter 2 - Administration, Article III. County Board, Division 2. Rules of Organization and Procedure of the Cook County Code.

It is with these words in mind that we submit the attached proposals for modifying the existing Rules. We welcome the opportunity to meet with each of you to discuss these.

Yours truly,

Jane Ruby, President

Suggestions for Changes to the Existing City Council Rules that Should Be Incorporated into the New Rules for the City Council from the League of Women Voters of Chicago dated March 27, 2023

These are organized in order of importance and reflect the League's emphasis on the need for transparency and for the public to be able to provide input to the Council.

1. **Existing Rule 40:** Currently provides for only 48 hours' notice of an agenda. The Cook County Board's rules provide for 4 business days' notice of an agenda for both the Board and the Committees. The County Board does not have a provision allowing for new items to be directly introduced to a Committee. **The League would like to see at least 4 business days' notice adopted by the City Council for all Committee meetings.**

Under the current Legistar system, notifications that something has been posted are not sent out until the early morning hours the day after something has been posted. Generally, comments are due the morning prior to the meeting. This means that a notice of an agenda may be sent out at 2 in the morning that states that written comments and/or a request to speak are due by 9 or 10 am of that same day.

Thus, under the current Rules and Legistar system, the public is effectively prevented from providing any comments to Committees.

The League notes that at Cook County, Legistar notices identify what has been posted (notice of a meeting and agenda, amendments or substitutes to an item, corrections, cancellation of a meeting, etc.). Those notices are sent out shortly after the posting, as opposed to the day after, which is what happens with the Chicago Legistar system. In addition, the Chicago Legistar notices do not identify what has been posted, only that something has. It is up to the public to try to determine what new information has been posted. This is often difficult, if not impossible, to do.

Even if the notices from the Chicago Legistar system would go out on a timely basis, 48-hours does not provide sufficient time for the public to provide any input to Alders. While groups like the League may be aware of items that have been introduced at a Council meeting and referred to a Committee, most people are not.

Further, even if the League is aware of an item, we do not know when it will appear – if ever – on a Committee agenda. The Rules Committee, as just one example, has over 100 items that were introduced and referred to that Committee since 2019, but have yet to appear on an agenda.

2. **Existing Rule 39:** This Rule currently provides that there must be at least 3 days' notice (excluding Sundays and holidays) for a Committee Chair to call a meeting. In line with the League's comments to Rule 40 above, the **League would like to see 4 business days' notice (or whatever additional notice beyond that the Alders would need).**
3. **Existing Rule 41:** This Rule covers a number of different procedures. The League has previously contacted Council members about the League's concerns with "Direct Introduction Items" to Committees from the Mayor and City Departments, in lieu of such items first being introduced at a Council Meeting and then referred to a Committee. **The League supports the proposed amendment sponsored by Alders Reilly and Waguespack in R2022-1116**, which requires prior public notice of any such Direct Introduction Item, including the public posting of the complete text. However, as explained

in connection with Rule 40 above, 48 hours' prior notice is not sufficient in order for the public to be able to provide any input to the Committee. **The League urges that 4 business days be the minimum notice and text posting time for Direct Introduction items, with the exceptions as listed in R2022-1116.**

4. **Existing Rule 58:** This Rule covers written and in-person public comments. Written comments are to be in conformance with applicable provisions of the Sergeant-at-Arms protocol. To speak, a request must be submitted pursuant to the protocol promulgated by the Sergeant-at-Arms.

At a minimum, there should be an indication as to where such protocols may be found. The League believes that it found such protocols on the City Clerk's web site at a link near the bottom of the home page. Following that link, the League found that for written comments for a City Council meeting, the comments are to be submitted "between 8 am and 9 am" on the day of the scheduled City Council meeting via email to public_comments@cityofchicago.org. Such comments are limited to 2 pages.

The **League does not understand why written comments may only be submitted during a one-hour window the morning of a City Council meeting.** Looking at what happens at Cook County, there is a notice on the "Meeting Details" of each Board and Committee meeting providing a link to an online form to both request to speak at the meeting and to provide written comments, both of which are due 24 hours prior to the meeting. Again, however, this link and the posting of the meeting and the agenda will be done at least 4 business days' prior to the actual meeting, so there is at least a 3 business day window in which to both request to speak and to provide written comments prior to the meeting.

In addition, what is currently posted on the Clerk's web site as the protocols should be looked at carefully as they are very confusing. Part of that is undoubtedly due to the changing situation regarding in-person and virtual meetings.

5. **Existing Rule 42:** This Rule provides that if an item is referred to the Rules Committee because two or more Committees are seeking to be in control, the Rules Committee must report by the next regular Council Meeting as to which Committee the item is being referred. The League questions whether this Rule is being followed. There are currently over 100 items that the Legistar system shows have been introduced but are still in the Rules Committee.

The League recommends that this Rule be retained AND enforced.

6. **Existing Rule 35:** Careful consideration should be given to whether all these existing Committees listed in this Rule continue and/or whether new Committees are added under the new Council. The League has looked at all the existing Committees and found that a number of them met infrequently, if at all, during 2020, 2021, and 2022. However, these Committees all have budgets totaling over \$5.6 million in the 2023 budget, most of which are for staff. If the Committees are not meeting, what is the staff doing?
7. **Proposed New Rule regarding material pertinent to an item:** The Cook County Board has a rule that requires that material pertinent to an item be provided to the President and all Commissioners, and, except when material is confidential as provided by law, such material is also to be available to the public. Besides the text of items being included in the agendas, the Secretary to the Cook County Board posts reports and other pertinent material on the "Meeting Details" page on Legistar for the applicable Committee or Board meeting. See Sections 2-107(h)(1) and 2-109(c), Part I – General Ordinances, Chapter 2 – Administration,

Article III. County Board, Division 2. Rules of Organization and Procedure of the Cook County Code.

The League recommends that the Council include a similar rule that requires the posting of pertinent material, such as reports, to the “Meeting Details” page of Legistar (or an equivalent location in any subsequent official posting platform), concurrent with the posting of the text of the items.

8. **Proposed new rule regarding posting of presentations given at meetings:** The League has observed Committee meetings at which there are power point presentations. However, these are difficult to read if you are observing in person, and the camera does not show the screen where the presentation is being projected when you are either streaming the meeting live or watching the video afterwards.

The League recommends that a new rule be added requiring that any such presentations be posted on the applicable Meeting Details page of Legistar (or any subsequent posting platform) within 1 business day of when the Council or Committee meeting was held.

9. **Existing Rule 30:** This Rule concerns amendments being made during a meeting. Rather than just verbally dealing with wording changes to an item, could the Committee or Council also utilize technology to project the item on a screen showing the language crossed out that is to be deleted and the language to be added in a different color (or utilize some other visual way to show what is being added)? In that case, it is important that the camera be pointed to the screen for those streaming the meeting and so that those viewing the recording later will be able to see the proposed changes.