



## **Performance Audit Report**

### **CITY COUNCIL AND OFFICE OF CITY CLERK**

Report by the  
Office of City Controller

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July 2025

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CITY OF PITTSBURGH  
**OFFICE OF THE CITY CONTROLLER**  
Controller Rachael Heisler

July 2025

To the Honorable Mayor Ed Gainey and  
Honorable Members of Pittsburgh City Council:

The Office of the City Controller is pleased to present this performance audit of the City of Pittsburgh's **City Council and the Office of City Clerk**. The audit was conducted pursuant to the Controller's powers under Section 404(c) of the Pittsburgh Home Rule Charter. This audit examines City Council and the City Clerk's Sunshine Act Compliance; the Legistar software program, website and social media, and the reimbursable expenditures of City Councilmembers.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Pittsburgh's City Council is the legislative branch of City government and consists of nine elected members from each Council District. The power and duties of Council are contained in Article 3 of the Home Rule Charter, Article V of Pittsburgh's Code of Ordinances, the Rules of Council, and Pennsylvania's Sunshine Act. Council also approves appointments as provided by the Charter, regulates revenues and expenditures, and approves the final operating and capital budgets for the City.

City Council meetings that contain a quorum, or attendance of half or more of Councilmembers, generally fall under the State of Pennsylvania's Open Meetings Law, 65 Pa.C.S. §§ 701 – 716, also known as the Sunshine Act. As stated by the Office of Open Records, "the Sunshine Act requires agencies to deliberate and take official action on agency business in an open and public meeting. It requires that meetings have prior notice, and that the public can attend, participate, and comment before an agency takes that official action." There are multiple types of City Council meetings that do not follow the Sunshine Act, two of which are Executive Sessions and Executive Briefings. § 708 makes an exception for Executive Sessions, while Executive Briefings do not contain a quorum of Councilmembers.

Councilmembers are allowed to attend meetings via videoconferencing, and they retain full voting rights. Attendance by phone is also permissible; however, voting on a quasi-judicial matter is prohibited. It is impossible for a member of the public to gather attendance information about a Councilmember without going through each meeting's minutes.

The City Clerk's Office coordinates and schedules all City Council meetings and public hearings and is responsible for maintaining the official records for the City. It also provides constituent and legislative support and oversees, guides, tracks and records the entire legislative process from the introduction of proposed legislation to final approval and publication.

The auditors also examined City Council's reimbursable expenditures. City Councilmembers can be reimbursed by the City for a variety of expenses. Travel, education, and training expenses are reimbursed from the respective Councilmember's budget. Councilmembers can also be reimbursed for purchasing supplies and food for community events and meetings. These reimbursements need approval from the President of Council.

The auditors researched the Controller's Office OnBase database system and found that, from 2022 to the end of the first quarter of 2024, City Councilmembers were reimbursed \$15,266.31. The largest percentage of reimbursement was for travel and travel-related expenses to conferences and talks, which totaled \$12,574.80. The other \$2,691.51 were reimbursements for food/supplies for community meetings/events and for the office.

Auditors also performed a review of the usability of the City's software system, Legistar, City Council's website, and social media accounts. Legistar provides an extensive record of all legislative history, which allows increased transparency and improved internal research capabilities. Legistar allows not only minutes and agendas to be posted and searchable, but that each piece of legislation is sent to be approved by each appropriate party before the item is put on the agenda. Legistar is the City's public-facing webpage known as the Legislative Information Center (LIC). The LIC homepage aids users unfamiliar with how to retrieve data.

Auditors identified Finding 1 Usability of Legistar, Website and Social Media where improvements in 12 various components would benefit usage of Legistar, the website, and social media accounts. **Recommendation 1** addresses these improvements in eight specific areas. Finding 2 Executive Sessions and Briefings, auditors found three shortcomings of documentation. **Recommendation 2** suggests three specific areas for better documentation and recordkeeping. Finding 3 Reimbursable Expenses, the auditors found where a written policy and improved procedures will help documentation and increase transparency, see **Recommendation 3**.

Our findings and recommendations are discussed in detail beginning on page 36. We would like to thank both City Council and City Clerk staff for their cooperation and assistance during this audit.

Sincerely,



Rachael Heisler  
City Controller

## INTRODUCTION

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This performance audit of **City Council and the Office of City Clerk** is conducted pursuant to the City Controller's powers under section 404(c) of Pittsburgh's Home Rule Charter. This audit analyzes City Council and the City Clerk's Sunshine Act Compliance, the Legistar software program, website and social media, and the reimbursable expenditures of City Councilmembers.

This is the third performance audit conducted by the City Controller's Office of City Council and second audit of the City Clerk's Office. The 2008 performance audit examined Council staff salary accounts, pre-encumbrance of funds, City Council miscellaneous services accounts, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) unspecified local options, Council origination and staffing, Council use of credit cards, and the recommendation of the Act 47 Recovery Plan to merge City Council and the City Clerk's Offices. The 2014 performance audit examined professional services account invoices and documentation, City Council Neighborhood Needs program, City Council budget and payroll, and City Council meetings with Act 47 oversight representatives.

## OBJECTIVES

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1. Explain City Council and City Clerk's responsibilities, processes, and procedures;
2. Examine City Council and City Clerk's compliance with Pennsylvania's Sunshine Act;
3. Assess City Council's use of executive sessions and briefings;
4. Examine the usability of the City's software system and Legistar and review City Council's website and social media accounts;
5. And examine City Council's reimbursable expenditures.

## SCOPE

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The scope of this performance audit is the 2022 and 2023 Council Meetings; usage of executive sessions, briefings, and the Legislative Information Center (LIC); City Clerk's staff changes in 2022 and 2023; Ordinances passed from 2000 – 2022; and reimbursable expenditures made by City Councilmembers in 2022 – 2024.

