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3  
4 **A RESOLUTION/ORDINANCE**

5  
6 Amending Section 1.13 of the Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances to assign  
7 priority to standing committee matters where members of the public have registered to  
8 speak and to provide equal time for testimony regardless of the content of their  
9 testimony

10  
11  
12 WHEREAS, inscribed on the eastern façade of the Milwaukee County  
13 Courthouse are words, “Vox populi vox Dei”, Latin for “The voice of the people is the  
14 voice of God”; and

15  
16 WHEREAS, Chapter 1 of the Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances  
17 (MCGO) outlines the rules of the County Board of Supervisors; and

18  
19 WHEREAS, MCGO 1.13 specifies, among other things, standing committee  
20 meeting procedures but do not directly address how members of the public wishing to  
21 provide testimony should be treated; and

22  
23 WHEREAS, MCGO 1.29, Decorum of Supervisors in Committee Meetings, states  
24 in part:

25  
26 *“Representatives of the news media, county executive and all staff, county*  
27 *supervisors and designated staff, constitutional officers, department heads and all other*  
28 *officers and employes of county government, as well as other public and private*  
29 *citizens, who either participate at or appear before any meetings of the county board or*  
30 *of any standing committees or any special or select committees, are entitled to the*  
31 *greatest measure of respect and courtesy.”*

32  
33 ; and

34  
35 WHEREAS, relatively few matters scheduled by standing committees result in  
36 members of the public registering to speak, but depending on the placement on the  
37 agenda, a person may have to wait several hours for an opportunity to briefly speak;  
38 and

39  
40 WHEREAS, Assembly Resolution 14 was introduced that would prioritize public  
41 and local government speakers over state officials and lobbyists in the speaking order  
42 on matters before the Wisconsin Legislature; and

43  
44 WHEREAS, an example where several members of the public had to wait more  
45 than five to six hours at a Milwaukee County Board standing committee was on the  
46 “Right to Counsel” legislation (File No. 21-506) although numerous items were

47 considered prior to that file where no members of the public had registered to speak;  
48 and

49  
50 WHEREAS, it should also be the goal of the Milwaukee County Board of  
51 Supervisors that if time limits are placed on public testimony, that the limits should apply  
52 equally to all speakers regardless of the content of their testimony; and

53  
54 WHEREAS, members of the public are also able to submit written testimony  
55 (eComment) through the County Legislative Information Center (CLIC) which is  
56 recognized through an agenda item at the foot of the agenda and may contain  
57 testimony/comments that was not shared with the standing committee prior to voting on  
58 the matter earlier in the meeting; and

59  
60 WHEREAS, the County Board of Supervisors should establish as a best practice  
61 and standard procedure to read public testimony (or summarize if necessary) into the  
62 record prior to voting on a file; and

63  
64 WHEREAS, one of the primary goals of holding standing committee meetings is  
65 to allow the public to understand and comment on the actions their elected officials are  
66 taking *before* votes are cast to help connect people with Milwaukee County government  
67 and affirm their confidence that their voices are being heard; and

68  
69 WHEREAS, the Committee on Judiciary, Law Enforcement, and General  
70 Services, at its meeting of March 4, 2024, recommended adoption of File No. 24-293  
71 (vote 3-2); now, therefore,

72  
73 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors hereby  
74 amends Chapter 1 of the Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances by adopting  
75 the following:

76  
77 **AN ORDINANCE**

78  
79 The County Board of Supervisors of the County of Milwaukee does ordain as follows:

80  
81 **SECTION 1.** Section 1.13 of the Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances is  
82 hereby amended as follows:

83  
84 1.13. - Committee meetings.

85  
86 (a) *Regular committee meetings.*

87  
88 (1) Except when otherwise determined by the respective chairperson, regular  
89 meetings of standing committees shall be held on the days and the hour  
90 specified by the chairperson, but not on an election day for a county-wide  
91 election or special election of county board supervisor or election day for  
92 president. The meeting shall be called to order promptly on the days and at the

93 hour designated in the notice of meeting by the chairperson of the committee  
94 (or in his/her absence, the ranking member thereof).

