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To: Government Structure Work Group Members
From: Barry Clegg, Jill Garcia, and Greg Abbott
Subject: Report on Interviews with City Department Heads

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On behalf of the Government Structure Work Group, we conducted a series of interviews that included most of the City's current department heads. The focus of these interviews was to gather their first-hand experiences operating within the current government structure, personal observations about the strengths and weaknesses of this current structure, and any recommendations for possible improvement.

Overall, department heads expressed unanimous belief that the current structure lacks strong accountability, is overly complex and highly inefficient, and is significantly influenced by personalities of individual elected officials. The highly diffused governance structure makes it difficult to determine who is in charge and who is accountable for any given policy, project, or proposal. The separation of powers under the current structure provides a healthy tension between Mayor and Council, ensuring that multiple perspectives and viewpoints are considered in policy-making processes. When there is alignment (agreement) between these principals on goals, strategies, and outcomes, the enterprise can be highly effective. However, when that alignment is not achieved, or when there is disagreement, either in terms of the goals (what) or the means (how), the enterprise can experience breakdown, which can vary from slight or little impact to major impacts that are disruptive to City operations. Experience has shown the City's unique structure is highly dependent upon individuals, and that dependency is not as resilient as might be needed or desired. And while the system can be effective, it is not efficient; there is a significant "overhead" required to support, manage, and engage fourteen full-time elected officials.

This report presents a summary of the feedback received from the City's department heads.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. How would you rate the effectiveness and efficiency of the current mayor-council structure?

a. What are the best attributes of the current structure?

From a political and policymaking perspective, the City of Minneapolis benefits from the duality baked into the existing mayor-council governance structure; that is, the balancing of the broad, citywide perspective from the Mayor, as the City's chief elected official, with the thirteen Council Members who represent the interests and priorities of their wards, which tend to be based around neighborhoods and smaller, more localized communities of interest (subsets within the larger community). Ostensibly, the Mayor provides a broad, community-based vision that incorporates the ideas, feedback, and support of Council Members; this would be reflective of some of the core processes encoded in the city charter, e.g., policymaking and the City budget.

At its best, the practicalities of the governance structure require collaboration and compromise between key players: Mayor, Council, and Staff (here referring to the heads of the operating department). A positive by-product of that structure is that it can nurture strong work partnerships, particularly between department heads and between elected officials and departments. In this regard, the Council's oversight of the administration through its standing committee system can help to nurture positive and productive relationships between elected policymakers and departments, especially between the committee chair and the department head. When there is solid alignment between these key players with respect to goals and outcomes supported by positive work relationships, the City enterprise can be very effective.

The Council's system of standing committees also enables elected policymakers to have a structured engagement with the enterprise and its operations. Department heads see the committee system as the appropriate forum for that kind of collaboration between elected policymakers and department leaders. Committees allow individual Council Members to develop a level of expertise within certain policy areas, and this can bolster positive work relationships with key staff in those areas, and it helps position Council Members as informed and effective representatives of the City. Recent examples of these positive outcomes within the existing structure include, among others, the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and the Neighborhoods 2020 Plan, both of which were significant policy initiatives that engaged policymakers and staff in long-term plans for the future of the City. Both plans involved significant engagement activities. Both demonstrated some of the "keys to success" for working inside the City's structure; these include: clear organizational alignment on policy goals and objectives as well as agreement on these points between the Mayor and the City Council; a sense of urgency and prioritization among other City work; the investment of necessary resources; and consistency in the planned/deliberate approach to the work by assigned departments (accountability).

Another example of the structure working well is the annual budget process. Here again, some of the core factors that make this a successful process are: clarity about roles and responsibilities; alignment between all parties on the ultimate outcome (a funding plan); a sense of urgency and prioritization among other City work; and consistency in the planned/deliberate approach to the work by assigned departments (accountability). For example—

- (1) Departments submit their funding requests and operating proposals to the Mayor;
- (2) The Mayor develops and presents a proposed budget, based on department submissions and the support of the professional staff;
- (3) The Council—through its standing committee(s)—evaluates the Mayor's proposed budget, which includes several public hearings that provide the community with meaningful opportunities to engage in the process;
- (4) The Council refines and perfects the Mayor's proposed budget and ultimately adopts a fiscal plan to fund the operations of the City enterprise; and
- (5) The Mayor approves the Council's final adopted budget.

This is an example of a recurring process that works well within the City's governing structure primarily because it is clearly defined in all aspects.

The larger size of the City's governing body (the Council) is also a factor in the City's success under the current governing structure. With the at-large Mayor and thirteen ward-based Council Members, there is a significant priority placed on constituent services. This can be a positive aspect of the current structure since it helps ensure the City is open and responsive to the community and that there are multiple pathways for residents to engage with the City, both through formal and informal channels. This helps to achieve maximum political representation and public engagement. Having fourteen elected policymakers brings diverse voices, perspectives, experiences, etc., to the City enterprise, which has advantages in terms of representation, engagement, and public participation in city government.