## METHODOLOGY

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- All items of business brought, presented to and decided by Council in 2022 were reviewed.
- All materials related to meetings held by Council in 2022 were reviewed. All executive sessions and briefings from 2022 – 2023 were examined.
- Legistar software usage was examined in late 2023 and early 2024 for the year 2022. Granicus, the makers of Legistar, was contacted and information was obtained relating to possible improvements to the software and future plans.
- The auditors searched through Pittsburgh Post-Gazette archives for relevant public notices from the City Clerk.
- The auditors corresponded with the City Council Solicitor on the City’s interpretation of the Sunshine Act, the status of current court cases, and the legal requirements for City Council operations. The auditors also contacted the City’s Department of Law (Law) for a relevant current case status.
- The City of Pittsburgh’s Information & Performance (I&P) team were contacted about software issues and assistance was obtained.
- Auditors researched the city of Dallas, TX for rules for Council’s attendance. Other governing municipalities were researched for their handling of ordinance changes, including Allegheny County, Council of the District of Columbia and Dover, Delaware.
- Auditors researched OnBase database for 2022, 2023, and early 2024 reimbursable expenditures for each of the nine councilmembers.

## OVERVIEW

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### ***CITY COUNCIL***

City Council is the legislative arm of City government. The power and duties of Council is contained primarily in [Article 3](#) of the Home Rule Charter, Article V of City of Pittsburgh Code of Ordinances, and the [Rules of Council](#). City Council is comprised of nine members, each having won election from their respective district. Councilmembers serve four years starting the first Monday of January after their election. Terms of Councilmembers are staggered so that four are elected at the same time as the mayor.

The requirements for the various types of meetings held by City Council are found in City Code and the Rules of Council. There are seven different types of Council meetings:

1. *Regular Meetings* of Council are to be held on Tuesdays at 10:00 a.m. for at least fifty weeks during the calendar year.
2. *Standing Committee Meetings* are to be held on Wednesdays of each of the weeks during which Regular Meetings of Council are held or on such succeeding days as the committee may determine by majority vote of Council.
3. *Special Meetings* are a separate session of Council held at a time different from that of any Regular Meetings or Standing Committee meetings and convened only to consider business specified in the call of the meetings. The purpose of a Special Meeting is to deal with matters arising between Regular Meetings or Standing Committee meetings, that require action by Council before the next Regular Meeting or Standing Committee meeting.
4. *Post Agenda* meetings are information gathering sessions sponsored by City Council. Specific guests are invited, at the request of the Councilmember who called the meeting, to share their expertise with Council on a target subject.
5. *Public Hearings* are called to receive input from the public. They can be called by a valid petition, by City Council, or by statutory mandate.
6. *Executive Briefings* (or *Informational Sessions*) may take place with individuals or a group of Councilmembers, provided a quorum of Councilmembers are not present. Executive briefings are commonly called just *Briefings* in Council.
7. *Executive Sessions* are meetings from which the public is excluded, although the agency may admit those persons necessary to carry out the purpose of the meeting.

Council chooses a President of Council on the first Monday in January following a municipal election, and the President serves for the ensuing legislative term of Council. The powers of Council President include the following: presiding over all meetings of Council and referring all proposed legislation to the proper committee, appointing Councilmembers to committees and choosing the chairperson, scheduling of public hearings, and endorsing all rules adopted for the government of Council. A President pro tempore is appointed by Council President and presides over Council meetings when the President cannot. According to the Home Rule Charter, Council committees are comprised of at least three members who serve for the term of the Council President. All members of Council may attend and participate in committee meetings, but only committee members are permitted to vote.

Council legislates either by ordinance or resolution. Ordinances are general rules of lasting effect, and resolutions deal with more temporary issues and pertain to specific matters, such as authorization of contracts, salaries, appropriations and budget transfers. All ordinances and resolutions introduced shall be kept in a place accessible to the public at all reasonable times. The City has its ordinances available on its [ECode360](#) website. Every ordinance or resolution must contain only one main subject, include the date of its enactment, and be signed by the presiding officer of the meeting at which a final action is taken. Council shall not take final



action on any legislation until a minimum of seven days has elapsed from the date of its introduction, unless Council finds and declares that an urgent reason exists requiring earlier final action. Council shall give public notice of the introduction of legislation within twenty-four hours after it is introduced. Except for legislation introduced directly by the mayor, all legislation requires a Councilmember to sponsor it. The Chair of the appropriate Standing Committee is usually assigned as the introducing member.

All bills referred to the City Clerk from the mayor, City council, or a department of the City must have accompanying documentation as to purpose, history, and fiscal impact in a manner prescribed by Ordinance, the Council Budget Office, and the President of Council. If any legislation falls under the jurisdiction of multiple committees, the Clerk is allowed to use their best judgment as to which committee to assign.

The powers, duties, and protocols of City Council are contained primarily in Article 3 of the Home Rule Charter, as well as [City Code Article V: Legislative, Chapter 151: Council](#), and the [City of Pittsburgh Rules of Council](#). The primary outline of duties is contained in the Home Rule Charter [§310](#) and is included below:

“Council shall have the following additional powers:

- a. To employ or retain its own staff and consultants including a city clerk and an attorney qualified to practice law before the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, who may act as legal advisor to council, and may represent council as a body in legal proceedings. Council's attorney shall not represent the City as a municipal corporation in any legal proceeding;
- b. To conduct investigations in accordance with the provisions of this charter;
- c. To approve appointments as provided by this charter, except as otherwise mandated by law;
- d. To exercise the power of removal as provided by this charter;
- e. To override the veto of the mayor by a two-thirds vote of all the members;
- f. To call a meeting at any time between council and the mayor jointly to discuss legislation or the business of the City in general, and to compel the attendance of the mayor at a council hearing;
- g. To authorize the sale of city services outside the City so long as services to the City are not impaired;
- h. To fix, by resolution, the salary of all elected city officials, but no elected city official shall receive a salary increase that exceed the average percentage of increase in salaries and wages paid to all city employees as based on the previous year's salary. Further, the salary paid to elected city officeholders shall not be

diminished during their term of office;

- i. To exercise other powers conferred by this charter, by law or ordinance, consistent with the provisions of this charter.”

City Councilmembers face similar prohibitions as other City employees. City Councilmembers are not permitted to hold any office, position, or employment in any corporation holding or applying for franchises from the City. They also may not have a personal or private interest in any legislation proposed or pending before Council unless they disclose the fact to Council or refrain from voting or participating in discussion of the matter. They are also prohibited from holding any office, position or employment in the government of the United States, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the City of Pittsburgh or Allegheny County, except as an officer or member in the federal reserve, officer or member in the National Guard of Pennsylvania, or as a member of any authority.