95  
96 (b) *Special committee meetings.* Special meetings of the standing committees may be  
97 called by the chairperson of the committee, and must be called upon written  
98 request to the chairperson by a majority of the members of such committee. At  
99 least twenty-four (24) hours prior notice of such special meeting shall be given by  
100 the committee coordinator to each member of such committee, unless for good  
101 cause such notice is impracticable, in which case shorter notice may be given, but  
102 not less than two (2) hours in advance of the meeting. An announcement by the  
103 chairperson of the board while the board is in session, of the time, place and  
104 subject matter of a special meeting of a committee to be held during a recess, shall  
105 be sufficient notice to the members of the committee.

106  
107 (c) *Committee general procedure.* All meetings of a committee shall be conducted in  
108 accordance with the provisions of ss. 19.81—19.98, Wis. Stats. The attendance of  
109 a majority of the members thereof shall be requisite for the transaction of business  
110 of a committee. A committee member who participates in a meeting of the  
111 committee by telephone, video conference, or by other means of  
112 telecommunication or electronic communication is considered present, subject to  
113 the provisions of sections 1.01(d) and 1.13(e). Without a majority in attendance, a  
114 committee may consider informational items only. Committee agenda are to be  
115 prepared so that members of the county board and other interested parties will  
116 receive the agenda by United States, electronic or interoffice mail at least twenty-  
117 four (24) hours before the scheduled committee meeting. A committee chairperson  
118 must schedule a county board referred item within a maximum of two (2) regular  
119 county board committee cycles. Once scheduled and publicly noticed, an item may  
120 only be withdrawn according to the provisions of section 1.13(d)(8). If the item is  
121 withdrawn by sole action of the committee chair pursuant to section 1.13(d)(8), the  
122 item must be placed on the committee agenda for the next regularly scheduled  
123 meeting and may not be withdrawn again.

124  
125 The committee coordinator shall enter in appropriate files kept for that purpose, a  
126 complete record of all such committee meetings, including attendance, appearances for  
127 and against pending matters, and minutes of the proceedings, including all motions  
128 made and by whom, how each member voted upon each matter considered, together  
129 with the final action by the committee thereon. All actions taken by the committee shall  
130 be by roll call vote, however a motion to place on file may be taken by voice vote  
131 without objection. No action shall be taken on any proposed ordinance unless it be in  
132 written form before the committee.

133  
134 Except as herein provided and so far as applicable, the rules of procedure of the  
135 county board shall apply to committee meetings. Minority rules shall not apply to  
136 committee meetings.

137

138 After the conclusion of the committee meeting, the committee coordinator shall  
139 prepare a separate, written report of the action of the committee upon those matters  
140 considered by it which require county board approval, for submission to the county  
141 board for action of that body. Such report shall be made up in such manner that the  
142 county board may take action upon it as a whole, or may set aside any portion of it for  
143 separate action. Any member of any committee may make a minority report of said  
144 committee on any recommendation to the board contained in the committee report.  
145 Such minority report must be presented when the matter is considered at the meeting of  
146 the county board.

147  
148 Except as provided in the preceding sentence, it is the duty of the committee to  
149 make a report to the county board on matters referred to such committee with some  
150 definite recommendation for disposition of such matters.

151  
152 When members of a committee or joint committee present at any meeting thereof,  
153 are, by recorded vote, evenly divided as to the disposition to be made of any subject  
154 matter referred to and pending before such committee or joint committee, such subject  
155 matter shall be returned to the next meeting of the county board without  
156 recommendation and the committee or joint committee shall thereupon be deemed to  
157 be discharged from consideration thereof.

158  
159 (d) *Committee motions and voting procedure.*

- 160
- 161 (1) If an item is on the agenda "for information only unless otherwise directed by  
162 the committee," a motion to place on file is not needed. The committee will just  
163 receive the item. However, if a motion is made and a vote is taken, said item  
164 will be reported to the board.
  - 165
  - 166 (2) If a motion to adopt an item fails, it will be reported to the board with a  
167 recommendation to reject.
  - 168
  - 169 (3) To take any other action on an item after it has been rejected, a motion to  
170 reconsider must be made and passed. Only a supervisor who voted on the  
171 prevailing side of the rejection action can make the motion to reconsider.
  - 172
  - 173 (4) If a motion to place on file or to reject fails, the matter is still before the  
174 committee and another motion shall be in order.
  - 175
  - 176 (5) If a motion to adopt, postpone indefinitely, place on file or reject receives a tie  
177 vote in committee, the matter shall be reported to the county board without  
178 recommendation.
  - 179
  - 180 (6) If a motion to refer, lay over or amend receives a tie vote, said motion fails and  
181 another motion is in order.
- 182

