

From: [Stephanie Rearick](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Subject: Request for changes to item #64 on tonight's council agenda
Date: Tuesday, January 13, 2026 4:34:28 PM

Some people who received this message don't often get email from steph@stephanierearick.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear alders,

I'm writing as a recently-elected member of Madison's Police Civilian Oversight Board and chair of its External Policy & Procedure subcommittee.

As you know, independent community oversight of policing has been a hard-won item here.

I ask you to help maintain our positive momentum and to vote not to weaken city rules that require council approval of MPD training grants. It seems likely that some of MPD's immediate concerns could be alleviated while maintaining stronger oversight, by including an amendment to item 64 on tonight's council agenda..

If it looks like the council wants to pass item 64, I'd like to suggest amending the proposal. These are things that could work to free up MPD to act quickly while also maintaining community oversight:

1. A financial threshold that still requires Council approval
 - any grant, training sponsorship, scholarship, or external training support above that threshold would require Council approval and public notice prior to acceptance.
2. Subject-matter flags that require review regardless of amount
 - Certain training categories should always trigger review due to heightened public interest and risk, including:
 - Highly militarized or tactical trainings
 - Trainings outside the United States
 - Trainings funded by third parties with business before MPD or entities that could reasonably be perceived as attempting to influence MPD operations or policy
3. Pre-acceptance transparency requirements
 - The public and Council should know what outside funds are being offered, by whom, for what purpose, and what training will occur before acceptance..

Having seen the difference the nature and amount of training can make in how police respond to a variety of situations, I think it's essential to maintain council and community oversight over training grants.

Thanks so much for your time and consideration,
Stephanie

—

Stephanie Rearick

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From: [Alex Saloutos](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Cc: [Patterson, John](#); [Valenta, Paige](#)
Subject: Supplemental Public Comment - Agenda Item 64, File No. 91026, Special Exemption for MPD
Date: Tuesday, January 13, 2026 4:37:57 PM
Attachments: [260113 LEGISTAR91026 MEMORANDUM MPDGRANTS M2.pdf](#)

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

Dear Common Council Members:

Please see the attached supplemental memorandum regarding Agenda Item 64.

Assistant Chief Valenta's response to my questions confirms that MPD's timing problem stems from an internal issue, not knowing the difference between a scholarship and a grant, not a flaw in the city's procedures. She also confirmed MPD cannot articulate what distinguishes it from other departments that follow existing policy. More importantly, the city already has an expedited approval process under MGO Sections 2.055(1) and 2.34 that can handle genuine time-sensitive situations while preserving transparency. A permanent exception is unnecessary.

I respectfully request a referral until MPD provides complete answers, or a no vote if the referral fails.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the letter 'A' with a stylized flourish.

Alex Saloutos
Phone: (608) 345-9009
Email: asaloutos@tds.net

M E M O R A N D U M

Date: January 13, 2026

To: Common Council
John Patterson, Chief of Police
Paige Valenta, Assistant Chief of Police

From: Alex Saloutos

RE: **Supplemental Public Comment – Agenda Item 64, Legistar File No. 91026, Common Council Meeting January 13, 2026**

I am submitting this supplemental comment following Assistant Chief Valenta's January 12, 2026, response to questions I raised regarding File No. [91026](#). Her response, attached as Exhibit A, actually strengthens the case for denial or referral rather than adoption.

WHAT VALENTA CONFIRMED

Assistant Chief Valenta confirmed the following:

- Detectives were notified in “late March 2025” that they received “scholarships” for training.
- The training was out of state in “late April.”
- MPD was surprised to learn that the “scholarships” were, in fact, grant funding.
- MPD did not have time to go through the city’s legislative process, which “often is about six weeks.”

WHAT VALENTA DID NOT ANSWER

On January 11, 2026, I sent a separate email directly to Assistant Chief Valenta and Chief Patterson with specific questions about the timeline. That email is attached as Exhibit B. As of this writing, I have not received a response to those questions:

- On what date did the detectives apply for the scholarship?
- What was the deadline for scholarship applications?
- Did MPD request Council approval to apply for the scholarship, as contemplated by APM 1-9? If not, why not?
- How much time elapsed between the award notification and the conference dates?
- Are there other instances in which MPD declined grant funding due to timing constraints? If so, what were the specific dates and timelines?

WHY THESE QUESTIONS MATTER

These questions go to the core issue before the Council.

The detectives necessarily applied for these scholarships before “late March.” That application date was the appropriate moment to seek Council approval, contingent on the award. That is how other city departments handle similar situations and is the standard practice under APM 1-9. For example, Item 79 on today’s agenda follows this approach.¹

APM 1-9, Grant Acceptance, states:

“Council approvals to apply for a grant, and accept and sign a grant agreement, can be combined into one resolution if all necessary details are known at the time of the resolution.”²

If MPD had followed this process, the timing issue would not have arisen.

