

Office of Resident Engagement and Community Organizing DRAFT PROPOSAL

A recurring theme arising from the work of the Task Force on the Structure of City Government has been the need for better representation on Common Council and on City of Madison boards, commissions and committees from people of color and those living with low incomes. TFOGS has identified many barriers to participation, including:

- times and places of city meetings
- requirements for in-person participation
- lack of child care and adequate transportation
- uneven quality of training and support for members
- uneven level of staff support and resources amongst boards, commissions and committees
- unclear purpose of some boards, commissions and committees
- unclear expectations of board, commission and committee members
- difficulty in understanding and using Legistar
- general lack of civic education/knowledge about city government
- historical housing patterns and current landlord practices that result in high mobility of people earning low incomes, many of whom are people of color and women raising their children without a partner

Additionally, in considering the current work-load of Alders, TFOGS subcommittees have noted that the time and work commitments for membership on boards, commissions and committees are significant, leading to questions about compensation levels and whether or not the position should be considered a full time job. TFOGS subcommittees also heard that city staff are overburdened with the work of supporting boards, commissions and committees and public engagement, pulling them away from other work commitments.

This proposal seeks to address these concerns through the establishment of an Office of Resident Engagement and Community Organizing (ORECO). The ORECO would be jointly supervised by the Mayor and the Common Council Executive Committee, since both offices have strong, practical interests in constituent engagement and community direction for city initiatives. This new structure of shared responsibility would be an innovation in city government that strongly promotes cooperation between the Mayor and the Council while maintaining the integrity, distinctive character and powers of each branch of government.

While the City of Madison purports to place a high value on resident participation, racial equity and social justice in government, there is much room for improvement in how these values are actualized. The ORECO would combine many already-existing staff positions into one office that is singularly focused on creating racial equity and social justice through training, support, facilitation and outreach to

enable residents to engage at various levels of policy development and project implementation while removing barriers to participation.

ORECO functions would include:

- Recruitment of and communication with potential board, commission and committee members
- Orientation, training and support of board, commission and committee chairs and members
- Administrative support for boards, commissions and committees
- Training of staff, Alders, and board, commission and committee members in Legistar
- City-wide and District-specific communications on behalf of Council, Mayor and other city departments with no communication staff
- Organization and facilitation of neighborhood and community meetings
- Outreach and education about city initiatives in collaboration with other city agencies
- Organizational support for community-led initiatives

Already-existing staff positions that might be brought under the umbrella of ORECO include:

- Constituent Service staff – Common Council office
- Neighborhood Resource Officer – Mayor’s office
- Administrative Coordinator in charge of boards, commissions and committees – Mayor’s office
- Racial Equity and Social Justice Coordinator – Department of Civil Rights
- Neighborhood Planner (x2?) – Planning
- Community Building & Engagement staff (x2?) – Community Development
- Organizational Development staff (x2?) – Human Resources
- City-wide Public Information Officer – proposed new position
- Other administrative support staff (3-4) - TBD