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TO: The Honorable Detroit City Council

FROM: David Whitaker, Director
Legislative Policy Division Staff 

DATE: January 22, 2026

RE: REPORT ON THE PROPOSED EXECUTIVE ORGANIZATION PLAN SUBMITTED
JANUARY 9, 2026.

The Detroit City Council has requested that the Legislative Policy Division (LPD) provide an analysis of the Mayor's 6 proposed amendments to the Executive Organization Plan (Plan). This memo is in response to that request.

Deadline for Action to be taken by the City Council

Under the City Charter, City Council must study and conduct hearings on the Mayor's proposed amendments to the Executive Organization Plan. Council has 60 business days to consider the Plan and to request modifications, which ends April 7, 2026, 60 business days from the day the Plan was filed with the City Clerk on January 9, 2026.

The City Council may request that the Mayor make modifications to the amendments. According to the Charter, "all amendments to the plan must originate with the Mayor." The City Council can only disapprove or approve of the Mayor's amendments. Disapproval by the City Council requires a 2/3 majority vote of City Council, otherwise the amendments become effective after 60 business days.

City Charter Limitations of Assignment and/or Combining Authorized Functions

Pursuant to Section 7- 102 of the Detroit City Charter, the Mayor is required to file an executive organization plan. That provision in pertinent part, states as follows:

The Mayor shall prepare an executive organization plan which, consistent with law and this Charter, sets forth all agencies of the executive branch and assigns authorized programs, services and activities to each agency.

Although the mayor is required to submit an Executive Organization Plan, the plan must comport with the various provisions of the charter. In that regard, Section 7- 102 states:

The Mayor may not reassign or combine the functions of staff departments, but may, except as to departments created under Chapters 3, 6, 7, 8, 12 and 13 of this Article, assign any of the functions of an operating department to a staff department, reassign the functions of one (1) operating department to another operating department or combine operating departments.

It should be noted that when determining if a department's function can be reassigned, the Charter has divided the departments into 3 categories. The first category is composed of "staff departments," which, in general, provide services to other city departments that cannot be combined with other staff departments. The second category is composed of "operating departments," which, in general, provide direct services to city residents that can be reassigned to either a staff department or operating department. The third category is an operating department, whose functions cannot be reassigned. Thus, under Section 7-102, the Mayor may only combine or transfer the functions of certain "operating departments" to other "operating departments" or "staff departments". The Mayor cannot reassign staff department functions to another staff department or an operating department.

The staff departments under Article 6 of the Charter are Budget, Planning and Development, Finance, Human Resources, and BSEED. The Mayor is prohibited from reassigning the functions of the following operating departments: Arts, Historical, Human Rights (CRIO), Police, Water and Sewerage, and Zoological Park.

Impact of the Executive Organization Plan on the Budget

The Executive Organization Plan amendments can be presented to the City Council at any time. However, to effectuate many changes in the budget, typically the plan has been presented during the budget season. Therefore, depending on which, if any, amendments become effective, the City Council will want to see how that change will impact the budget of those affected departments. This may require making changes in the proposed budget to reflect your wishes in both the plan and the budget.

Analysis of the Proposed Amendments to the Executive Organization Plan

The Detroit City Charter, ordinances and resolutions determine the functions of departments. The following is LPD's assessment of whether the proposed 6 amendments to the EOP comport to these restrictions.

- (1) Establish the Department of Human, Homeless, and Family Services, of which the purpose is to identify and alleviate causes of poverty and promote self-sufficiency and self-determination by providing quality, efficient services in a compassionate manner to disadvantaged persons, children, families, and returning citizens; and**

(2) Transfer some of the administrative and major functional areas of the Housing and Revitalization Department to the Human, Homeless, and Family Services Department; and

These first two proposed amendments deal with the same subject matter. The Plan provides the following summary of departmental purpose for the Human, Homeless, and Family Services (HHFS) Department:

The purpose of the Department of Human, Homeless, and Family Services is to identify and alleviate causes of poverty and promote self-sufficiency and self-determination by providing quality, efficient services in a compassionate manner to disadvantaged persons, children, families, and returning citizens.

The major functional areas identified under the Plan are:

- 1) Administrative Services
- 2) CDBG Initiatives
- 3) Issuance of Municipal Identification Cards (e.g., Detroit ID)
- 4) Office of Homelessness Solutions, which will focus on supporting displaced and at-risk residents as they navigate housing processes
- 5) Office of Homeownership Resources, which will focus on providing educational resources and guidance related to homeownership and homeowner rights
- 6) Returning Citizens Liaisons
- 7) HOPE (Property Tax Exemption)
- 8) Financial Empowerment Centers
- 9) Supportive Services, which will consist of connecting residents to necessary support systems, including mental health, substance abuse counseling, and maternity support

Aside from the limited restrictions of Charter Section 7-102, the Mayor has a great deal of latitude when determining the organization of City governmental operations and services. Therefore, it does not appear that the creation of the HHFS Department nor the shifting of some functions of HRD to the HHFS Department violates the Charter. However, it would be helpful for the Council to have an opportunity to examine a more detailed breakdown showing which of “the administrative and major functional areas” will be moved from HRD to the new department. Council should inquire about the specific changes in operations and administration, and be informed as to how these changes will affect operations and what efficiencies are expected.

