

From: Adam Tauno Williams
Sent: Monday, December 16, 2024 10:41 AM
To: City Clerk <cityclerk@grand-rapids.mi.us>
Cc: Mayor <mayor@grand-rapids.mi.us>
Subject: Proposed Accounting Staff Reallocation

Hello,

I am writing to express my opposition and concern regarding the proposed reallocation of staff and resources from the Comptroller's office to the City Manager's purview.

- The citizens of Grand Rapids voted in 2012 on a proposal to change the city charter regarding the Comptroller's responsibility and reporting; that initiative failed overwhelmingly (46,030 to 26,246). The citizens of Grand Rapids want **elected** oversight and accountability. There is a channel for approaching changes to the City Charter, the City Commission should use that channel, not attempt to bureaucratically circumvent it.
- The presentation of this as an agenda item on the Friday before the City Commission meeting, to be reviewed on Tuesday mere hours prior to the City Commission meeting, has terrible *optics*, **to put it mildly**. Overall this is a constant frustration with how the City Manager and Commission operates. That agendas become available only **two business days** before items will be reviewed and possibly decided is not transparent government. Agenda items often have the appearance of materializing from the ether and then almost immediately being decided. This may be in textual compliance with the Open Meetings Act, but it is performative compliance, and not in the spirit of the Act.
- The City Manager presenting this change to city staff as a fait accompli before the item had appeared on a public agenda raises questions about the oversight, or lack thereof, being exercised by the City Commission. Additionally it indicates the existence of technical violations of the Open Meetings Act. **How was this determined with such confidence when it had not been discussed at quorum outside of a public meeting?**
- The City Comptroller is an elected official, as the City Charter exists today it (1) clearly delegates financial operations to that office and (2) provides very little direct authority to those elected by the citizens of the city. The proposed change would further reduced the scope of elected representation. The city, as it grows, should be moving towards greater authority for those elected by the citizens. The proposed changes are not in the spirit of the issues identified by the 2019/2020 Task Force For Elected Representation (TFER); a report to which the City Commission still has made no response other than to oppose change.

If there is a practical issue this agenda item addresses that case needs to be made, a change of operation of this scope demands more process than this.

Perhaps in the future the City Commission could consider (1) a policy requiring that City Commission agendas be posted at least five business days prior to a meeting, and (2) placing the composition of the agenda in the authority of the **elected** mayor.

Over the years of attending all manner of city meetings I have heard innumerable and sonorous declarations concerning the need to respect process, observe process, have "difficult conversations", etc... In this case I hope the City Commission will follow through on its own declared values.

2nd Ward Resident,

Adam Tauno Williams