The City's diffused structure also means that department leaders have a greater level of autonomy when compared to peers in other jurisdictions. That higher level of autonomy can be important to achieving stated goals and objectives because it provides the necessary space to develop and to lead on proposals, projects, and priorities and it enables them to bring their professional expertise, experience, credentials, etc., to serve the best, long-term interests and needs of the City. As a result, department heads have a greater level of autonomous capability to, individually and collectively, make decisions on operational issues. This can help to avoid unnecessary potential conflicts with policymakers, which has administrative benefits in terms of efficient internal operations as well as employee engagement in the work. This can be further strengthened if the department head can identify an elected official who shares the same values or supports the work. In that case, the policymaker(s) can champion the department's work.

b. What are the biggest drawbacks to the current structure?

The current governance structure is heavily dependent upon interpersonal relationships; thus, when these work relationships are strained or break down, the enterprise can suffer as well, ranging from minor inconveniences to major disruption. This can create barriers to enterprise operations and success. Factors that most often lead to challenges or system breakdown include: lack of clarity or disagreement about roles and responsibilities,

particularly between the Mayor and Council; lack of alignment or conflicting perspectives on policy goals and objectives, both between policymakers as well as between policymakers and staff; and elected policymakers bypassing established processes to drive personal priorities and projects. The diffused nature of the structure underscores these systemic weaknesses. As a consequence, the enterprise carries a significant “overhead” in terms of time and resources required to address these challenges. The term “overhead” is here used to refer to the enterprise resources consumed with addressing and/or resolving political gamesmanship, power plays, and interpersonal dynamics between the fourteen elected policymakers that could otherwise be channeled into the work of the City. At times this dysfunctional dynamic also permeates the operating departments where it manifests as conflict over power and resources, sometimes involving policymakers as well.

A primary concern articulated by department heads was the lack of accountability under the current structure. The diffused structure results in an operating culture of “governance by committee,” which can lead to having “too many cooks in the kitchen” in which no one person/position is ultimately responsible for outcomes. The current structure does not support the creation of a shared (and clear) vision and goals; thus, there is no defined platform from which to identify priorities, measure and evaluate performance, and determine needs (both internal and external to the City enterprise). It is not always clear, within the current structure, how to secure clarity in terms of priority or direction from City Council nor is it clear how departments are expected to take input from individual Council Members to inform their work. A frequent question at the departmental (operational) level is “*who decides?*” And the current structure makes it difficult to answer that question. Indeed, this fundamental question is often not addressed by the city charter or its codes and policies.

On urgent matters or matters of immediate need, particularly those involving public health and safety, the diffused structure of the City Council slows decision-making and sometimes dilutes the immediacy of some decision-making needs. Additionally, the Council’s structure results in a parochial approach to governance, whereby individual policymakers are dictating policy based on ward-specific issues, not necessarily the broader issues of the entire community. While Council is always willing to add to department responsibilities (new or expanded services and programs), there is rarely a discussion about sunseting or removing work to accommodate new or expanded priorities. The “more with less” mantra is simply not sustainable, particularly when there is an open opportunity for policymakers to micromanage departments in this diffused environment. There can be retaliation from policymakers if departments fail to champion their causes or projects and incorporate these into the department’s plans. That approach is disruptive and even harmful to the long-term interests of the enterprise, since that kind of operating environment disincentivizes highly-qualified individuals from applying or even considering employment with the City of Minneapolis.

As a result, for most departments there can be a disconnect between the stated objective (ends) and the operational tactics to achieve that objective (means). Additionally, there are other levels within the City enterprise that further diffuse leadership; for example, the Board of Estimate & Taxation and its authority and ability to impact departmental work (budget related).

One obvious exception to the general, diffused organizational structure is the relationship between the Mayor and the Police Department. In that case the city charter provides a clear, unified chain of command and operating structure which provides a recognized line of accountability. This does not exist for other operating departments. A major advantage of that singular line of accountability is that there is clear (and immediate) communication, whether about strategic issues or day-to-day operations. That is especially important on time-sensitive and urgent issues, particularly those which have (or may have) a significant community impact. One drawback of this direct reporting relationship is that there is potential for even more political influence (or attempted political influence) when the elected official does not have a background in the industry. There could be value in having the police department report through a non-elected official (e.g., city manager or administrator) which might help isolate and protect the police department from attempted political influence in day-to-day operations.

A lack of efficiency and high level of waste is another significant flaw directly attributable to the City’s current organizational structure. As already stated, lack of alignment and agreement on goals and objectives between policymakers—and between policymakers and departments—can result in a lack of overall accountability for performance, but it also leads to an inability to set priorities among many competing issues. The truism that nothing can be a priority when everything is a priority reflects the operating culture in Minneapolis, and when everything must be a priority there is waste of effort and resources.

