

**Common Council Chief of Staff (CoS) Updates**  
**01/21/20**

▪ **Summary of 2019 accomplishments and challenges:**

- We started off 2019 working with HR's Organizational Development section to lay out every staff person's roles and responsibilities and who the backup staff would be for each activity. The purpose of this endeavor was to reinforce the office as non-partisan and to remove individual personalities from the work that needs to be done. A list of who to contact for Council Office assignments was distributed electronically to all alders.
- Along with clarifying roles and responsibilities, we worked collaboratively to develop a cross-training plan, which is still in progress. This is to ensure that, in an office as small as ours, there is a succession plan in the event that a staff member is out of the office for any extended period of time. A copy of the plan was shared with Council Leadership.
- Early in 2019, I successfully hired and brought on board our legislative analyst, Dr. Karen Kapusta-Pofahl, who has been invaluable in providing fair and balanced research on topics of interest to alders. In 2019 the office covered at least 73 topic areas of interest to alders.
- We successfully facilitated department orientations for new alders and the inaugural budget retreat with the Mayor's staff, which, in my opinion, was a real success.
- Outreach was a great success in 2019. I reached out to various communities, stakeholders and potential partners to inform them about the work of alders and the Council. I had the opportunity to engage guests both domestic and international. Some of the conversations that arose during these engagements included how to counter NIMBYism, growth and density in the city, gentrification on the South Side and how the City can support asset-based community development.
- Amid these accomplishments, one challenge that has arisen is that of consistently being kept in the loop on proposed resolutions, ordinances, policies or budget amendments.

A chief of staff generally works behind the scenes to solve problems, mediate disputes, and deal with issues before they escalate. Also, my understanding is that the position was created to address 3 strategic focus areas:

- 1) Strategic management of the Council Office and staff – this includes developing staff and program level strategies, setting priorities, problem solving and providing leadership to ensure optimal support for Alders in the execution of Alder initiatives and responsibilities.
- 2) Expert consultation and support for Alders in the analysis of City policy – including supporting Alders in navigating City legislative and administrative processes and procedures.

- 3) Relationship building and communication support – this includes serving as a communication and policy liaison between the Common Council Office, the Mayor’s Office, City managers and staff, and the public.

The lack of a streamlined process and the challenge of information flow have made it difficult to be effective in this position. In order to address this, after discussions with Council Leadership and some City staff, I am proposing the following process changes:

- I would like all proposed legislation, regardless of origin, to come through the Chief of Staff during the development phase, once drafted but before introduction. This will allow me to ensure that our office provides an equity analysis on all proposed legislation (ordinances, ordinance changes, and resolutions) being kept in the loop will also allow me to work with Council Leadership as they set and approve Council, Executive Committee and legislative agendas. Further, in some cases, members of communities or stakeholders, such as the Chamber of Commerce or communities of color, have expressed concerns about proposals that I know nothing about and in such instances, it will be easy for me to work with alders and Council Leadership, in collaboration with the Mayor’s Office, to ensure that we are on the same page with respect to messaging such as informing constituents on what stage in the legislative process a proposal might be in, as well as to temper any anxieties regarding regulatory changes. In addition, being kept in the loop by department heads, this will also ensure consistency in informing the relevant alders whenever there is an event that is either in their district or could impact their district, out of courtesy.
  - The Mayor’s Chief of Staff will continue to meet with me on a monthly basis to ensure that there is open communication on pending legislation or potential hot button issues. This will help me keep alders abreast on any issues before they become public.
  - A preliminary review of the surveys about the Chief of Staff position showed that some respondents were unsure about the efficacy of the position and how to best utilize it. Streamlining how legislative topics and issues around the delivery of public services are triaged by the Council Office will provide clarity on how the Chief of Staff can work effectively in collaboration with department heads as a measure of the position’s performance evaluation. Currently, collaboration predominantly consists of being invited to sit on interview panels and participate on teams like the RESJI strategic team and the Performance Excellence Leadership Team, as well as project-specific activities like providing insights to the 311 exploratory project and assisting ad hoc committee chairs in achieving the completion of the report on MPD’s policing policies.
- **Annual Plan:**

Understanding that priorities might shift with changes in Council Leadership, the goal for 2020 is to continue work on completing the cross-training of Council Office staff. Additionally, there are three main projects I hope to focus on this year:

    - I plan to work with the legislative analyst to review and update the Council’s Policy Guide, pulling in recommendations from the President’s Work Groups on Alder Communications and APMs.

- Once department heads submit their budget proposals for 2021, the legislative analyst and I will review all the proposals and provide brief summaries of each to all alders. This will allow alders to have a sense of needs expressed by agencies relative to what makes it into the executive budget and can better inform any budget amendments.
- In an attempt to improve community engagement, I hope to expand my outreach to media outlets like local television and radio stations to give the work of alders and the Council more exposure beyond the City Channel and the Council Office's twitter account. In addition, our legislative analyst is working with area high school students to host a youth summit. The endeavor will expose students to the great work and resources of the City, as well as provide an opportunity for City staff to hear concerns of the youth as we try to encourage their civic engagement now and into adulthood.