



# City of Madison

City of Madison  
Madison, WI 53703  
www.cityofmadison.com

## Meeting Minutes - Approved TASK FORCE ON STRUCTURE OF CITY GOVERNMENT

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Wednesday, October 16, 2019

6:30 PM

Room 206, MMB  
215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.

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**PLEASE NOTE ROOM CHANGE**

### **A POSSIBLE QUORUM OF THE COMMON COUNCIL MAY BE PRESENT AT THIS MEETING**

[50732](#)

Documents related to the Task Force on the Structure of City Government

### **THE TASK FORCE MAY SUSPEND THE RULES TO STAND INFORMALLY AND ALLOW FOR PUBLIC DISCUSSION AND ENGAGEMENT ON ANY AGENDA ITEM**

#### **1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL**

The Meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

**Present:** 10 - Paul E. Skidmore; Keith Furman; Rebecca Kemble; Ronald M. Trachtenberg; John E. Rothschild; Roger Goodwin; Justice M. Castañeda; Maggie Northrop; Eric S. Upchurch and Eileen Harrington

**Absent:** 1 - Syed Abbas

Upchurch arrived at 6:33 p.m.

Goodwin left at 9:35 p.m.

Skidmore left at 8:27 p.m.

**Also Present:** Alder Grant Foster, Karl Van Lith, Linette Rhodes, Nan Fey, City Attorney May and Assistant City Attorney John Strange

#### **2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion by Rothschild, second by Goodwin, to approve minutes from 10-2-19 TFOGS meeting. ACA Strange offered two corrections. To Item 5, add Harrington as yes vote to Motion to recommend that BCCs create an organizational chart. To Item, sub. (b) regarding motion to move from 20-member to 10-member council, add Castañeda as the second and correct typo of "unanimously." Motion passed by voice vote, with corrections.

#### **3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Sue Hoffenberg completed a registration form and spoke for three (3) minutes. She submitted written comments to the Task Force, which are included in Legistar File 50732.

**4. DISCLOSURES AND RECUSALS**

There were no disclosures or recusals at this meeting.

**5. MOTION TO RECONSIDER DECISIONS MADE AT THE OCTOBER 2, 2019 TASK FORCE ON GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE MEETING REGARDING RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCLUDE IN THE FINAL REPORT TO THE COMMON COUNCIL ON ISSUES PERTAINING TO THE COMMON COUNCIL INCLUDING:**

Alder Kemble, with a second by Alder Furman, moved to reconsider decisions made by the Task Force at the October 2, 2019 TFOGS meeting regarding recommendations to include in the final report to the Common Council on issues pertaining to the City's Common Council. Alder Kemble explained that her absence at the 10-2 meeting was caused by a plane crash at the airport from which she was flying. Had she been present, she would have suggested a different process for developing recommendations that may have produced different results. In particular, she mentioned that because of the interconnectivity of the questions, what question the TFOGS starts with likely drives answers to other questions. Therefore, her intent with the motion to reconsider specifically is not to undo what the Task Force did on 10-2, but to offer alternative paths of analysis. Task Force members discussed the importance of allowing Alder Kemble and Alder Skidmore to discuss this issue. On reconsideration, Kemble proposes doing three different rounds of voting with a different question each time. Kemble explained that the first vote could be to affirm the decision of the Task Force at the preceding meeting if one starts with the question of whether the Council should be full or part time. She proposes the TFOGS then do another round of voting with the premise that it start with the question of the size of the Council. She suggests a third round of voting could be starting with the question of whether aldermanic districts should be geographic or at large. Motion to reconsider passed on unanimous voice vote.

With the matter back before the body, Kemble made a motion, seconded by Castañeda, to proceed by offering different scenarios based on different leading questions, including that the TFOGS affirm the scenario voted on at the 10-2 meeting (no further discussion necessary) as the option when starting with the question whether Council should be full or part-time, then vote on a second scenario starting with the size of the Council, leaving open the possibility of a third scenario starting with a different lead question.