The current structure—lacking a central coordinating point—results in multiple and sometimes conflicting staff directions, most of which are not prioritized or evaluated for duplication, often with unanticipated consequences. For example: the Mayor’s Office has a number of policy aides who each have a specific portfolio that encompass various policy initiatives and operating departments; the Council, divided into ward offices, each have separate priorities which may or may not align with the priorities established by the City Council as a governing body let alone with the priorities expressed by the Mayor or which are identified by departments; and the professional staff in operating departments all have agendas reflecting best practices and service and program improvements. However, there is not an effective overall manner of coordinating and linking all of these systems, priorities, policy initiatives, and programs together. It’s a hodgepodge that requires extra levels of duplication to track and follow-up on multiple agendas and priorities. This tendency toward inefficiency is further compounded by multiple policy-making bodies inside the enterprise which are in addition to the Mayor and Council, many of which have a legal mandate and defined role in the City’s operation (either by statute or charter or code). The competing narratives can be difficult for staff to negotiate between elected policymakers and it can be difficult to get the required organizational buy-in to drive forward on major policy issues.

The current structure makes it difficult to provide a singular “voice” for the City of Minneapolis. The fragmented, diffused structure is reflected in the City’s multilateral approach to its various constituencies (the many-to-many approach). This results in a continuous push-pull, tug-of-war effect on operating departments and creates challenges (and sometimes obstacles) to informing the public about the work of the City on behalf of the community, as well as how to engage with the City in appropriate forums. Public engagement, and those processes, can be problematic because the different policymakers create and/or recreate expectations around process and design on a project-by-project basis and not as a consistent, holistic design and function of the enterprise. Wards tend to become self-organized “fiefdoms,” each with its own agenda, list of priorities, and values that do not necessarily align with the broader needs of the City (or the City enterprise). In this environment, pet projects by elected policymakers can drive budgetary decision-making and investments, which usually fails to address enterprise needs and priorities. Being pulled in multiple directions makes it harder for departments to focus on official City priorities, goals, needs.

Most of the inappropriate behaviors and administrative interference are holdovers from the older aldermanic system which gave individual Council Members more authority over department operations. While departments do push back against it, that approach can benefit the wrong kind of leader; specifically, bad leaders (unproductive, poor performing, etc.) can find organizational shelter by currying favor with policymakers who are willing to champion them and their causes. Department heads thus can play policymakers against one another to advance their own causes. Worse still, department heads learn that if they can “fly under the radar” and avoid the attention of policymakers they can wield significant power in the current structure with no accountability or consequence.

2. How does the current mayor-council structure operate in the real world, as opposed to how it looks on paper?

The city charter does not provide significant distinction between legislative and executive functions. This is perhaps its most significant failure. Both on paper and in practice, the system is complex and is not a system that would be deliberately designed by anyone seeking to promote good governance or effective government operations.

(a) How is direction given to departments: by the Mayor; by Council committees; by individual Council Members?

Departments can and do receive direction from multiple sources; that includes: the Mayor, the Council and its standing committees, the independent Audit and Executive committees, individual Council Members, and other policy-making bodies that operate within the enterprise, and more. This diffused and complex nature of the City’s governance and operating structure means it is difficult to define effectively the opportunities or challenges to be addressed, to prioritize among them, and to clearly articulate the desired outcomes or results to be achieved. As a consequence, there is significant effort spent across the enterprise to define issues and to secure agreement among numerous stakeholders. Multiple layers of leadership and management compound this challenge, especially when there is not agreement on defining the issue from the start.

Former Council Member Walt Dziedzic often said: “Seven votes plus the Mayor is public policy in the City of Minneapolis.” Department heads noted that while this may be correct from a purely legal interpretation of the

city charter, it allows for a haphazard, buckshot approach to both legislative (policymaking) and executive (policy implementation and enforcement) functions. It engenders an inconsistent, arbitrary, and short-term approach to governing the largest municipality in the State of Minnesota. Worse, it can give advantage to a hardball politics approach that devalues compromise and collaboration and diminishes an environment of deliberate policymaking supported by professional analyses, data, and community participation.

Individual policymakers often have questions about issues and when staff is responsive to those questions it can cutoff or minimize the temptation for policymakers to intrude into administrative operations. On a positive note, being direct and responsive to questions raised by policymakers can engender trust between the Council and departments. The City's current structure allows significant space in which individual policymakers can interrupt/interfere/intervene in department operations, which requires department heads to negotiate—formally and informally, directly and indirectly—with policymakers and their constituents and other stakeholders. This is part of the City's added "overhead" that consumes limited resources, time, and energy—often without a corresponding return in value.

(b) How are conflicts resolved?

Many conflicts go unresolved in the current structure, which means there oftentimes is no final resolution to issues. Sometimes someone assumes a certain approach—with or without authority—until that approach is questioned, adjusted, or stopped by other players in the system with more authority. This environment does not necessarily have healthy dynamics for participants.

In the past, conflict—in terms of conflicts between policymakers, conflicts in roles and responsibilities, and conflicts between the positions and perspectives of policymakers—was largely handled informally by the Mayor and Council President, and sometimes other leaders on the City Council. However, it is unclear that this is a formal function of the Council President or even a role that the Council President can, will, or should fulfill. Obviously, it is difficult for any member of staff to confront an elected policymaker. A corresponding challenge is the difference elected policymakers and staff have in terms of the value of conflict. For policymakers, there is not necessarily a need for alignment and agreement; they are not elected as a "team" and, therefore, may not perceive themselves to be a team. From the staff perspective, however, there is a need to find alignment among the body of policymakers (Mayor and Council Members), and this is easiest to support if there is at least the semblance of a team at the policy level between elected officials. The City's existing organizational design requires department heads to invest significant time and resources into managing relationships with the Mayor and Council Members. This becomes an additional burden in terms of maintaining focus on results and outcomes while handling what could be described as "helicopter" policymakers.

