



MEMO

Department

To: Committee of the Whole
From: Tim Greenwood, City Attorney
Date: February 17, 2026
Re: Monday/Tuesday Meeting Structure

Background information:

The City's current meeting structure uses Standing Committees (as described at Ordinance 2.12), which are the Board of Public Works, Finance and Personnel Committee, Health and Recreation Committee, Legislative Committee, and Public Protection and Safety Committee. These Standing Committees meet on Monday evenings at 6p.m. and are followed the next day, Tuesday, by a Common Council meeting at 7:00pm. All voting members of these committees are common council members, and most Standing Committee actions are ultimately advisory to the full council. As a result, items considered by Standing Committees on Monday are routinely considered and approved again by the same elected officials at the Council meeting the next night.

This structure produces several challenges. First, it results in duplicative procedures and redundancies. Department staff must prepare and present the same information twice in consecutive nights, and Council members deliberate and vote twice on the same matters. Additionally, if there is a proposed change that two Standing Committees have jurisdiction over, it should then go before both (each with their own Common council membership) before being forwarded on to the entire Council for action

Second, the need to adjourn one meeting and convene the next creates inefficiency and adds administrative complexity without substantial benefits. This also increases recordkeeping burdens, as each Standing Committee requires its own separately maintained agenda and set of minutes.

Third, maintaining multiple small committees increases the potential for quorum issues. Because several alders serve on two or more Standing Committees, absences can more easily prevent a quorum and delay or prevent committee action.

Fourth, restructuring may allow for more consistent and equitable consideration of issues. Since all voting members of all Standing Committees are also Common Council members, all alders will ultimately participate in discussion and decision-making. Allowing all alders to engage earlier in the process would reduce the need to reopen and re-debate items on Tuesday that were already discussed Monday.

For these reasons, there are three potential approaches the City could take:

1. **Maintain the current system** with standing committees meeting on Mondays and the Common Council meeting on Tuesdays;
2. **Revise Ordinance §2.12** to discontinue standing committees and conduct Monday meetings as a **Committee of the Whole**, allowing all matters to be reviewed by the full Council prior to formal action; or
3. **Eliminate Monday meetings and standing committees entirely**, with all discussion and action occurring at the regular Tuesday Common Council meeting.

To aid the Council's consideration of these options, the Legal Department analyzed the number of ordinance amendments required under options 2 or 3. Approximately 30 ordinances would require amendment or repeal because they either reference a Standing Committee directly or indirectly, or because they would become invalidated if Standing Committees are discontinued.

Analysis of Options:

Option 1: Maintain the Current System

Maintaining the existing structure preserves the status quo, requires no ordinance amendments, and avoids operational disruption. Elected officials and staff are familiar with the current process, and it maintains a separation between preliminary committee review and formal Council action.

Option 2: Convert Monday Meetings to a Committee of the Whole

Revising Ordinance §2.12 to discontinue Standing Committees and hold Monday meetings as a Committee of the Whole (COW) allows all alders to participate in initial discussion of each matter. This structure reduces duplication by consolidating multiple committee meetings into a single forum and ensures that the full Council is engaged early in the process, potentially shortening Tuesday meetings and preventing unnecessary revisiting of issues.

A COW format retains a two-night system, which provides scheduling continuity and preserves a space for in-depth discussion prior to formal action. It may also provide more transparency, as the public would have a clearer understanding that substantive conversation occurs at a single, full-council meeting.

This option requires ordinance amendments, but does not require as many operational changes as eliminating the Monday meeting entirely. It balances efficiency and deliberation, though it does not entirely eliminate the need for two evenings of meetings.

Option 3: Eliminate Monday Meetings and Standing Committees Entirely

Eliminating all Monday meetings and conducting all business during the Tuesday Common Council meeting maximizes efficiency. This option would remove duplicative presentations, reduce staff and alder workload, eliminate quorum issues for small committees, and streamline recordkeeping into a single meeting with one agenda and one set of minutes. It would also make the legislative process easier for the public to understand by consolidating discussion and action into a single meeting.

The primary drawback is the potential for longer Tuesday meeting agendas, especially during periods of high activity. This option also represents the most significant operational change and requires at least the same amount of ordinance amendments as Option 2. Council members and staff may require an initial adjustment period as processes and expectations shift to a single-night model. Despite these challenges, this structure offers the greatest clarity, efficiency, and simplification of the decision-making process.

Strategic Plan:

This change provides accountability of ex-officio members if voting rights are provided and transparency to the community as to whether the position has voting capacity or not.

Budget: N/A

Staff Recommended Action:

Direct staff which of the three above options the City would like to pursue or to provide additional information on the options.