Motion passed 8-1 on a roll-call vote

Yes: Kemble, Upchurch, Skidmore, Rothschild, Castañeda, Furman, Northrop, Trachtenberg  
No: Goodwin

Having affirmed the first scenario, the Task Force moved on to considering other scenarios that start with different leading questions.

**6. DECISIONS REGARDING ANY REMAINING RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCLUDE IN THE FINAL REPORT ON ISSUES PERTAINING TO THE COMMON COUNCIL**

Member Upchurch noted that some survey responses suggested that the

current size of the Council is not sufficient (i.e., not big enough). Notes that many respondents don't know the name of their alder or what district they are in. He thinks this suggests we need more alders, not less.

Member Kemble states that making the Council smaller would cut against the fundamental idea of creating better representation for the City's residents. At the current size of government, it's still possible for alders to talk to every household in the district. Maintaining that level of connection is important as a gateway into other forms of engagement. Kemble says doing the work well demands at least 20 and perhaps expanding to accommodate future growth.

Member Northrop states that if we assume that the districts stay the same size or get smaller (i.e., with more alders), then it seems true that the transient nature of some populations would permanently prevent them from serving on the Council because they often move over aldermanic district lines.

Member Castañeda stated that we have looked at a variety of similarly situated cities and that they all have smaller full-time councils. He cautioned that there is a danger in relying on the survey as empirically validated data. He reiterated the importance of recognizing the barriers to serving on the Council that the current structure creates given that people with lower incomes cannot afford to miss work to serve on the part-time council. He further noted the City's Neighborhood Resource Team (NRT) maps and how, as Member Northrop noted, people who often move from neighborhood to neighborhood often move across aldermanic district lines, making it impossible for them to run for alder. Finally, he noted that the Council is, in many respects, already full-time, but only certain alders are able to actually work full-time while others need to maintain day jobs for the income. This results in better representation for districts with alders who can spend more time in their districts than alders who need to work full-time jobs. Finally, he noted that going to a full-time council does not necessarily mean that Madison will professionalize its politics or create avenues for corruption. He again noted other cities where full-time council members are working moms and others, not necessarily full-time politicians.

Alder Foster states that it is very difficult to reach 12,500 constituents working full-time and so it is difficult to see how reaching 25,000 constituents (if, say, the City goes to a 10-member council and doubles the size of the current districts) would be easier. Another issue is with regard to campaigns. It is still possible to run campaigns without huge money. Concern of going full time is it will become harder.

Alder Skidmore made a motion to move the previous question.

Vote on Motion Not to Change the Size of the Council failed 5-5 on a roll-call vote.

Yes: Trachtenberg, Goodwin, Kemble, Skidmore, Furman  
No: Upchurch, Rothschild, Castaneda, Harrington, Northrop

The Task Force then made a series of additional motions related to the size of the Council. Upchurch moves, with a second by Kemble, that the council be at least 20 with consideration of there being more.

Motion failed by Roll Call Vote 3-6.

Yes: Goodwin, Kemble, Upchurch

No: Trachtenberg, Skidmore, Rothschild, Castañeda, Furman, Northrop

Motion by Furman, Second by Kemble, that alders represent around 14,000 residents. Furman later moved to amend his motion to state that alders represent 14,000 residents. The amendment passed by voice vote.

Member Rothschild states that changing the number slightly is not going to change things too much. Castañeda states that it's not necessarily true that larger districts mean alders can't have contact with residents and rejects the notion that if we double-down on this idea it is going to make things better. He sees no benefit to keeping a system in place that has systematically excluded a swath of our population for decades. Northrop agrees with Castañeda. Kemble, however, says it's a straw dog argument to say that the size of the Council is the reason for the disparate representation. Having fewer alders will not result in better representation.

Trachtenberg moves the previous question. Motion fails 5-5 on a roll-call vote.