### ***STANDING COMMITTEES***

Each councilperson is appointed by the President of Council to chair a standing committee. Current standing committees are:

- 1) Committee of Finance and Law
- 2) Committee of Public Safety and Wellness
- 3) Committee of Public Works and Infrastructure
- 4) Committee of Human Resources
- 5) Committee of Land Use and Economic Development
- 6) Committee of Recreation, Youth and Senior Services
- 7) Committee of Innovation, Performance, Asset Management, and Technology
- 8) Committee on Intergovernmental and Educational Affairs
- 9) Committee on Hearings and Policy.

Specific oversight of each committee is shown in Table I, taken from the January 2023 version of the Rules of Council, as shown on the following page.

<b>TABLE I</b> <b>Committees and Areas of Responsibility from Rules of Council, 2024</b>	
<b>Committee</b>	<b>Areas of Responsibility</b>
<b>Committee on Finance and Law</b>	Bond and Debt issuance; City Banking/Investment; Creation of Offices or Positions of any kind; Department of Finance; Enterprise Resource System; Equal Opportunity Review Commission; Ethics; Law Department; Multi-Year Capital Improvement Program; Office of Municipal and Budget (Operating & Capital Divisions); Pension Fiscal; Real Estate; Taxation; and Treasurer.
<b>Committee on Public Safety and Wellness</b>	Bureau of Animal Control; Bureau of Fire; Bureau of Police; Citizens Police Review Board; Department of Public Safety; Emergency Management Agency; Emergency Medical Services; Emergency Operations and Communications; Homeland Security.
<b>Committee on Public Works and Infrastructure</b>	Construction and maintenance of Public Works; Department of Mobility and Infrastructure; Department of Public Works, including Bureau of Administration, Bureau of Operations, Bureau of Environmental Services, and Bureau of Transportation and Engineering; Facilities Operation and Maintenance (not parks or recreation related); Forestry & Shade Tree Commission; Public Right-of-Way management; Public Right-of-Way maintenance; Streets Lighting.
<b>Committee on Human Resources</b>	Benefits; Department of Personnel and Civil Service; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; Human Relations Commission; Job Training Partnership Act/Pittsburgh Partnership/Workforce Investment Act; Office of Municipal Investigation; Payroll Administration/System; Pension Benefits Administration; Personnel (inclusive of salaries and employment numbers).
<b>Committee on Land Use and Economic Development</b>	Art Commission; Community Development Block Grants; Conditional Use Permits; Department of Community Affairs funding; Department of Community and Economic Development funding; Department of City Planning; Department of Permits, Licenses, and Inspections; Mapping and GIS; Historic Review Commission; Market Based Revenue Opportunities; Neighborhood Initiatives; Riverfront Development; Small Business Initiatives; Transportation Planning; Zoning; Sustainability Initiatives.
<b>Committee on Recreation, Youth and Senior Services</b>	Department of Parks and Recreation; Greenways; Libraries; Park Programming; Recreation Facilities Maintenance; Senior Centers and Programming; Special Events; Trails; Youth Policy.
<b>Committee of Innovation, Performance, Asset Management, and Technology</b>	311 Response Center; Cable Bureau; City Asset Inventory & Management; Department of Innovation & Performance; Facilities Inventory and Management; Fleet Maintenance, Repair and Alteration; Purchasing and Contracts; Information Technology; Data collection and analysis; Operational Performance Targets.
<b>Committee on Intergovernmental and Educational Affairs</b>	Allegheny Regional Asset District; Authorities-Agreements; County; Congress of Neighboring Communities; Federal; Local governmental cooperation agreements; Quasi-governmental cooperation agreements; Liquor Licenses; Pennsylvania Municipal League; Port of Pittsburgh, School Boards; State; Tourism- Visit Pittsburgh
<b>Committee on Hearings</b>	Held by the President of Council Appointments and Reappointments; Executive Sessions; Post Agenda Meetings; Public Hearings; Public Meetings; Special Committees; Special Meetings

Source: Rules of Council, 2023

## ***CITY CLERK***

A City Clerk serves two main functions: providing a direct link between citizens and their government and serving as an historian for the recorded history of a city and its people. As such, the City Clerk's Office provides City Council with centralized staff support. Both the City Clerk and Assistant City Clerk positions are voted on by Council every three years, and these individuals are responsible for all operational matters in relation to City Council.

The primary responsibilities of the City Clerk's Office are found in [City Code Article V: Legislative, Chapter 153: City Clerk](#). Chiefly, these responsibilities include attendance at all meetings and the keeping of accurate minutes; custody, transmitting, recording and filing of all papers related to Council business; maintaining a calendar control system with all Council and commission meetings and documentation thereof; and the keeping of the Municipal Record. The City Clerk's Office also includes the City Council Budget Office. This office analyzes all legislation with respect to financial implications, prepares report and summaries for Councilmembers, and participates in the finalization of annual operating, capital and CDBG budgets.

In 2018, City Code was amended to create the Records Management Division, under the auspices of the City Clerk's Office. Further information can be found [here](#). Primarily tasked with developing procedures, standards, and techniques in relation to records and archive management, this division also established a historical archives repository, found [here](#).

The City Clerk's Office is referred to as "Council as a Body" in the 2023 operating budget (not as City Clerk's Office). The City Clerk's Office underwent an additional expansion, when staffing was increased from 14 full-time positions in 2022 to 20 in 2023, making two part-time positions full-time and adding four more. The 2023 operating budget also separated these positions into the following three main divisions: Clerk Division, Records Division, and City Council Budget Division. Three additional divisions were created in 2023: Public Engagement Division, Health Division, and Solicitor Division. This increased the salary budget from \$807,293 in 2021 to \$1,209,199 (subtracting the \$71,340 vacancy allowance) in 2022.

## ***SUNSHINE ACT***

The operation of a municipal government is subject to Pennsylvania laws, in particular [Title 65](#) Chapter 7 of Pennsylvania's Consolidated Statutes, referred to as the "Sunshine Act." Under the Sunshine Act, "the right of the public to be present at all meetings of agencies and to witness the deliberation, policy formulation and decision making of agencies is vital to the enhancement and proper functioning of the democratic process and that secrecy in public affairs undermines the faith of the public in government and the public's effectiveness in fulfilling its role in a democratic society."

