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To: Council Member Whitfield Calloway, Chair
Rules Committee

From: David Whitaker, Director 
Legislative Policy Division

Date: October 2, 2023

Re: Suggested Amendment to Council Rules

The Legislative Policy Division has written language for the suggested amendment to the current version of the Council Rules received to date.

The suggested amendment is to Section 22.0 of the Council Rules which outlines the procedures for persons wishing to address Council. The relevant section reads as follows:

A person shall be permitted to address a meeting of the City Council subject to the following rules:

A brief written notice of a request to address the City Council shall be filed with the City Clerk not later than 2:00 p.m. of the business day immediately preceding the day of the scheduled meeting to which the request pertains. The City Clerk shall provide reasonable assistance in the preparation of such request to any person requesting assistance.

A written notice of a request to address the City Council shall identify the person making the request. Identification shall include, full name, address (both resident and business), phone number, and shall state the subject matter on which such person wishes to address the City Council.

Upon approval of the request by the Body, the Chair of the Standing Committee or Committee of the Whole shall have the discretion as to when during the meeting the person shall be heard and shall also have the discretion to impose a reasonable limitation on the time allotted to hear such person.

This procedure shall not apply to scheduled public hearings or to persons invited by the City Council to participate in discussions before the City Council.

This Rule was intended to allow the occasional community leader the opportunity to address Council beyond that which is allocated during the Public Comment section of a Council meeting. Over the past few months, however, Council has been receiving an increasing number of requests under this Rule. Often the requests come from the same individuals or others associated with those individuals, speaking on issues and subject matters that have previously been brought before the Council during prior meetings through Public Comment.

A suggested amendment to this section was submitted. In this suggestion, the language would be rewritten to require that the full City Council vote in Formal Session to either accept or reject a petition request to speak. If approved, the petitioner would only be allowed to speak at a Formal Session. Rewriting the language for this section would clear up current ambiguities. The suggested language would read as follows:

A person may be permitted to address a meeting of the Detroit City Council only at a City Council Formal Session, subject to the following rules:

A brief written notice of a request to address the City Council shall be filed with the City Clerk not later than 2:00 p.m. of the business day immediately preceding the day of the scheduled Formal Session. The City Clerk shall provide reasonable assistance in the preparation of such request to any person requesting assistance.

A written notice of a request to address the City Council, at a Formal Session, shall identify the person making the request. Identification shall include, full name, address (both resident and business), phone number, and shall state the subject matter on which such person wishes to address the City Council.

If the request is approved by the Body, at a Formal Session, the Chair shall have the discretion to determine at what future Formal Session the person shall be heard. The Chair shall also have the discretion to impose a reasonable limitation on the time allotted to hear such person.

This procedure shall not apply to scheduled Public Hearings or to persons invited by the City Council to participate in discussions before the City Council.

Other suggestions were made but none of them were sent to the Rules Committee to be assigned to the Legislative Policy Division for drafting.

If there are further suggested amendments to the Rules, they should be directed to the Chair of the Rules Committee to be assigned to LPD for drafting.

Should there be any questions, please advise.