Yes: Trachtenberg, Goodwin, Kemble, Skidmore, Furman

No: Upchurch, Rothschild, Castañeda, Northrop, Harrington

Then, there was some general discussion about what members thought was the correct size for the Council. Harrington thinks 10 (as voted last week) is the right size and said that the status quo is simply unfair to those districts whose alder cannot already work full-time. Castañeda said that he is agnostic as to size but understands implications. The current size of districts (too small) and the current structure of the BCCs are both impediments to equality in the city. One of the keys to reforming the BCC structure is having a Council that is forced to and has the capacity to focus on it. Finally, we are seeing a population coming into the political fold (young women of color) like we have never seen before and we need to look at models like a full-time council that will invite them in not keep them out. Rothschild stated that he agrees with 98% of what Castañeda said and says that the BCC structure and engagement are huge issues and that he believes engagement would be easier with fewer members and that those members could focus on changing the BCC system. Trachtenberg is concerned about how the public would receive a recommendation to reduce the size of the Council to 10 and think it likely would not be adopted. Castañeda responded that if the Task Force makes this recommendation he thinks the people will see the wisdom in it and the Council will be required to at least confront the issues raised by the current structure. Upchurch suggested that the Task Force focus on scenarios, not actual recommendations, and it begins with 20 alders and studying methods of choosing the number of alders.

The Task Force took a 5-minute recess, during which Alder Skidmore left to attend another meeting. Upon returning from recess, Trachtenberg moved, with a second from Goodwin, that if we do not go to a full-time council, then we retain 20 person part time council and then have to address issues c, d, e and f.

Kemble stated that she is voting not because the motion conflates the issues of size and full-time/part-time. Kemble supports a paid full-time council but is not in favor of shrinking size of council. Acknowledges that some people are better represented than others but maintains that more alders produce better representation.

Motion fails 3 – 5 (5 needed to pass because 9 left in attendance)

On roll-call vote :

Yes: Trachtenberg, Goodwin, Rothschild

No: Kemble, Castaneda, Furman, Northrop, Upchurch

The Task Force then took up items other than the size of the Council individually.

Castañeda moves for full-time council, second by Kemble. Motion passes 6-2 on roll-call vote.

Yes: Kemble, Castañeda, Furman, Northrop, Upchurch, Rothschild

No: Trachtenberg, Goodwin

Castañeda moves to maintain geographic district representation. Motion passes 6-0 on roll-call vote.

Yes: Kemble, Castaneda, Rothschild, Trachtenberg, Goodwin, Furman

No: None

Abstain: Upchurch, Northrop

Castañeda moves that Common Council terms should be 4 years, second by Kemble. Motion passes unanimously 8-0 by roll call vote.

Castañeda moves to impose term limits of 12 consecutive years on Common Council members, second by Kemble. Motion passes unanimously 8-0 on roll-call vote.

Furman moves that if the Common Council goes to 4 year terms then Council leadership positions go to 2-year terms, second by Northrop. Motion passes unanimously by roll-call vote.

Castañeda moves that salary for Council members be set at 80% area median income for single parent with two children (approximately \$67,000), second by Furman. Motion passes 7-1 on roll-call vote with Kemble voting no.

The Task Force referred item g., when any related structural changes should be implemented to the next meeting.

**7. DECISION ON WHETHER THE MAYOR OR COMMON COUNCIL SHOULD MAKE  
ALDER APPOINTMENTS TO BCCs**

A motion to take item 7 off the table failed.

**8. DECISIONS REGARDING RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCLUDE IN THE FINAL  
REPORT PERTAINING TO RESIDENT PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

No discussion.

**9. DISCUSSION OF TIMELINE AND PROCESS FOR WRITING AND REVIEWING THE FINAL REPORT**

No discussion.

**10. FUTURE MEETINGS AND AGENDA ITEMS**

No discussion.

**11. SCHEDULE ADDITIONAL MEETING(S)**

No discussion.

**NOTE: The deadline for filing a Final Report is December 1, 2019**

**12. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Trachtenberg, second by Kemble, passes by voice vote. Meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.