Requirements around public notice, meeting agendas, recording of votes, keeping of minutes and exemptions to open meetings are also included within the Sunshine Act. The Sunshine Act requires that public agencies provide proper public notice and have meeting

agendas available for public use. It is also required that accurate meeting minutes be kept that include the results of votes.

The auditors were told that City Councilmembers were offered a free training course by the state's Office of Open Records in 2022 for instructions on the Sunshine Act requirements. However, the Clerk's Office did not have a record of which Councilmembers attended the course.

### ***Public Notice***

The Sunshine Act requires City Council to provide notice at least three days in advance of the first regular meeting of each calendar year, as well as notice for the schedule of its remaining regular meetings. An agency shall give notice of each special meeting or each rescheduled regular or special meeting at least 24 hours in advance. Notice is not required in the case of an emergency meeting or a conference. The Sunshine Act also requires that the agency holding a meeting shall supply, upon request, copies of the notice to any newspaper of general circulation, radio, or television stations which cover the area.

According to the City Clerk, notice of City Council meetings are posted on City Council's [homepage](#), on the LIC's [calendar](#), [Instagram](#) (under the account name cityclerk\_pgh), [Facebook](#) (under the account name CityClerkPGH), [Twitter/X](#) (under the account name of @CityClerk\_Pgh), and displayed in the lobby near the elevators in the City-County building. Most meetings are announced a week in advance with the notable exception of budget meetings, which are scheduled further in advance.

Per City Ordinance §319, City Council is also required to advertise meetings in local newspapers 10 days before the public hearing for the following types of legislation: salary, appropriation, budget matter, land use control, new taxes, increased taxes, creation of an authority, creation of a quasi-public agency, increase in the amount making a sealed bid procedure unnecessary on contracts, and an election of all Councilmembers at large or by district.

City Clerk staff advertises the City Council's meeting times for the upcoming year in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's* classified section near the end of the previous year. On December 30, 2021, City Council posted the listing shown in Figure 1 on the following page as the public notice for all regular and standing meetings for the 2022 year.

**Figure 1**  
**Public Notice for the 2022**  
**Pittsburgh City Council Meeting Schedule**

**2022**  
**CITY COUNCIL**  
**MEETING SCHEDULE**  
Notice is given that Council  
Mtgs. will commence in a  
hybrid format at 10:00 AM  
Tuesdays for Regular  
meetings, and at 10:00 AM  
Wednesdays for Standing  
Committees meetings.  
Meetings are subject to  
change via advertisement.  
Participants are encour-  
aged to join virtually until  
further notice.  
Brenda F. Free, City Clerk,  
MMC

Source: Pittsburgh Post-Gazette December 30, 2021

Per §322 of City Ordinance, any new legislation passed should be announced via publication in a newspaper circulating the City within 30 days of passing, and the announcement should include the title or general summary of each ordinance, conditional use, and historic preservation resolution is required to be published. These legal notices are generally published on Thursdays in the Classified section of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* and look like Figure 2 on the following page.

**Figure 2**  
**2022**

**Public Notice for Ordinance 17**

THE FOLLOWING  
ORDINANCE WAS  
APPROVED BY THE MAYOR  
6-30-22  
No 17 Amend Pgh Code, Title  
9, Zoning Code, Article II, Base  
Zoning Districts; Article V, Use  
Regulations, Ch 911, Primary  
Uses, Section 911.02, Use  
Table; & Section 911.04, Use  
Standards; Article VI  
Development Standards, Ch  
915, Ch 915.04, Environmental  
Performance Standard, & Ch  
919, Signs; & Ch 922  
Development Review  
Procedures, 922.15, create  
new Urban Center Mixed Use  
Zoning Districts & related  
zoning regulations  
BRENDA F. FREE  
City Clerk

Source: Pittsburgh Post-Gazette July 21, 2022

## ***STREAMING PLATFORMS***

City Council meetings are streamed on Legistar for the general public. Council sessions are also streamed on I&P's [YouTube page](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and broadcast on the City's local television channel, with the goal of increasing the visibility of City Council sessions. The City also has an Instagram account but cannot stream on that platform due to a lack of followers. Once the streams are completed, they remain accessible for public viewing on both Legistar and the City's YouTube channels.

## ***PUBLIC PARTICIPATION***

Citizens are allowed to voice their opinions, suggestions or concerns in front of Council during regular meetings, standing committee meetings, public hearings, and special meetings. Citizens are encouraged to enter their information on the City Council's webpage or to call the City Clerk's Office at (412) 255-2138 to register to make a public comment.

Speaker signup requires potential public speakers to give details of the hearing the citizen will be attending, their full name, address, phone number, email, and speaker type. Speaker type is based on whether they are in favor of what the Council is addressing, opposed, or just commenting on it.

When making a public comment, citizens are asked to state their name and neighborhood before starting. Citizens are required to have their response not breach the order and decorum of the chamber through yelling, vulgarity, threats, or profanity. Citizens are also required to finish their statements within three minutes so that the maximum number of public speakers are able to speak at any given meeting. If any time is remaining in a public hearing, unregistered speakers can be allocated one minute of time, provided the list of registered speakers has been exhausted. Written statements can be emailed to [cityclerksoffice@pittsburghpa.gov](mailto:cityclerksoffice@pittsburghpa.gov).

Streams for City Council meetings do not allow for online comments or questions to deter negative, disruptive comments from people with no connection to the City of Pittsburgh. While not having an online-commenting system does negate the impact of those unaffiliated people, it also limits the ability of residents to provide their input for City Council meetings in the moment.

## ***AGENDA AND MEETING MINUTES***

Each non-exempted meeting requires the agenda to be posted in advance as well as be available to the public at the meeting according to §709(c)(1) of the Sunshine Act. Pittsburgh City Council does give out physical copies of the meeting agenda on a stand towards the front of the Council Chambers, as shown in Exhibit I in the appendix.

Non-exempted meetings are also required by Sunshine Act §706 to have written minutes kept that include all of the following: the date, time, place of the meeting, names of members present, substance of all official actions, record by individuals of the roll call votes taken, the names of all citizens who appeared officially, and the subject of their testimony.

