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March 24, 2021

Dear Commissioners,

On March 3, 2021, I circulated a letter summarizing the key points of Legistar item# 21-1273, known as the Joint Committee Meeting Ordinance (hereinafter, the “JCMO”). Since my letter, my staff and I had an opportunity to speak with you and your staff regarding the JCMO. I value and thank all of you for your questions, input, and recommendations regarding the JCMO. We considered those questions, input, and recommendations to further amend the JCMO in key areas to clarify certain proposed processes based on our conversations. My staff will send the newest version of the JCMO for your review. We highlighted the latest additions to the JCMO in yellow and green for ease of review. Many of the changes include referencing “joint committee” or “joint committees” in parts of Cook County’s municipal code (hereinafter, the “Code”) where appropriate.

However, there are several substantive changes to the JCMO, as follows:

In Section 2-71, “Definitions”, the JCMO defines a joint committee; including this definition in the appropriate section of the Code.

In Section 2-103, “Quorum required for meetings of the Board, its Committees, Joint Committees, and Subcommittees”, the JCMO defines the quorum needed to conduct a joint committee meeting. The JCMO defines two (2) possibilities regarding achieving quorum for joint committee meetings. Pursuant to Section 2-103(d), Scenario 1 involves a joint committee comprised of committees

and/or subcommittees which are not committees of the whole. Each comprising committee and/or subcommittee must have a quorum of its committee members present at the joint committee meeting in order to achieve quorum for the joint committee meeting. Additionally, a Commissioner will count towards the quorum for each comprising committee of a joint committee if he or she sits on two or more of the comprising committees of the joint committee. Pursuant to Section 2-103(e), Scenario 2 involves at least one comprising committee being a committee as a whole. In this scenario, the joint committee achieves quorum if there are enough Commissioners present to achieve quorum for the committee as a whole. This requirement for Scenario 2 aligns with the ideology of both efficiency and collaboration behind joint committee meetings since a committee as a whole has the highest requirement for quorum.

In Section 2-109, “Committees, generally”, the JCMO defines how to form a joint committee. Pursuant to Section 2-109(a)(7), The JCMO requires written consent from the chairpersons of all comprising a joint committee. The written consent must detail the specific item or items forming the basis for forming the joint committee. The joint committee chairs must submit the written consent to the Secretary to the Board, the President of the Board, and the Commissioners, no later than two days prior to the County Board, committee, subcommittee and/or special committee meeting for which the Board, a committee, a subcommittee, and/or a special committee may call the item or items forming the basis of the joint committee. Forming a joint committee is an intentional exercise of collaboration between Commissioners; therefore, consent is crucial.

Section 2-109(a)(7)(b) defines what the comprising committee chairpersons must include in their written consent, including but not limited to: (1) the item or items forming the basis for forming the joint committee; (2) the intention of all consenting committee chairpersons to refer the listed items to the formed joint committee; (3) the names of the comprising committees and comprising committee chairs; (4) which comprising committee chair will preside over the joint committee meeting; and (5) other such information and details relevant to the efficient execution of the joint committee meeting. Furthermore, Section 2-109(a)(7)(d) mandates joint committees must have written consent amongst the comprising committee chairs around specific items to consider. This provision is unlike the provisions which allow for committees, subcommittees, and/or special committees to form via a resolution or ordinance by the Board. This limiting language for forming joint committees will increase collaboration, and transparency amongst Commissioners while simultaneously ensuring the authority of the comprising chairpersons over their respective committees remains intact.

In Section 2-109(j), “Referrals to committees”, the JCMO defines when the Board may refer an item to a joint committee. The JCMO states the Board may refer an item to a joint committee, “provided the joint committee’s comprising committee chairs written consent, prior to the Board’s motion to refer the item or items, stated the joint committee’s intention to receive the item or items by referral. Thus under the JCMO a referral of an item or items to a joint committee will occur as follows:

1. Chairs of comprising committees will execute a letter of consent identifying the item or items for which they agreed to form a joint committee;
2. The Chairs will disseminate the letter of consent to the Board, President, and Secretary;
3. The Board, during the main Board meeting, will refer the item or items, previously detailed in the joint committee written consent letter, to the joint committee;
4. The item or items will go to the joint committee for the joint committee to meet at the call of the presiding joint committee chair.

This process is replicable for committees, subcommittees, and/or joint committees which may refer an item to a joint committee, provided the joint committee formed to discuss and address those specific items. Again, this stresses the importance of the intentional exercise of collaboration between Commissioners to form a joint committee.

In Section 2-109(m), “Joint committee meeting actions incorporated into comprising committees and/or subcommittees’ minutes”, the JCMO defines how to report the actions of a joint committee. The Secretary to the Board will incorporate the actions of a joint committee into the committee and/or subcommittee minutes of each comprising committee and/or subcommittee of the joint committee. This ensures the Secretary to the Board can continue to utilize the reporting method of standard meetings we currently receive. The Secretary to the Board will include the items received and acted upon by a joint committee, pursuant to Section 2-109(m), referencing the date, time, quorum, and detailing the difference between these items and other items heard exclusively by the comprising committees in their respective minutes. This ensures both efficiency and transparency as the Secretary to the Board will not need to substantively alter its current reporting mechanism and this allows all comprising committees to have a record of the joint committee actions for which their respective committees took part.

Lastly, in Section 2-111, “Items pending in committee at conclusion of term”, the JCMO defines what happens if a joint committee fails to discharge an item or items before a Board term ends. The Secretary to the Board will receive and file the item or items should the joint committee fail to discharge them, as the Secretary to the Board would do with items from other standing committees, subcommittees, and/or special committees. However, since the JCMO does not create standing joint committees, upon failure to discharge the item or items and the Secretary to the Board’s receiving and filing of the item or items, the joint committee will dissolve at the end of the term.

I cannot overstate how valuable and important your input was towards these latest JCMO amendments. Your continued dedication to communication, collaboration and action is commendable. Our municipal code is silent regarding whether the Board of Commissioners has the power to hold joint committee meetings. The JCMO will expressly grant this power; however, exercise of the power will be discretionary. The JCMO currently sits in the Rules Committee but we anticipate calling this item in April. My Chief of Staff La’Mont Williams will be in touch with you and your staffs should you desire to discuss these latest changes. On behalf of Commissioner

Deer, Commissioner Suffredin, and myself, I look forward to your support for the Joint Committee Meetings Ordinance.

Thank you,

Handwritten signature of Bill Lowry, consisting of the name "Bill" followed by a stylized number "4".

Commissioner Bill Lowry – 3rd District
Chairman of Cook County Cannabis Commission