As stated, alliances and relationships are crucial to effective performance: for the enterprise, for individual departments, and for department leaders. The current structure lacks sufficient systems and protocols for this; rather, success is driven first and foremost by these interpersonal relationships. As a consequence, any interpersonal challenges can have a disproportionate negative impact on the ability of the enterprise to continue moving forward. Tensions can be escalated and magnified quite easily in the current structure. The inherent theatrics of the public settings in which Council operates (i.e., public meetings) can actually fuel conflict, drama, and antagonism between elected policymakers and department leaders. The public forum can lend itself to individual policymakers leveraging opportunities to undermine public confidence in the City government and its capacity and performance. Differing policy approaches and associated priorities tied to the future of community safety following the death of George Floyd while in police custody this year clearly illustrate how disagreements, coupled with interpersonal conflict among principal players, can have major implications for the City. Multiple policy approaches, overlapping levels of work (both duplicating and conflicting), and strained interpersonal dynamics have distracted from forward momentum and progress on this significant policy issue, both internally and externally to the City enterprise. And, as demonstrated over the past several months, these conflicts can, at times, surface in very public forums. Staff is constrained in their ability to engage directly with elected policymakers or to push back on demands that may not be appropriate or consistent with formal direction or stated priorities.

Although the city charter does establish a general framework, those reporting structures can be blurred when individual policymakers do not recognize—or may refuse to recognize—the governance structure that is dictated by the city charter. Individual priorities often drive this type of inappropriate behavior. The City Coordinator plays a significant role in negotiating with elected officials to stay within their respective boundaries (reporting lines)

and to respect the operating structure dictated by the city charter. This is an unnecessary burden on the City Coordinator, which then distracts that individual from the performance of the core and central management functions of that position. The City Coordinator is effective at articulating a shared and cohesive message on behalf of the City's executive team (department leadership) to the Mayor and Council, and provides that level of enterprise messaging including, at times, appropriate pushback when policymakers are acting outside their defined, official roles/positions. Management decisions tend to be based on facts, data, and existing laws, policies, industry regulations and best practices, whereas policymakers tend to lead from positions that are based on emotional appeals, community narratives, and other factors that are not necessarily based on facts and data. Conflict tends to emerge from the differences in those perspectives.

Staff spend significant energy and effort to help identify, articulate, address, and resolve conflicts or disagreements—on policy issues, programmatic needs, procedures, and protocol—between the Mayor and Council (and amongst the Council Members), and between the policymakers and departments. Finding common ground becomes a significant focus of attention for department leaders to advance goals/objectives when there is disagreement between the Mayor and Council.

(c) Do personalities, as opposed to position and formal role, play a part? Do they overwhelm formal process?

The personalities and preferences of the fourteen elected policymakers play at least as important a role in City operations as do formal positions, policies, and procedures. Thus, the personalities of the elected officials can, and at times do, overwhelm formal processes and, in some respects, may dictate actual processes even when in conflict with city charter or city codes and policies. From a pragmatic standpoint, department heads must navigate politics within and across the enterprise to make progress on assigned goals, objectives, priorities, etc.

Disagreements between elected policymakers can have a negative impact on employee morale and motivation, which tend to be amplified in Minneapolis since media coverage (external) tends to focus on these disagreements and Council and Committee meetings are broadcast and recorded. Moreover, the negative influence of social media contributes to those impacts. One example noted by department heads as one of the most disappointing comments from a current policymaker was that they worked for constituents of a particular ward and not for the good of the City as a whole. That statement is a direct reflection of the untenable nature of the City's existing diffuse structure today.

On a positive note, official roles and responsibilities can serve as organizational guard rails or boundaries which help to avoid, minimize, or at least mitigate conflict when individual policymakers want to get deeply involved in department operations. For example, various professional codes, industry standards, best practices, and even relevant federal and state laws can support department leaders in resisting inappropriate actions or interference by individual policymakers. However, standing up to that inappropriate behavior is always challenging. This government structure enables individual policymakers to influence department operations. Savvy community stakeholders know Council Members can (and will) pull enterprise levers to "make things happen," even when that isn't always in the best interests of good government or the entire community.