- 183 (7) No motions, or debate on motions, shall be made from the chairperson. If the  
184 chairperson wishes to make, or to speak at any length on, a motion, the  
185 chairperson shall turn over the gavel to the vice chairperson or next senior  
186 member for the remainder of the item. This provision shall not prevent a  
187 chairperson from questioning a witness concerning testimony being presented  
188 to the committee.
- 189 (8) Once a committee comes to order, an attendance is taken to establish a  
190 quorum, any item on the agenda can only be removed by concurrence of a  
191 majority of the committee. Prior to the committee coming to order, an item can  
192 be removed by the chairperson.  
193
- 194 (9) Supervisors wishing to add their names as co-sponsors of resolutions or  
195 ordinances introduced by supervisors, shall, prior to a committee's final vote on  
196 said resolution or ordinance, obtain the permission of the primary sponsor, and  
197 be added if there is no objection from a member of the committee. If there is  
198 objection, a vote of the committee shall be taken regarding adding the co-  
199 sponsor(s).  
200
- 201 (e) *Remote meetings.* Standing committees shall be equipped to conduct business  
202 remotely via telephone conference, video conference or other electronic  
203 communication provided that the meeting is live-streamed, televised live or  
204 otherwise broadcast live to the public, subject to the following:  
205
- 206 (1) If a committee chairperson chooses to schedule a committee meeting as a  
207 hybrid meeting, the chairperson shall attend in-person at the courthouse or at  
208 the physical location of the designated meeting. In exigent circumstances, the  
209 vice-chairperson of the committee may fulfill this requirement if the chairperson  
210 is not able to attend in person.  
211
- 212 (2) Virtual-only county board meetings shall be reserved for an emergency or  
213 other extraordinary circumstance.  
214
- 215 (3) Supervisors not subject to [subsection] 1.13(e)(1), staff, and members of the  
216 public wishing to testify shall have the option to attend any standing committee  
217 meeting remotely, other than committee of the whole, via the electronic  
218 communication protocol designated for the meeting.  
219
- 220 (f) **Public testimony. The chairperson of the standing committee, when not**  
221 **conducting a required public hearing, may choose to allow public verbal**  
222 **testimony during standing committee meetings. Members of the public may**  
223 **also submit written testimony or comments through the eComments portal**  
224 **of the county legislative information center (CLIC). To the extent possible,**  
225 **the chairperson shall strive to adhere to the following practices:**  
226

- 227 **(1) If one or more members of the public have registered to speak to an item**  
228 **prior to the start of the standing committee meeting, effort shall be made**  
229 **to consider the matter prior to considering other items where no public**  
230 **testimony is expected. Meeting agendas shall contain appropriate**  
231 **language to notify the public that items may be taken out of order.**  
232  
233 **(2) If time limits are applied to verbal testimony from members of the public,**  
234 **they shall be applied equally to all public speakers regardless of the**  
235 **content of their testimony.**  
236  
237 **(3) Prior to the standing committee voting on the disposition of a file, any**  
238 **eComments received prior to the start of the meeting shall either be read**  
239 **into the record or, if determined by the chairperson as voluminous, be**  
240 **summarized so meeting participants understand the sentiment of the**  
241 **testimony.**  
242

243 **Nothing in this section shall abridge the ability of the chairperson to conduct the**  
244 **standing committee meeting and consideration of items in the order they deem**  
245 **best for members of the public, employees and staff, and members of the**  
246 **committee.**  
247

248 **SECTION 2.** The provisions of this Ordinance shall become effective upon passage and  
249 publication.  
250

251  
252 03/04/24  
253 S:\Committees\Committees\2024\March\JLEGS March 4\Resolutions\24-293 Resolution ordinance amending Section  
254 1.13 ars.docx