LPD believes that the OCFO needs to provide a crosswalk showing the establishment of the HHFS and how other components of the EOP will be budget neutral.

Particularly, services for people experiencing homelessness have been a major focus of the Council and the public. The Council will need to be well informed regarding changes and updates to these services so that they can provide valuable input and effectively communicate any changes to the public. It is also worth inquiring whether there are other “wrap-around” services being provided by other departments that should also be consolidated under the HHFS Department. This includes the “Supportive Services” function listed in the Plan and whether it requires transferring services from other departments.

It appears that the City is reestablishing the previously dissolved Human Services Department. Will there be any effort to reinstate the designation as the City’s Community Action Agency?

The Plan lists the issuance of Municipal Identification Cards as a major functional area of the HHFS Department. This function is currently performed by the Health Department. Therefore, the Plan should reflect that this function is being moved from the Health Department to HHFS.

The Plan should also elaborate on the functions of the “Returning Citizens Liaisons,” including whether the intention is to transfer the functions of any other departments to HHFS. Likewise, the Plan should describe the function of “Financial Empowerment Centers,” and whether this is a new function or one that is being transferred from another City department.

It would be helpful for the Council to be aware of what “CDBG Initiatives” are being performed by HHFS, and HRD as both departments are identified in the EOP Amendment as handling CDBG initiatives. Community Development Block Grants cover a broad range of activities including economic development, construction, demolition, public services, conservation and renewable energy, etc. As a result, it is not clear whether the intention is to place all responsibilities related to the CDBG program within HHFS or HRD. Given the strict compliance guidelines for CDBG from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Council needs to be informed and assured that any changes to responsibility for CDBG will not affect compliance with HUD and will not hinder the City’s ability to maximize the benefit from the CDBG program.

Similarly, the Council should seek clarity on the inclusion of “HOPE (Property Tax Exemption)” as a major functional area of HHFS. Currently, the Board of Review (BOR) is largely responsible for the administration of the HOPE program. It is important for the Council to understand whether the intention is for HHFS to help individuals apply for the HOPE exemption or to play some other role in the administration of the program. Additionally, it should be clarified whether these services are ones that are currently within the Assessor’s Office or whether these are additional services. Notably, the Board of Review is appointed by City Council and both the Board and the Council have responsibilities under the Detroit City Code regarding the HOPE exemption. This includes Council’s responsibility to determine and make available the City’s guidelines for granting HOPE exemptions.¹ Any changes to the administration of HOPE will require a detailed review to ensure that there is no conflict with provisions of the City Code or the Charter. LPD also notes that if the HOPE function is duplicative to that of the BOR, perhaps the money associated with the HOPE activity in the new HHFS could be shifted elsewhere.

¹ 2019 Detroit City Code, Section 44-4-155.

(3) Transfer the Office of Immigrant Affairs from the Housing and Revitalization Department to the Mayor's Office; and

This transfer is permissible under the Charter. Council may still wish to inquire as to whether there will be any expected operational changes or efficiencies that will result from the transfer.

(4) Establish Neighborhood Affairs in the Mayor's Office, which will focus on establishing and strengthening connections between the City of Detroit and its neighborhoods through community engagement, resource navigation, and safety initiatives; and

It would be helpful for Council to receive more detailed information concerning the creation of Neighborhood Affairs, primarily regarding its relation to the Department of Neighborhoods (DON). It is unclear whether Neighborhood Affairs will carry out the same primary activities of the DON under a different name or whether it is a significant departure. It is important for Council to have an understanding of how Neighborhood Affairs will operate, particularly non-at-large Council Members as the new department will be doing direct community engagement in each District

(5) Transfer Homeland Security and Emergency Management Services from the Mayor's Office to the Police Department; and

This transfer is permissible under the Charter, as it does not reassign the functions of the Police Department, but rather it incorporates Homeland Security and Emergency Management Services into the Police Department. For historical context, these functions were previously within the Police and Fire Departments before the Duggan administration consolidated them in the Mayor's Office with the rationale that it would allow for immediate executive oversight in the event of a crisis. Council may still wish to inquire as to the rationale for moving these functions from the Mayor's Office and whether there will be any expected operational changes or efficiencies that will result from the transfer.

(6) Transfer the Jobs and Economy Team from the Mayor's Office to the Housing and Revitalization Department.

The Mayor is permitted to combine the Jobs and Economy Team (JET) with HRD. It is important to note that JET was already transferred to HRD in the FY26 budget. Council may still wish to inquire as to whether this is meant to capture the change that has already taken place or whether there will be any expected operational changes or efficiencies that will result from the transfer. For example, is the intent of transferring JET to HRD is to align the JET team more with housing initiatives?