As noted above, individual Council Members sometimes bypass the management/operating structure set by the city charter. Individual Council Members subvert the formal chain of command, going directly to leaders, supervisors, and even front-line staff who are subordinate to the department head to issue directions, ask questions, make requests, etc., and this results in extra and unnecessary (inappropriate) work to adjust and manage workflows, respond when and if appropriate, address the interruption of other work, and restore command and respect for the line of authority/accountability. The harm that is caused when Council Members bypass those structures impacts the effectiveness of departmental operations and service delivery, undermines the established chain of command, and, in some cases, can have negative consequences to the community as well. Individual Council Members also can pit departments against each other by "shopping" for opinions, support, etc.; this is particularly true when the primary department with a specific responsibility doesn't agree with, support, or immediately respond affirmatively to an individual policymaker's position, direction, preference, etc. This inappropriate behavior is certainly not new; however, the crises over this past year have seen increases in that negative behavior. And, over the course of this current term, there has been a marked increase in what is perceived as a general mistrust of and dissatisfaction with professional staff or with the performance or results of certain departments. In those instances where a department tends to fall out of favor, Council Members turn to other departments with the expectation that they "fill the gap" and go outside their lanes, which further blurs the

lines of accountability, both in terms of governance as well as administration, organizational structure, reporting lines, official functions, etc.

Contrast the clarity in organizational design of Hennepin County Government with the complex structure that is the City of Minneapolis. Hennepin County has a streamlined operating structure that clearly defines and separates policymaker functions from policy implementation, management, and enforcement. As already stated, the lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities in the Minneapolis model leads to confusion and conflict, and the current environment only emphasizes this tension and the resulting conflict rather than resolving or at least minimizing it. The Council spends a significant portion of its time, collectively, on expressing its values, both in terms of adopted resolutions as well as a myriad of staff directions that run the gamut of activities, from appropriate policy-level work to the most detailed, in-the-weeds administrative busy work. Despite this near-endless stream of values being expressed, there is little in the way of oversight by the Council to assure implementation of those values statements in a way that translates into enterprise operations and performance. Despite efforts to the contrary, there is not a focus on mission-driven performance supported by regular monitoring and reporting mechanisms. There is little to no deliberate thought put into the systems and processes as well as key messaging from an enterprise perspective, driven by or supported by the elected policymakers. Worse, there is a failure at the leadership level—by elected policymakers—in embodying the values that they do express, which further results in organizational conflict, confusion, and stress.

3. How well do you think the current mayor/council structure has proven to be resilient (or not) over the past year during multiple crises (e.g., COVID health pandemic, civil unrest and disturbance, and related financial pressures)?

As noted, the absence of a centralized executive in the Minneapolis governance structure is the central, recurring issue and has major implications in terms of organizational alignment, direction, and response. Especially during a crisis, the unified command structure of a strong executive model is critical since it provides clear direction, accountability, and immediate response. The multiple, overlapping emergencies Minneapolis confronted this past summer gave the City enterprise a kind of “test drive” with a stronger mayoral model. In addition to an “executive mayor,” the City established a Policy Group under the emergency declaration that included the Council President and Vice President as well as key department heads, functioning as a kind of advisory cabinet to the Mayor. The additional benefit of that approach was that the Council’s leadership was looped into plans and preparations, which could have allowed for an effective collaboration between executive and legislative leaders.

In the early days and weeks, watching events unfold during these crises, it was difficult to identify who exactly was in charge of the City and the City’s response; the overall public impression was that the City was unraveling, and this was in large part the result of a lack of clear leadership and clarity around roles and responsibilities. Conflicting messaging between the Mayor and Council, as well as individual Council Members, led to confusion, frustration, and unnecessary negative media coverage at a time when the City truly needed to be seen as “one organization speaking with one voice.” The governance structure in Minneapolis—centered on the City Council—does not move rapidly and the only way the City was able to address the emergency crises was by streamlining that operating model under emergency provisions to switch to a stronger mayor model. Equally as important, department heads stepped into the leadership gap to ensure a sense of organizational stability, clear communications, and a sense of shared direction. In the absence of that clear leadership authority, departments had to step up and get work done.

The City’s operating structure is resilient in the sense that those who operate within that structure make it work; in other words, it works because of the relationships between individuals, but not because of solid systems. In a crisis, people tend to pull together and focus on the immediate issues at hand. Ultimately, that is what happened over the summer months in Minneapolis; people eventually came together, identified and prioritized issues, and were aligned on goals and outcomes. Credit for any perceived resiliency demonstrated this past year is rightly a reflection of the department heads who pulled together to ensure the continued operational capacity of the City enterprise. That partnership and collaboration between department heads, and their teams, has been the greatest example of the City structure’s “resiliency.” Still, as the “emergency” transitioned into mitigation and recovery, that alignment dissipated and the usual challenges re-emerged.

That’s not to say that structure and performance couldn’t be optimized; they can be and should be. But, by and large, organizational success is largely driven and determined by individuals, not by the structure or systems in

place. Perhaps one major difference has been the difference between internal and external perceptions of the City's performance. In the past, the City's diffused operating structure appeared more chaotic to the public (externally) than what was experienced by elected policymakers and staff (internally). Today, however, especially after the multiple challenges of 2020, elected policymakers are impatient for change and have a need to exert their influence within the City's operating structure, and this has driven what might be described as "bad behavior" by some of the Council Members. These changes are becoming more apparent to the general community, which has been exaggerated by the multiple crises that confronted the City this past year.