## ***EXECUTIVE SESSIONS***

As previously mentioned, executive sessions are exempted from the Sunshine Act. The Sunshine Act outlines the reasons that City Council is permitted to hold executive sessions as follows:

- 1) To discuss any matter involving the employment, appointment, termination of employment, terms and conditions of employment, evaluation of performance, promotion or disciplining of any specific prospective public officer or employee or current public officer or employee employed or appointed by the Council, or former public officer or employee, provided, however, that the individual employees or appointees whose rights could be adversely affected may request, in writing, that the matter or matters be discussed at an open meeting. The Council's decision to discuss such matters in Executive Session shall not serve to adversely affect the due process rights granted by law, including those granted by State law. The provisions of this paragraph shall not apply to any meeting involving the appointment or selection of any person to fill a vacancy in any elected office.



- 2) To hold information, strategy, and negotiation sessions related to the negotiation or arbitration of a collective bargaining agreement or, in the absence of a collective bargaining unit, related to labor relations and arbitration.
- 3) To consider the purchase or lease of real property up to the time an option to purchase or lease the real property is obtained or up to the time an agreement to purchase or lease such property is obtained if the agreement is obtained directly without an option.
- 4) To consult with its attorney or other professional advisor regarding information or strategy in connection with litigation or with issues on which identifiable complaints are expected to be filed.
- 5) To review and discuss Council business which, if conducted in public, would violate a lawful privilege or lead to the disclosure of information or confidentiality protected by law, including matters related to the initiation and conduct of investigations of possible or certain violations of the law and quasi-judicial deliberations.

Exhibit A in the appendix shows that Pittsburgh's City Council held 29 executive sessions in 2022. This represented a 34% increase from the 19 executive sessions that were held in 2021, though the increase can be explained by the high number of exceptional events that happened in Pittsburgh in 2022. Beyond more common executive sessions for legal billing, executive sessions were held in 2022 regarding the Wilksburg annexation, the Purdue Pharma opioid litigation, the Fern Hollow Bridge collapse, and the legal ramifications of potential firearms legislation. These all required legal advice to be presented to Council and meet the criteria for executive sessions. However, the auditors found some records were missing on Legistar regarding some sessions.

City Council held 24 executive sessions in 2023, representing a decrease of 17% from 2022.

## ***LEGAL CHALLENGE***

The February 5, 2022, executive session was challenged by a City of Pittsburgh resident (plaintiff) as a violation of the Sunshine Act in the Allegheny Court of Common Pleas. The plaintiff claimed that the City Council executive session dealt with budget changes, not personnel issues, and that budget changes were not covered under the Sunshine Act as a valid reason for an executive session. The City Law Department (defendant) argued that the discussions dealt with terms and conditions of employment and a personnel issue. The case has been pending with ruling dismissing a portion of the complaint, including the allegation of a violation of the Sunshine Act. An appellate court dismissed the prosecution's appeal of the original ruling, and the plaintiff has not filed anything in over a year, as of March 2024.

## ***EXECUTIVE BRIEFINGS***

In accordance with the Rules of Council Chapter III, Section 1, Subsection G, Pittsburgh City Councilmembers are able to hold executive briefings, commonly known as briefings, as

long as a quorum (i.e., a majority of Councilmembers) is not present at any given briefing. A quorum in Pittsburgh City Council’s case is five Councilmembers. As long as a quorum is not present, briefings are not subject to the Sunshine Act. To facilitate this, most briefings are held in two separate sessions, neither containing a quorum of members.

While the intention of briefings is to inform Councilmembers on the details of certain topics, especially topics that may contain privileged legal information, they can also be used to discuss policy and what councilmembers plan to vote. This stands in stark contrast to conferences, which allow a quorum to be present for educational meetings but prohibits all deliberations.

Since the end of 2022, Briefings have been searchable on the City of Pittsburgh Legistar page, but only scant details are available from the website. These briefings do not document who attends, no minutes are maintained of what is discussed, and no public record is available of the content of deliberations that occurred. Only the time, location, and subject of the briefing are posted to the Legistar page. The Sunshine Act exists to ensure right of the public to be present for meeting and to be able to witness government deliberations and policy formulation.

In 2022, Pittsburgh City Council held 15 briefings about a wide range of topics, from Allegheny County Sanitation Authority (ALCOSAN) and the Pittsburgh Regional Transit (PRT) to the Tri-party Cooperation agreement between the City of Pittsburgh, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), and the Pittsburgh Land Bank. In 2023, Pittsburgh City Council held 27 briefings, which is an 80% increase in the number of briefings compared to 2022.

Table II provides a list of all 42 briefings held between 2022 – 2023, and auditors were unable to locate the first 14 briefings in Legistar. These missing details are indicated by “N” in the Legistar column.

<b>TABLE II</b> <b>Pittsburgh City Council Briefings</b> <b>2022 - 2023</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Legistar</b>	<b>Details</b>
1/26/2022	N	ALCOSAN
2/15/2022	N	PWSA rate increases and customer assistance program
4/12/2022	N	PLI's proposed license simplification
6/2/2022	N	PRT

Table II Cont'd

6/14/2022	N	Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership; Downtown and the partnerships that are underway and needed to support the recovery
6/29/2022	N	Updates from the proposed annexation of Wilkinsburg Committee Members
7/6/2022	N	PLI new software that they will be launching July 2022. The software is called Agency Counter, which will replace CivicCentral, formerly known as Buildingeye
7/12/2022	N	Bill 2022-0270, Ordinance supplementing the Pittsburgh Code, Title 7: Business Licensing, by creating a new Chapter 768: Short Term Rentals
9/27/2022	N	Homelessness in the City of Pittsburgh
9/29/2022	N	New Base Zoning Districts and Other Zoning Amendments as it relates to Council Bill 2022-0592
11/1/2022	N	Briefing on Mayor's preliminary 2023 budget
11/3/2022	N	Briefing on Mayor's preliminary 2023 budget
11/3/2022	N	New Base Zoning Districts and Other Zoning Amendments as it relates to Council Bill 2022-0592
12/13/2022	N	Bureau of Police Headquarters as it relates to Council Bill 2022-1017
12/13/2022	Y	Tri-Party Cooperation Agreement
1/9/2023	Y	Medical Debt: entering into an Agreement or Agreements with a vendor chosen through the City bid process for the purpose of purchasing and discharging eligible health care debt owed by Pittsburghers
1/10/2023	Y	Bond: authorize and direct the incurring of Non-Electoral Debt through the issuance of a series of General Obligation Bonds of the City of Pittsburgh
1/25/2023	Y	\$1,000,000 available in the Operating budget for grants (no legislation)
2/28/2023	Y	Bill 1214 CNG legislation: amending Resolution 124 of 2020, which authorized an Agreement for professional services relating to the leasing and maintenance of a mobile CNG fueling station
3/28/2023	Y	PWSA Stormwater Strategic Plan (no legislation)
3/30/2023	Y	Briefing - Rental Registry
4/25/2023	Y	Bill 376 Tri-Party Cooperation Agreement: Resolution amending Resolution Number 661 of 2017
6/6/2023	Y	Briefing - Capital Budget
6/20/2023	Y	Bill 2023-1612 Cooperation Agreement w/ URA: resolution to enter into a Cooperation Agreement or Agreements for the City to provide annual contributions to support a 2023 issuance for affordable housing
6/29/2023	Y	Briefing - Office of Equal Protection

