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To: Council President James Tate

From: David Whitaker, Director
Legislative Policy Division

Date: September 25, 2026

Re: Auditorium Seating Configuration

The Legislative Policy Division (LPD) would like to bring to your Honorable Body's attention a recurring situation during Formal Session.

The seating configuration in the Auditorium requires the Clerks and the Parliamentarian to face the audience. In Formal Session, Council members leave the room during the meeting. That, of course, is permitted if it does not result in the loss of a quorum. The challenge is that neither the Clerks nor the Parliamentarian are aware of the departure of one or more Council members during the meeting. This becomes significant when a motion is voted upon. If, for example, there are only eight members present in the room at the time of the vote, a four-four tie vote causes the motion to fail. Likewise, a motion to waive reconsideration requires that the motion to which the waiver would be attached passed with two-thirds of the members serving having voted in the affirmative (Section 10.14.2.1). That, of course, means six affirmative votes on that motion for the waiver to be attached.

It would be much too disruptive for the Clerk or the Parliamentarian to continually turn around to check which members are at the Table. LPD would suggest, therefore, that to avoid potential confusion in the future, the Chair immediately announces when a Council member leaves the room and that the Clerk acknowledges that announcement. Likewise, when the Council member returns to the room, the Chair acknowledges such. A Council member may leave the Table at any time, but as long as they are physically in the room, they are considered present for the meeting.

Please advise if there are questions.