4. How does Minneapolis compare to:

(a) St. Paul—

The City of St. Paul is structured with a strong mayor form of government in which the elected mayor is the chief executive officer for the City. In that strong executive model, final accountability is held by the mayor who is the head of the City's administration and has the authority to direct the work of departments, to prioritize enterprise projects, and to make decisions within the policies set by the City Council. Generally, the mayor selects a "cabinet" which encompasses the heads of the City's departments; thus, there is the potential for department heads to change when a new mayor is elected, but that is not a strict requirement, and department heads may serve in multiple administrations, despite changes in the office of mayor. One notable difference is for the chiefs of the police and fire departments, where each chief serves a defined six-year term (and can be reappointed). There organizational design in St. Paul ensures a direct line of accountability flowing from the mayor to each of the City's departments. Despite the difference in government structures, many of the biggest challenges confronting St. Paul are similar to those in Minneapolis; for example: budget, staffing, resources.

(b) Other jurisdictions where you may have worked or with which you are familiar—

Many department heads reported having prior experience in local jurisdictions besides the City of Minneapolis, including in various levels of government. That included service in other cities, special service districts (e.g., schools), counties, and state government agencies. Most of these were defined within the context of a strong mayor or manager model in which operational and administrative matters were streamlined under the direction of a single manager (chief executive officer). In those structures, department heads were expected and encouraged to work autonomously within the broad policy parameters articulated by the chief executive.

(c) Pluses and minuses of each—

It was noted that strong mayor systems do not guarantee effective performance, nor are jurisdictions which have strong mayor systems free from politics or political gamesmanship or the potential for clashes between executive and legislative demands; those still exist. The difference is that the governing framework (charter) vests the final responsibility for day-to-day administration in the chief executive (mayor), and departments have a clear line of accountability to and from the mayor. Many times, charters include specific prohibitions against administrative interference by City Council (e.g., Duluth city charter) which shields departments from intrusion, interference, and/or micromanagement by Council Members.

Absent the centralized authority of a chief executive and prohibitions against administrative interference, the Minneapolis structure enables elected officials to function as the equivalent of a department head—by issuing direct orders/instructions to department heads or their subordinates—or even to usurp directions given by the department heads, bypassing established policies, procedures, and protocols. This has a significant and negative impact on the operating culture of the City in that it devalues, demoralizes, and disincentivizes department heads and, worse, negatively impacts the City's ability to attract, hire, and retain the best professionals in various fields. This interference by Council Members also is in direct contradiction to the mayor-council structure under the city charter.

Another negative consequence of the diffuse operating structure in Minneapolis is that it also provides "cover" for individual department heads who may not be effective in their roles. If they can find favor with and align with one or more elected policymakers, they can get by in ways that would not be acceptable in other organizations. This tolerance for poor performance—especially by the organization's top leaders—sets a bad example and has trickle-down consequences.

These problems with the Minneapolis model make it more challenging to position the City competitively within the broader "industry." The City must be adaptable to the changing nature of work, regardless of sector, even

during—or especially during—challenging times, like the City has experienced in 2020. Minneapolis needs to be more resilient and adaptable in terms of attracting, developing, retaining the best workforce. The current form of government does not lend itself to these objectives.

An interesting comparative note here is that Hennepin County, Ramsey County, and St. Paul all have governance structures that feature a strong, centralized executive. None of these other jurisdictions have the same level of political conflict, the requisite level of “overhead,” and they are able to operate more effectively and efficiently in making decisions. None of these other jurisdictions receive the same level of negative media coverage either.

5. Do you, as a department head feel accountable to one or more “bosses”? To whom and why? Do you think a different structure would improve accountability?

Minneapolis has a long-established practice of performance evaluation, which has been primarily focused on the rank-and-file beneath the level of department head. There are formal policies and associated procedures in place. However, the practice for evaluating performance by department heads has shifted over the years. In past years this has involved outside facilitators to help policymakers fulfill these duties; other times the practice was a more informal tone with discussions between policymakers and department heads. Generally, each department head has been given performance feedback by a combination of the Mayor, the Council President, and the Chair of the Council Committee that oversees that department.

This highlights concern about the role the Mayor and Council share in terms of being the primary “employers” within the City’s formal organizational structure; that is, the Mayor and Council represent the City enterprise at the highest level, yet the lack of awareness and/or attention they have for this critical leadership responsibility can create deficits in terms of operations because they simply do not bring the levels of expertise requisite to that level of “corporate” responsibility. Political agendas can create conflict with legal requirements and professional demands, and these can have negative consequences to the enterprise. These challenges are further compounded with the overall lack of accountability that the City’s current structure can produce, and that can expose the City—as an employer—to higher levels of risk and liability.

The City of Minneapolis does not get the best results or service because the talent and expertise of its professional staff—one of its most important assets—are constrained by political priorities and by elected personalities. Elected officials may issue directives that dictate specific desired outcomes that do not allow for the consideration or inclusion of the professional perspectives, policy analyses, and solid work that is required for “good government,” that is effective, efficient government that anticipates and responds to community needs. Many times, elected policymakers expect the professional staff to function as mere scribes rather than professional leaders in their respective fields. Disagreements are perceived as personal attacks or an unwillingness to implement the priorities of the elected officials. This has a demoralizing impact on staff, from top down, and results in an organizational culture of fear where staff are afraid to offer their professional input if it might be in conflict with the goals of elected officials.

