From: Travis Robert Austin
To: Common Council Executive Committee
Subject: Missed Public Comment re: 87483
Date: Friday, September 19, 2025 4:43:06 PM

Hello,

My name is Travis Austin. I'm a Master of Public Affairs student at UW-Madison and a member of the City of Madison Ethics Board. The views I'm expressing here are my own and not an official position of the City Ethics Board. I was registered to speak earlier this week on Legistar file 87483 - Adopting the Updated Elected and Appointed Official Code of Ethical Conduct; however, the CCEC decided to re-refer the item due to a lack of time before the Common Council meeting that was starting at 6:30. I wanted to provide what I would have been my comments in person had that item been discussed:

> I wanted to state my support for the Govindarajan Alternate that is being proposed for discussion. The structure and wording of the Alternate best help to clarify a distinction between MGO 3.35 and the Code of Conduct. When I initially read the first proposed update, there was still some confusion on how to draw a distinction between the Code of Conduct and MGO 3.35. I am also wholly in support of the changes that are proposed to capture and clearly define more forms of conduct than what is currently present in the Code of Conduct.
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> This confusion was present earlier this year, when former Alder Myadze filed ethics complaints that contained many allegations that did not appear to fall under MGO 3.35, but likely the code of conduct. While Alder Myadze chose to withdraw his complaints at the jurisdictional meeting, there was one aspect of the complaints that, had we gotten to a discussion of jurisdiction, I might have been inclined to take up. Improper use of the official City Blog was one allegation that I likely would have voted to give jurisdiction for, as it is a resource that is not available to the general public. If an alder were to request an advisory opinion from the Ethics Board, I would welcome that consideration and discussion of the proper use of that resource. I would also welcome the chance for the Ethics Board to give feedback on the Code of Conduct at our next meeting. The Ethics Board has a meeting scheduled for late October.
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> When it comes to the enforcement of the Code of Conduct, I would like to suggest an alternative enforcement mechanism for your consideration. Under its current structure, the Common Council Executive Committee hears complaints that cannot be resolved by other means. Currently, the Ethics

Board meets very infrequently to address MGO 3.35 complaints, and the likelihood that a complaint under the Code of Conduct would require a hearing is also fairly low. Violations of the Code of Conduct that require a hearing could be tense, heated, or controversial. It could be effective to seek guidance and recommendations from an outside body like the Ethics Board, rather than the Common Council Executive Committee holding a hearing. The Ethics Board is more insulated from political tensions and could make its considerations insulated from those tensions. It is also just as valid to keep the jurisdiction of the Ethics Board narrow, only dealing with financial conflicts and conflicts of interest, so the Ethics Board can maintain select expertise on those types of violations. The decision on which method of enforcement is the best course of action will be up to you; each has pros and cons that should be weighed and considered.

I welcome any discussion Alders might wish to have regarding either the Code of Conduct or an advisory opinion regarding the use of the City Blog.

Thanks,
Travis Austin