Table II Cont'd

7/10/2023	Y	Bill 2023-1686 Food Policy: use plan for the \$3 million Food Justice Funds as allocated in the City's American Rescue Plan, pursuant to Resolution No. 762 of 2022.
7/18/2023	Y	URA Legislation Impacting Council Districts: Cooperation Agreement or Agreements with the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh for the administration of certain projects and programs
7/24/2023	Y	Verizon Franchise Agreement: enter into a cable franchise agreement with Verizon Pennsylvania LLC ("Verizon") at no cost to the City.
8/29/2023	Y	Park Legislation
9/12/2023	Y	Comprehensive Plan (Planning)
9/14/2023	Y	Bill 2022-0270: Ordinance amending the Pittsburgh Code of Ordinances, Title Seven: Business Licensing, Article X: Rental of Residential Housing
9/26/2023	Y	PLI International Property Maintenance Code ("IPMC") updates
9/28/2023	Y	Deer Culling Program
10/3/2023	Y	PWSA's new Pilot Private Service Line Leak Repair and Expanded Conservation Program
10/5/2023	Y	Bill 2023-1845 Deer Management Program: Ordinance amending the Pittsburgh Code of Ordinances, Title Four: Public Places and Property and Title Six: Conduct
10/10/2023	Y	PPS Strategic Plan
10/16/2023	Y	Stop The Violence Grant
10/19/2023	Y	Bill 2023-1979 Smart Loading Zones Program: Ordinance amending the Pittsburgh Code, Title Five: Traffic, Article VII: Parking, Chapter 541: General Parking Regulations
11/17/2023	Y	ALCOSAN
11/21/2023	Y	Bill 2023-1866 and 2023-1867 Residential Real Estate Wholesalers: Ordinances amending Title Six: Conduct, Article I: Regulated Rights and Actions and Article V: Discrimination
12/1/2023	Y	Bills 2023-1866 & 2023-1867: Ordinances amending Title Six: Conduct, Article I: Regulated Rights and Actions and Article V: Discrimination
12/4/2023	Y	Briefing - Overall Budget

Source: Legistar and the Pittsburgh City Council Clerks

All of the 2023 briefings' details and dates can be found on Legistar, but only one of the 15 briefings' details and dates for 2022 are available on Legistar. The following briefing details and dates for 2022 in Table III on the following page are not available on the Legistar site.

<b>TABLE III</b> <b>Pittsburgh City Council Briefings</b> <b>2022</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Legistar</b>	<b>Details</b>
1/26/2022	N	ALCOSAN
2/15/2022	N	PWSA rate increases and customer assistance program
4/12/2022	N	PLI's proposed license simplification
6/2/2022	N	PRT
6/14/2022	N	Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership; Downtown and the partnerships that are underway and needed to support the recovery
6/29/2022	N	Updates from the proposed annexation of Wilkinsburg Committee Members
7/6/2022	N	PLI new software that they will be launching July 2022. The software is called agency counter, which will replace Civicentral, formerly known as Buildingeye
7/12/2022	N	Bill 2022-0270, ordinance supplementing the Pittsburgh code, Title 7: Business Licensing, by creating a new Chapter 768: Short Term Rentals
9/27/2022	N	Homelessness in the City of Pittsburgh
9/29/2022	N	New Base Zoning Districts and Other Zoning Amendments as it relates to Council Bill 2022-0592
11/1/2022	N	Briefing on Mayor's preliminary 2023 budget
11/3/2022	N	Briefing on Mayor's preliminary 2023 budget
11/3/2022	N	New Base Zoning Districts and Other Zoning Amendments as it relates to Council Bill 2022-0592
12/13/2022	N	Bureau of Police Headquarters as it relates to Council Bill 2022-1017
12/13/2022	N	Tri-Party Cooperation Agreement

Source: Pittsburgh City Council Clerks

## ***LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION CENTER***

The legal requirements of the Sunshine Act as it relates to meeting agendas and minutes must be met by any governmental entity. Smaller governmental bodies can accomplish this in-house, since there are fewer business matters to discuss. Larger governmental bodies must seek out specialist software to meet these requirements. The City of Pittsburgh contracted with a company named Daystar in 2000. Daystar was acquired by Granicus, the company who holds the contract with the City to this day. Granicus offers many different software packages for governmental entities, including website and content management services, digital communications strategy services, public meeting and records management. According to Granicus, they hold contracts with 6,000 local governments including 48 of 50 of the largest cities. It should also be noted that more locally, Granicus' Legistar software is used by Allegheny County and the cities of Philadelphia and Allentown.

The City's contract with Granicus includes several facets beyond the simple posting of agendas and minutes. The primary software in the package is called Legistar. Legistar is described by Granicus as providing a "comprehensive legislative history for increased transparency and improved internal research capabilities" This means that not only are minutes and agendas posted and searchable, but that each piece of legislation is sent to be approved by each appropriate party before the item is put on the agenda. Legistar is the public-facing webpage we are familiar with as the LIC.