Valenta’s response also confirms that MPD initially treated the “scholarships” as something other than grant funding. That points to an internal problem within MPD. It is not a flaw in the city’s grant procedures, and it does not justify a permanent exception to a citywide policy.

Finally, if MPD believes the existing procedures are unworkable, the appropriate venue for that discussion is APM 1-9 itself. All other departments rely on that APM for grant approvals. Creating a department-specific exception by ordinance, while leaving APM 1-9 unchanged for everyone else, would undermine the consistency of the city’s administrative framework and codify what appears to be a management problem within a single department.

VALENTA’S RESPONSE UNDERMINES MPD’S CASE

The limited timeline Valenta described—“late March” notification for “late April” training—was approximately four weeks. While that is tight, the crucial question is what happened before “late March.” MPD has not disclosed when the detectives applied for the scholarships or why MPD did not seek Council approval at that time.

Valenta also acknowledged that MPD is “not in a position to know” what distinguishes MPD from other departments. If MPD cannot articulate why it should be treated differently, the Council should not grant a special exception.

THE CITY ALREADY HAS AN EXPEDITED APPROVAL PROCESS

Even if MPD were to face a genuinely time-sensitive grant opportunity, the city’s existing rules already provide a mechanism for expedited approval. MGO Section 2.055(1) provides that a resolution may be acted upon the same day it is introduced if suspension of the rules is approved

¹ For example, Item 6 on the January 5, 2026, Finance Committee agenda, later listed as Item 79 on the January 13, 2026, Common Council agenda (Legistar File No. 91115), is a resolution “Authorizing the Department of Transportation to apply for a \$6.75 million Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP) Grant from the Federal Railroad Administration and authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to sign the resulting grant agreement to accept the grant (District 4, District 6, District 12, District 15, District 17).” Numerous similar items appear regularly on Council agendas. Available at: <https://madison.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7769918&GUID=9FAE1496-4086-494D-A592-5CB452FA7871>.

² APM 1-9, Grant Acceptance. Available at: <https://www.cityofmadison.com/mayor/apm/1-9.pdf>.

under Section 2.34 and action on the item has been publicly noticed as required by the open meetings law.³ Section 2.34 permits suspension of the rules by a two-thirds vote of the Council.⁴

This means MPD does not need a blanket exception to the citywide grant policy. If a genuine time-sensitive situation arises, MPD can request expedited consideration through the existing suspension-of-rules procedure—preserving transparency and public notice while still allowing timely action. The fact that this procedure exists and MPD has apparently never attempted to use it further suggests that the problem is one of planning, rather than process.

REQUEST FOR ACTION

The factual record remains incomplete. I respectfully renew my request that the Common Council:

1. Refer this legislation to a future meeting until MPD provides complete answers to the questions above, including the application date and an explanation of why MPD did not follow the standard APM 1-9 process. If MPD or the administration believes that broader policy changes are needed, those changes should be considered as amendments to APM 1-9 on a citywide basis, rather than through a department-specific ordinance.
2. If the Council declines to refer, vote No. The city already has an expedited approval process under MGO Sections 2.055(1) and 2.34 that can accommodate genuine time-sensitive situations while preserving transparency and public notice. A permanent exception to citywide policy is neither necessary nor justified on this record.

Thank you for your consideration.

EXHIBITS

Exhibit A: Email from Assistant Chief Paige Valenta, January 12, 2026

Exhibit B: Email from Alex Saloutos to Chief Patterson and Assistant Chief Valenta, January 11, 2026

³ MGO Section 2.055(1) ("No ordinance or resolution... shall be acted upon, except for making referrals, on the same day on which it was introduced, unless suspension of the rules has been approved, according to Section 2.34 of the Madison General Ordinances, and action on the item has been publicly noticed as required by the open meetings law."). Available at: https://library.municode.com/wi/madison/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=COORMAWIVOICH1--10_CH2STRUGOCOCO_2.055RECOMA.

⁴ MGO Section 2.34(1) ("The assent of two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) of all members of the Council shall be required to suspend, alter, or modify any of the rules in this Chapter for a given meeting."). Available at: https://library.municode.com/wi/madison/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=COORMAWIVOICH1--10_CH2STRUGOCOCO_2.34SURU.

Exhibit A

Tuesday, January 13, 2026 at 4:21:09 PM Central Standard Time

Subject: FW: Questions about Legistar ID No. 91026
Date: Monday, January 12, 2026 at 6:26:47 PM Central Standard Time
From: Valenta, Paige
To: Alex Saloutos
CC: Patterson, John, Duncan, John, Vidaver, Regina

Hello Alex Saloutos ,

You have posed the same questions to multiple people, so I am responding to everyone at once to provide consistent information. I have worked with the MPD Grants Specialist to answer your questions. The answers are below.

