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May 1, 2023

To: Members of the 2023-2027 Chicago City Council

re: Recommended Changes to the Chicago City Council Rules of Order and Procedure
for 2023-2027

Dear Council Members:

Congratulations to each of you for winning election to the 2023-2027 City Council. We look forward to having an opportunity to interact with you and see all that you can accomplish for our city in the coming years. We appreciate your willingness to serve the people of Chicago.

The League believes that a critical component for you, the Council, City government, and the City being successful is that you have sufficient time to review matters that will be on Committee agendas and that the public, whom you represent, have an opportunity to provide you with both information and their opinions on agenda items. Sadly, that is not the case in most situations today. The League also believes that everyone benefits when government is as transparent as possible.

The League is attaching several recommended changes to the Rules of Order and Procedure of the Council that will serve to (1) increase transparency and (2) provide the public with a true opportunity to contact you and the other members of a Committee regarding items on Committee agendas.

The League understands that the Rules of Order and Procedure that were voted on for this new Council on March 30 will need to be voted on and adopted by you as the new Council. **The League urges that you also include the attached recommended changes – either as part of the Rules initially adopted or in a subsequent amendment to the Rules.**

The League thanks the 2019-2023 Council for incorporating some important changes to Rule 41 dealing with items directly introduced to Council Committees by the mayor and city departments. These changes clearly increase transparency, but unfortunately do not provide a true opportunity for the public to provide input on such items. The additional change included in the attached will do much to make such input possible.

Thank you for considering these proposals. We welcome the opportunity to discuss these with each of you.

Yours truly,
Jane Ruby, President

**Recommended Changes
from the League of Women Voters of Chicago
to the Rules of Order and Procedure of The City Council,
City of Chicago for Years 2023 – 2027,
Passed March 30, 2023, #R2023-502**

These recommendations are organized in order of importance and reflect the League's emphasis on the need for transparency and for the public to have a reasonable opportunity to provide input to the Council.

1. **Rule 40:** This rule currently provides for only 48 hours' notice of an agenda. This provision is unchanged from the Rules in effect for the 2019- 2023 Council. **The practical effect of this Rule is to prevent the public from providing input to the Council. The League would like to see at least 4 business days' notice of an agenda 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 the posting. 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. Obviously, the result is that the public is prevented from timely providing comments.

In contrast to this current 48-hour minimum notice of City Council Committee agendas, the Cook County Board has a rule that provides for a prior notice period of 4 business days. This allows the public an opportunity to know when an item is going to appear on the agenda and to provide either written or verbal comments. If the Cook County Committees can post agendas 4 business days prior their meetings, surely the City Council Committees should be able to do so. And, in fact, some do. We think that having more notice of what items will be appearing on a Committee agenda would also benefit all the Council members by giving you more time to prepare.

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 until they see the items on the Committee agenda.

Further, even if the League is aware of an item, we do not know when it will appear – if ever – on a Committee agenda. Many items spend many months before they appear on a Committee agenda. Thus, prior notice of at least 4 business days is needed for Committee agendas.

2. **Rule 39:** This Rule currently provides that there must be at least 3 days' notice to the Alders (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. **Rule 41, Section B:** The League fully supports the important changes that were made on March 30 to this Section B of Rule 41 dealing with Direct Introduction Items from the mayor and city departments. These changes provide important prior notice requirements for both the Alders and the public. However, for the same reasons listed regarding Rule 40 above, **the League urges that the minimum 48 hours' prior notice of a direct introduction item be changed to at least 4 business days.** Such a change would also provide the Alders with more time to review the item and gather any needed information prior to having to take a vote.
4. **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 at the County 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.

5. **Rule 35:** Careful consideration should be given to whether all 28 Committees listed in this Rule should be approved by the new Council. The League has looked at all the previously existing 19 Committees and found that a number of them met infrequently, if at all, during 2020, 2021, and 2022. Considering that the combined budgets for the 19 previously existing Committees total over \$5.6 million in the 2023 budget, the 19 Committees should be evaluated as to whether they have served the purpose intended and how budgets and staff should be assigned going forward to whatever Committees the new Council approves.
6. **Proposed New Rule regarding material pertinent to an item: The League recommends that the Council add a new rule that requires the posting of pertinent material, such as reports, to Legistar (or any subsequent official posting platform), concurrent with the posting of the text of the items.** This will increase transparency and provide the public with greater understanding of what the Council is doing.

There is precedent for such a rule. 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 or in connection with the text of

the item posted on Legistar. 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.

7. **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. Again, this added transparency will increase the public's understanding of what the Council is doing and why.

8. **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)? We would think this would be of help to the Alders, as well. 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.