There are other pieces of software within the Legistar system supplied by Granicus that automates the meeting minutes as they happen, as well as provides the City's Legistar administrator with the ability to bookmark each order of business. If the user is interested in a specific piece of legislation, they can be taken directly to the start of the video recorded discussion. The costs of all LIC software in 2022 was \$59,484.20. Since 2017, the annual increases have been modest, averaging 2% a year. In 2021, the City added a module to host information about Boards, Authorities & Commissions.

More recently, the City signed a master services agreement with Granicus to provide a content management system, including "a better website, an expansion of forms and improved outreach capabilities through the use of a strategic partnership to help design a holistic approach to digital engagement and services, the ability to reach what content is resonating with its audiences, and staff empowerment to start optimizing based on that understanding." A single payment of \$283,995 is due upon Granicus' completion of the project. The new website was debuted on October 22, 2024.

## ***OVERALL END USER EXPERIENCE WITH LEGISTAR***

Legistar enables the City Clerk's Office staff to reliably provide quick and complete materials to the public, mostly in the form of agendas, legislation and attachments in support of legislation. However, when the user wants to view a particular agenda, legislation or attachment, instead of the link opening normally or opening in a new tab, the user is forced to download an Adobe Acrobat file (PDF) and only open it once it has been downloaded. This process is a hinderance to users who might not know if they should or should not download the file, how to

open the file, as well as navigating back to the webpage from the PDF reader window. It also leads to the user having many files without descriptive names in the designated download folder. This issue also occurs with mobile devices.

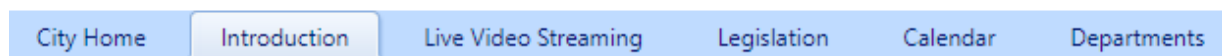
## ***LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION CENTER HOMEPAGE***

As stated on the LIC's homepage, "City Council takes pride in its open form of government and is pleased to provide state-of-the-art technology to assist the public in tracking and retrieving legislation." Once the user launches into the next page, tabs are visible denoting Live Video Streaming, Legislation and Calendar.

The true value of any webpage, but especially a homepage, is to anticipate the user's need for further information and posting that information or a link to that information in an easy-to-find place. The City's LIC webpage has been listed as 'under construction' during the preparation of this audit. It includes a link to the Municipal Record Online website. The Municipal Record is an annual compilation of the proceedings of Pittsburgh City Council. The Municipal Record was first published in 1868 and the Clerk's Office digitized the Municipal Record up until 1999, and legislative information is stored in the LIC thereafter.

The LIC homepage provides assistance to a user unfamiliar with how to retrieve data using the two systems. It is hoped once the homepage is fully constructed that the formatting more clearly delineates how to operate both data systems. After reviewing other cities' LICs, there are two recommendations to improve Pittsburgh's LIC that we would like the Clerk's Office to consider: the additions of both a map and the Rules of Council. These could be located in the vertical tabular menu on the homepage, seen in the figure below as it presently stands. Figure 3 shows the City's LIC Tabular Menu.

**Figure 3**  
City of Pittsburgh's LIC Tabular Menu



Source: Pittsburgh's Legislative Information Center

## ***MAPS***

City Council's district and ward maps are already located within the City Council portion of the City's website. However, this map is a static map that users who need more information would be unable to interact with. Having easily understandable maps available is important to a constituent or other interested person to be able to locate their representative and also verify their district's boundaries have not been changed during a reapportionment process. Reapportionment is governed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Constitution which states that within a year following the Federal decennial census being reported, the governing party of any municipality must have their boundaries redrawn so that the legislative districts are compact and continuous and as nearly equal in population as possible.

## ***RULES OF COUNCIL***

As previously discussed, the City of Pittsburgh's Rules of Council plays a large role in the conduct of the legislative process and how Council governs itself. The Rules of Council defines the organization of Council, rules related to different types of meetings and public participation, roles of different committees, procedures for the conduct of meetings, rules surrounding Council expenditures and payment of invoices, and specific guidelines for certain duties of Council, such as liquor license transfers. Every five years, Council is tasked with the review of the Rules of Council and amending as necessary. Further, a change to these Rules at any time takes a majority vote.

Amendments to Rules of Council occurred in 2022 under [2022-0901](#), updating them to include mainly changes to participation that happened during the pandemic, and updates to reflect changes in the Sunshine Act. Changes made in 2022 were passed in 2023. Some of the more significant changes are listed below:

- An addition of the role of the Parliamentarian: The City Solicitor, or their designee, or the Solicitor to City Council is to serve as Parliamentarian to Council to provide advice and compliance assistance with Robert's Rules of Order. Robert's Rules of Order is a set of procedures designed to facilitate orderly meetings and efficient meetings with strict procedures around meeting structure, motions, voting, and quorums. This role does not extend beyond Robert's Rules of Order and all other legal questions are to be directed to the City Solicitor or the Solicitor to City Council for an opinion on the record or in writing.
- Previously, Councilpersons were allowed to participate in meetings via telephone except if voting on a quasi-judicial matter. This rule still stands; however, Councilpersons can participate in all meetings via videoconferencing.
- Public commenters now must state their name and neighborhood and are expected to deliver their comments in such manner as to not breach the order and decorum of City Council. Public comments cannot include threats, vulgarity, or incitements to lawless action. The chair is responsible for maintaining order in accordance with applicable law and Robert's Rules of Order.
- Renaming of some committees.
- Regular and Standing meeting order of business changes.
- Protocol for legislation sent from Mayor's Office to City Council.
- Protocol for quasi-judicial proceedings (acting on a matter subject to Local Agency Law).
- If an expenditure raises concerns, the City Solicitor or the Solicitor to City Council shall issue a written opinion before a Councilmember commits to making the expenditure.



- Departmental invoices threshold was raised from \$3,000 to \$5,000.

On the City's LIC, Council calendars are listed from 2001 and legislation from 2000. Meeting details are listed on the calendar for the years 2001-2005, which include a brief description of the item of business and a pop-up window listing Councilmembers' votes on the items. It was not until 2005 that the minutes of the meeting as well as an agenda were posted for all meetings. The advantage to having all business and voting information in one file per meeting is obvious. Regular Council meetings were recorded, and videos are posted on the LIC starting in 2011, except for 2012; and all other Council meetings, including standing committee meetings are recorded and posted from 2015 to the present day.