As professionals, most of the City’s department heads hold themselves accountable to certain professional and/or industry standards or codes, which is one level or kind of “performance evaluation.” This does not negate the need for ongoing professional performance evaluations. Department heads, in general, however, do not look to the Mayor and City Council for input in terms of professional development.

There is some confusion and misperceptions about organizational authority in terms of personnel matters that need to be addressed and could be clarified in terms of the existing structure established under the City Charter. Under the City Charter, there are essentially two categories of departments: charter departments and coordinator (management) departments. Charter departments include the ten departments which are appointed, collectively, by the Mayor and City Council. These departments—under the charter—are accountable to the Executive Committee. These include the City Assessor, City Attorney, City Coordinator, Civil Rights Director, Community Planning & Economic Development Director, Fire Chief, Health Commissioner, Police Chief, Public Works Director, and Regulatory Services Director. These department heads are appointed to serve two-year terms (except Police Chief is appointed to three-year term). The charter says that these individuals can only be appointed or removed with the consent of the Executive Committee, which *de facto* means that this independent committee is the supervisory “authority” within the enterprise for these ten departments. The other ten departments are appointed by and report to the City Coordinator and provide enterprise management and management-support functions, and include the 311, 911, City Communications, Convention Center, Emergency

Management, Finance & Property Services, Human Resources, Information Technology, Intergovernmental Relations, and Neighborhood & Community Relations departments.

6. What suggestions do you have for improving the mayor/council structure, as defined in the Charter?

Again, the most important issue appears to be how to structure the executive function within the enterprise. Clearly, charter change in this regard could clarify roles and responsibilities between Mayor and Council as separate and distinct executive and legislative “departments,” similar to what is found in federal and state governments. There is unanimity among those interviewed on that point, which is reinforced over the past year’s experiences with multiple crises and conflicts. Depending on how the executive function is structured, it would reveal a different set of patterns between the Mayor and Council which could, over time, drive to a different internal operating culture—one based on a shared agenda of clear goals, agreed timelines, and achievable outcomes. It is hoped that a clear distinction between those two major responsibilities—executive and legislative functions—could enable the individual players to focus on shared goals and priorities, rather than political gamesmanship. While healthy tension between legislative and executive functions can contribute to better overall policymaking and diverse community representation, the enterprise needs a stronger, streamlined, and clear line of accountability that would result from having the Mayor function as chief executive officer.

Whatever may ultimately be proposed as a possible charter amendment, it should not be subject to the vagaries or preferences of individual policymakers in office today. Any such amendment must provide a working framework that is not dependent on the individuals who occupy those offices. Over the past eight years, there has been an increasing polarization between the Mayor and Council, leading to departments and professional staff being at potential risk if they displease the individual elected officials.

Some further observations of the potential to transition to an “executive mayor” model focused on the need to differentiate, within the City’s “executive department,” between political and policy leadership of the Mayor and how to provide for professional staff leadership in the day-to-day administration. The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) recognizes this governance triangle between mayor-council-staff. Charter change could solidify the executive team appointed by and responsible to the Mayor by making the appointive terms of charter department heads run coterminous with the elective term of the Mayor. This would minimize the existing process of vetting nominees in a public forum that has become, over time, an opportunity for public flogging and humiliation of would-be department heads. While public scrutiny is appropriate, the current appointment/reappointment process has become a circus and it can be a disadvantage in attempting to recruit the best and brightest to serve in the City.

In fact, the current nomination, appointment, and reappointment processes under the city charter tend to encourage nominees and department heads to give in to inappropriate individual behaviors or interactions with Council Members, including moves to bypass formal operating structures and reporting relationships. The appointment/reappointment process forces nominees and department heads to lobby elected officials to get and keep their positions. Taken to extremes, this can result in direct and/or indirect threats from policymakers to an appointment (or reappointment) which could force staff into situations that might compromise professional codes, industry regulations, City policies, etc. Extending those terms for charter department heads to align with the elective term of the Mayor is almost universally recognized as a key to clarifying and strengthening reporting lines to a strong executive (and distinguishing the executive from the legislative). Again, accountability is important; however, the current appointment process for charter department heads does not address accountability as much as it does political favoritism, supporting and delivering on goals and priorities of elected officials (that may not be aligned with those of the City enterprise), etc. There is, however, a concern about transitioning from appointive terms to a pure “at-will” system in that the latter would inevitably politicize those staff leadership positions which could have a corresponding negative effect of reducing the professional caliber of individuals interested in those roles and could also result in more frequent turnover, lack of sufficient qualifications, etc. On the whole, some variation of a defined appointive term is preferred to a true “at-will” system for charter department heads.