Thank you for your inquiry,

Paige Valenta

Assistant Chief
Madison Police Department
211 S. Carroll Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53703
(608) 266-4049

The legislation and fiscal note fail to answer basic questions that the Council and the public need in order to evaluate this proposal:

1. What specific circumstances led MPD to decline grant funding due to timing constraints? It is unclear whether this reflects a systemic issue with the City's grant approval process or a lack of planning by MPD.

A year ago, the Wisconsin Department of Justice Office of Crime Victim Services informed MPD detectives that scholarships were available to attend the annual National End Violence Against Women Conference. Detectives applied and were given the "scholarships," except they turned out to be a grant. Note: WDOJ has an online grant portal and the scholarships were not submitted through it but just sent as emails through the Office of Victim Services.

MPD occasionally get scholarships and employees are allowed to accept comped travel and registration for conferences they attend, because their attendance is a benefit to the city, and the city would otherwise be paying for those expenses (see MGO 3.35(6)(e)).

Grants, of course, are different and given the unexpected change in the type of support offered by WDOJ, MPD did not have time to go through the city legislative process of accepting the award (which often is about six weeks) and thus had to decline it.

Additionally, at times WDOJ has annual specialized training grant opportunities that become available when other awardees could not spend all their funding and returned it, leaving WDOJ with additional funding. WDOJ then make such funds available on short notice to interested agencies. Sometimes MPD has been able to

use these funds when there is sufficient time for both council approval and planning for the training; other times MPD have had to decline such opportunities. The current resolution is simply an attempt to not miss out on such training opportunities since the training needs of our employees are ongoing due to the nature of the profession, and we have a small city-funded training budget.

2. What specific circumstances led MPD to decline grant funding due to timing constraints? Based on the available record, it is unclear whether this reflects a systemic issue with the City's grant approval process or a lack of planning by MPD. Without concrete examples with actual dates, there is no way to assess whether the problem is real, how frequently it occurs, or whether better planning is needed rather than a policy exception.

The detective personnel were made aware that they received the "scholarships" in late March 2025. The training was out of state in late April.

3. What distinguishes MPD training grants from grants sought by other City departments in a way that would justify different procedures? If timing constraints justify blanket pre-authorization for MPD, the same logic would apply to other departments. Either this exception should apply citywide, or there must be something unique about MPD training grants that warrants different treatment.

The Police Department is not in a position to know about other agencies' training processes. Perhaps the Finance Department or Mayor's Office could answer this question.

4. What does this legislation do to promote or obstruct transparency and accountability? The current process ensures Council review before grant acceptance. This legislation would replace that prospective review with an annual retrospective report.²

The resolution is simply an attempt to address unusual circumstances when the Police Department would miss out on training opportunities. Trainings are opportunities for professional development and can aid the community through better policing, better investigations and better efforts to reduce crime.

This resolution requires the review and approval by the City Attorney and other review as required by City contract procedures before a training grant can be accepted.

Again, the goal is simply not to miss out on opportunities when there are short timelines.

Exhibit B

Tuesday, January 13, 2026 at 4:22:09 PM Central Standard Time

Subject: Questions Regarding File No. 91026 (MPD Training Grants)
Date: Sunday, January 11, 2026 at 10:47:15 PM Central Standard Time
From: Alex Saloutos
To: Patterson, John, pvalenta@cityofmadison.com
Attachments: 260111_LEGISTAR00000_MEMORANDUM_MPDGRANTS.pdf, image001.jpg, image002.jpg

Dear Chief Patterson and Assistant Chief Valenta:

I have submitted the attached memorandum to the Common Council regarding File No. 91026, which is on Tuesday's agenda. At the Finance Committee meeting, Assistant Chief Valenta cited a scholarship-funded training opportunity for detectives as the basis for this legislation. To better understand the circumstances, I would appreciate answers to the following questions:

1. What date did the detectives apply for the scholarship?
2. What was the deadline for scholarship applications?
3. What date did MPD request Council approval to apply for the scholarship (as contemplated by APM 1-9)?
4. What date did MPD receive notice that the detectives were awarded the scholarships?
5. What were the dates of the conference or training?
6. Are there other instances in which MPD declined grant funding due to timing constraints? If so, please provide the same information for each.

APM 1-9 explicitly contemplates combined resolutions authorizing both application and acceptance. Other city departments routinely use this process. If MPD had sought Council approval at the application stage, the timing issue would not have arisen.

I am not opposed to MPD receiving training funds. I am requesting relevant facts to evaluate whether this exception to citywide policy is necessary or whether the issue can be resolved through better planning and the use of existing procedures.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.



Alex Saloutos

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