TO: Mayor Rhodes-Conway
FROM: Karen Kapusta-Pofahl, Common Council Chief of Staff
DATE: July 24, 2026
SUBJECT: Common Council Operating Budget Transmittal Memo
CC: Deputy Mayors; Finance Director; Budget Manager

Goals of Agency's Operating Budget

The goal of the Common Council Office 2027 budget request is to maintain support for each of the alders and the Council as a body to do the important work of representing their constituents and the city as a whole.

99.25% Budget for General, Library, and Fleet Funds

The Council Office expects to be able to absorb a .75% base budget reduction without impacting our level of service in 2027. The Common Council Office underspends its overall annual budget each year. We anticipate being able to do so again in 2027.

Reduction Scenarios

The Common Council Office 2% reduction scenario is to reduce the alder expense accounts by $1330 each for a total of -$20,600, leaving them with $570 each. While the alders, on average, do not spend their entire alder expense account funds, this level of cut would reduce the resources available to the alders for engaging with their constituents. Any efforts to not make this cut are very much appreciated.

Reallocations and Other Changes

The $500 that was designated for the Small Business FAM tour in 2026, as well as the $600 for promotional items will be recategorized as a general Community Engagement fund of $1100. Examples of expenses from this pool of funds include supplies and materials, event registration fees, room or equipment rental fees, promotional items, and so on.

Future Planning

As the city grows, alder districts will grow as well. Our office is researching ways to support the alders as they manage their growing districts, such as a constituent management system for tracking and managing emails, in addition to low or no-cost resources and processes we can provide. We will be reporting our findings and recommendations to CCEC once completed.

We would like to also take this opportunity again this year to flag the need to create dedicated staff position(s) to assist with the management and support of City boards, commissions, and committees (BCCs) through the training of BCC staff, officers, and members, as well as working to improve the consistency of operations across the entire BCC system. One way to do this in the short term would be to provide us with $30,000 in Consulting Services funding to hire someone to assist us in creating and revising these materials and integrate them with the Human Resources Management System that will be operational in 2027.