Similarly, ICMA recognizes the organizational benefits of centralizing executive functions through a city manager, which provides a single point of coordination between the policy functions of Mayor and Council and the City’s operating departments. Having a professional administrator in that type of position can have a positive influence on the City’s capability as a preferred employer of choice, on the ability of the City to attract investment from the

private sector and business/development, to respond to the needs of an increasing and diversifying population, etc. All of this would improve the City's performance and its perceived performance (both internally and externally). In that regard, there is a need to strengthen the internal capacity to implement, monitor, and enforce enterprise policies, regulations, and procedures across all line departments, which is usually a primary function of a city manager. That position does not exist in the City's current structure but is functionally provided by the City Coordinator. In the current structure, enterprise management functions are the responsibility of the City Coordinator, but the City Coordinator has little enforcement powers on the other charter departments. Strengthening the executive function of the City government must necessarily also address this current shortcoming. Breaking down internal siloes between departments achieves greater efficiency, consistency, and a more effective overall structure.

Ensuring any future structure preserves and strengthens the role of professional staff to exercise direct oversight of the work of their respective departments should be given strong consideration. While a pure city manager model may not be the primary choice for Minneapolis, the benefits of professional administration cannot be ignored and a hybrid model should be explored (like that which is established in Duluth, which has a strong mayor-council-administrator model).

This professionalization of the administrative functions also needs to limit the ability of elected policymakers to make organizational changes too easily. In the past, Council Members have tended to create, transfer, develop, and support specific services or functions in departments they perceive to be supportive and responsive to their individual or collective agendas and priorities. That naturally leads to a sense of proprietary ownership over those services or functions (or the departments, divisions, or units in which such services and functions are placed), and that fuels the inappropriate micromanagement by elected policymakers previously noted. That level of direct interference in administration discourages trust and collaboration between policymakers and between departments. It also can have a detrimental effect on those services and functions over time—and on the City enterprise—as elected officials come and go and subsequent policymakers merge, mesh, move, and manipulate the organizational structure. Recognizing the need for adaptation, there also needs to be a certain amount of consistency and organizational “stickiness” so that municipal services, programs, and functions can be effectively and efficiently delivered notwithstanding changes in the offices of Mayor and Council. In general, the core government services and programs are distributed into the “line departments” with staff departments providing the needed management controls, and this approach also reduces intradepartmental conflict and competition for resources. Referring to comments related to inappropriate administrative interference in the operation of departments, a charter provision that strictly prohibits that level of involvement by Council Members in the administrative operation of departments is appropriate, modeled on examples found in other charters [e.g., City of Duluth – see Duluth City Charter, Chapter IV, Section 18].

While not necessarily a proper function of a charter change, there also should be some uniform level of mandatory training and orientation provided to newly-elected Council Members. The majority of those who run for public office do not come to their roles with significant prior experience in management and administration, and they are therefore not equipped to perform in that capacity. The City should seek to minimize the natural “weaknesses” of Council Members with respect to management and administration and to leverage their “strengths” within the confines of policymaking and constituent representation. Failure to define roles and responsibilities of Council Members has a more significant potential effect to negatively impact functions and services that are highly technical, detailed, and complex, and is the primary concern among professional staff. This could be the proper subject of a charter change directed at the City Council as an institution. To that end, it would be helpful for the charter to be very clear on what the role of the City Council—and of individual Council Members—is and what it is not. The charter can be amended in a way that structures the legislative department for its primary purposes: policymaking, government oversight, and constituent services. The Council should be appropriately resourced to perform its official functions, which would also minimize the temptation to interfere with the administration and to micromanage departments.

While the current structure does offer advantages in terms of allowing for the incorporation or inclusion of multiple perspectives in City policymaking, there is no current means of measuring that engagement to validate that it truly reflects the broad representation and diversity of all Minneapolis residents. Increasingly, it feels as if “multiple perspectives” really means the narrow, special interests of highly organized advocacy groups that are presented to the City in the form of “demands” and not as true “public participation” in policymaking. The goal for inclusive, broad community engagement and representation of the diverse communities that constitute the

City of Minneapolis is not necessarily achieved when the default is to the loudest demands expressed by a few highly organized and well-connected advocate groups that drive the political agenda. In truth, this approach has diminished broad participation, silences dissent, and minimized the inclusion of different perspectives, voices, etc.

There may be potential benefits to considering at-large representation on the City Council, perhaps modeled on the Park & Recreation District Board of Commissioners or the Minneapolis Public School Board of Directors, to avoid the more narrow and parochial approach created by election by wards. Either expanding the Council's membership to include some at-large members or transitioning some of the existing seats to at-large election so that the total number of Council Members remains at the current level. Also, in conjunction with the move to a stronger executive mayor model, perhaps it is worth investigating the option of moving to a part-time City Council that is strictly focused on legislative and policymaking functions.

Other structural issues raised by department heads include determining what is meant by "alignment." How could the charter be changed to build (or strengthen) structures that would encourage and support alignment? How would alignment be identified and measured? Also, consider who the current system supports or benefits, and the equity impact of how the existing structure works. Can we determine the potential negative impact of the current structure for women and BIPOC communities. Is the City's governance structure equitable, fair, and accessible to all communities, and what data supports those perspectives? Embedding equity and race equity into future governance structures will be important, particularly in a way that engages active participation from the community. Leadership design should not undo or undermine the work thus far and advances made in the City's race equity focus. Majority rule should not be an automatic default in this regard. The current organizational design sucks momentum away from work on race equity issues.