

City of Detroit
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

Janice M. Winfrey
City Clerk

Andre P. Gilbert II
Deputy City Clerk

To: Angela Whitefield-Calloway, City Council Member
From: Janice Winfrey, City Clerk
Andre Gilbert II, Deputy City Clerk
Date: March 14, 2023
Re: **2023-2024 City Clerk Budget Questions**

1. **QUESTION:** There is a bottleneck or delay in the process for when ordinances are passed and when they are updated into the City Code and made publicly accessible-
 - a. How long does it take for an ordinance, once it is passed, for the City Code to be updated? What is the cause of the delay?

RESPONSE: The answer is that it depends. The outline of the regular ordinance process is presented on the City Clerk's website. <https://detroitmi.gov/government/city-clerk/city-ordinances-enacted-and-codified-city-code>

For the past two years, the Clerk's office has concentrated on preparations for the codification of the supplements to the 2019 Detroit City Code. In reviewing ordinances for inclusion in the supplement, the Clerk's office discovered a number of issues with ordinances. As a result, the office determined to begin reviewing ordinances regularly before having them printed into loose leafs and uploaded onto the Municode website. This process is almost completely caught up to the 2023 ordinances. We are concurrently working on Supplement 3 of the 2019 Detroit City Code.

Once we finish our review, we anticipate that the time from when the City Council passes an ordinance until it is uploaded to the Municode website will be between 4-6 weeks. This is dependent on the length of the ordinance and whether there are any substantive or structural issues with the ordinance. For instance, the Clerk's office routinely receives zoning ordinances that run 100 pages. These ordinances take additional time for proofreading before the Legal News can print them.

- b. Is there a plan in place to possibly our current platform to close the gap? It would be of great service to the residents if we could show online our law-making process in real time.

RESPONSE: Once the City Council has completed its law-making process which is an open and transparent one, the City Clerk's duty is to publish and codify those ordinances. This is a process that the City Clerk engages in concert with The Legal News, which prints the ordinance and the Municode corporation which publishes and codifies the ordinance.

The Office of the City Clerk is always happy to respond to requests for copies of City ordinances that have not yet been posted on line after enactment or to copies of draft ordinances that have not yet been enacted. To further facilitate information to City Council and the public, we will have on our website a section named “Ordinances in Process”. This section will include copies of a proposed ordinance and when it ordinance is introduced, when the ordinance is passed and approved and when the ordinance becomes effective. It is hoped that this information will assist persons interested in particular ordinances and their status.

QUESTION: There is growing concern from the public that there is a lack of accessibility and transparency when it comes to public information

a. What is the Clerk’s office doing to make public information more accessible and the information finding process more user friendly?

RESPONSE: In the past, accessing public information meant contacting our office via phone or email or visiting in person. Now we’re proud to say that we’ve made great strides in making information more accessible and user-friendly. Our office worked with DoIT and Media Services to create a dedicated page on our website called ‘City Council Agendas and Document,’ which can be found easily on the City of Detroit’s homepage and each City Council Member’s page. This page features a calendar of all City Council meetings and provides access to meeting agendas, related documents, and time-stamped videos of City Council Sessions. We’re committed to continuing our efforts to improve accessibility and ease of use for all of our constituents seeking public information.

b. Our assumption should be that everyone trying to access public information is doing so for the first time and so having to navigate too deeply may deter the public from searching and finding published material.

RESPONSE: We understand that accessing public information for the first time can be challenging. This is why we’ve made it a priority to simplify navigation and make information more easily accessible. Our City Council Agendas and Documents page is designed with user-friendliness in mind, as well as our webpage, by reducing the number of clicks it takes to access commonly sought-after documents. We’ve ensured that this page is prominently featured on the City’s homepage, our home page, and each City Council Member page. Additionally, we’re working on improving access to other important documents, such as the City Code and ordinances. Our goal is to make public information as easily accessible as possible, so all of our constituents can stay informed and engaged.

CC: City Council Members and Staff