For the audit scope year of 2022, the auditors reviewed all meeting minutes, and all pieces of business brought before Council. Regular meetings of Council are required by the Rules of Council to be held at least 50 weeks per year, with Standing meetings being held on all weeks where a regular meeting occurred. On occasion, City Council will hold multiple regular meetings in the same week, which will still only require one standing committee meeting.

Table IV shows the number and types of the various meetings held by City Council in 2022.

<b>TABLE IV</b>	
<b>Number and Types of Meetings Held by City Council, 2022</b>	
<b>#</b>	<b>Type</b>
52	Regular Meeting
47	Standing Committee
52	Committee on Hearings
22	Reapportionment Advisory Committee
5	Post Agenda
1	Briefing
29	Executive Sessions
<b>208</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>

Data Source: City of Pittsburgh Legislative Information Center

## ***COUNCIL MEETING ATTENDANCE***

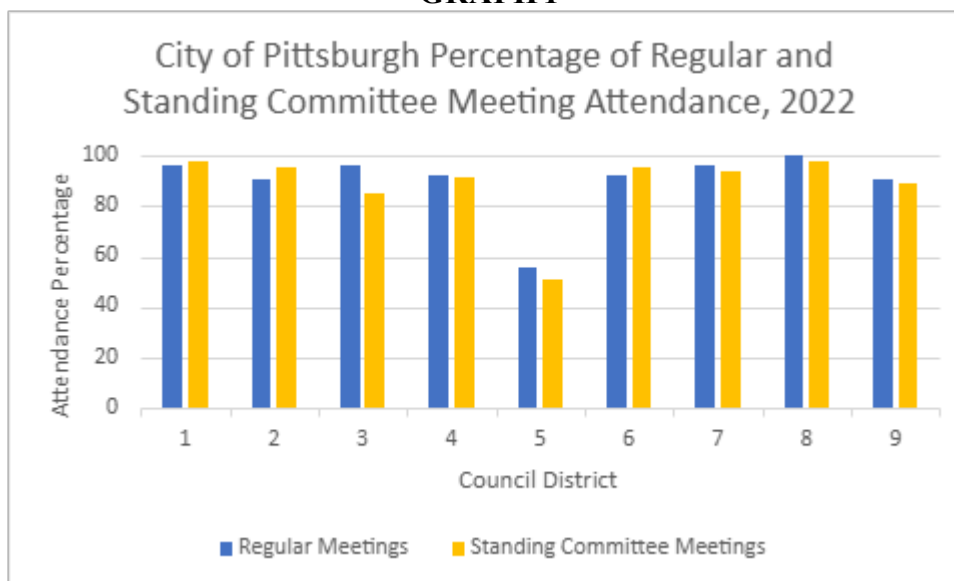
Councilmembers do not have the authority to act or make decisions as individuals. They are members of an elected body that makes decisions through a formal meeting process. Therefore, it makes it imperative for Councilmembers to attend meetings. Councilmembers are required to attend regular, standing or duly called special meetings of Council.

Councilmembers are allowed to attend via videoconferencing, and they retain full voting rights. Attendance by phone is also permissible, however, voting on a quasi-judicial matter is prohibited. A quorum is required to have a meeting; a quorum in this case being a majority of members in attendance. Since 1992, Pennsylvania has allowed members to participate via telephone or video conferencing. *Babac v. Penn. Milk Marketing Bd.* 613 A.2d 551 further reads “[a] quorum of members can consist of members not physically present at the meeting but who nonetheless participate in the meeting and ... such quorum can take official action, provided that, the absent members are able to hear the comments of and speak to all those present at the meeting and all those present at the meeting are able to hear the comments of and speak to such absent members contemporaneously.” Additionally, any Councilmember absent at any Regular, Standing Committee or duly called Special Meeting of Council shall be fined a sum of twenty dollars (\$20.00), unless excused by the Council for sickness or other unavoidable causes. Any fine is deducted from the salary of the Councilmember.

City Councilmembers are considered full-time elected officials of the City of Pittsburgh and not only attend meetings as above, but also frequently meet with the community in the evenings and attend events on the weekend. It is impossible for a member of the public to gather attendance information about a Councilmember without going through each meeting’s minutes. The inhouse Legistar desktop application, available only internally, does offer the user the ability to get this information per Council person. Some municipal clerks allow the public to access meeting attendance. In [Dallas](#), Councilmembers are required to attend at least 50% of the meeting to be considered present, and the councilmember must be present for at least a total of 90% of all assigned meetings. Dallas also allows the public to view all meetings, attendance at meetings, time spent out of the room both missed and excused, and an attendance forecast showing the end of the year attendance percentage if all remaining meetings are held and attended by the member of Council.

Graph 1 shows the attendance percentages by Council District for the year 2022. Of note, District 5’s attendance rate is lower due to the resignation of a councilmember and the wait for a new one to be elected.

**GRAPH 1**



\*District 5 is lower than average owing to the resignation of its Councilmember in July 2022 and another Councilmember elected to the seat, starting November 2022.

Data Source: Legistar

## ***VIDEO INDEXING***

The City of Pittsburgh's Clerk's Office has always been the repository of Council meeting minutes. In 2011, the Clerk's Office was able to post videos of the Regular Meetings of Council and by 2015, videos of Standing Committees, Post Agendas, and Committee on Hearings were added. By 2022, the only meetings not recorded were the Executive Sessions and the Reapportionment Advisory Committee meetings. Using Legistar software, City Clerk staff monitor the meetings and mark the start of each item on the agenda on the video.

A review was undertaken of all meetings in 2022 where video should have been recorded and preserved. All of the meetings had videos posted to the Meetings section of the LIC. A review was also taken of the placement of the video markers to see if they aligned to the agenda items. Since Committee on Hearings meetings are typically single subjects, they were excluded. The remaining Regular and Standing Committee meetings were examined for correct indexing. Three random items on each agenda were selected and a successful index was one where the item was introduced +/- 10 seconds from the index moment.

The indexing examination concluded that the start of the recording of three meetings happened after the meeting had already started, one starting at proclamations and the other two starting at the public comments. Often the video is started at the appropriate time, but the meeting does not start for many minutes later. The filming of the meetings is done by I&P's City Channel and is outside the scope of this audit. Auditors found that there were seven meetings out of the 99 Regular and Standing Committee meetings that were not indexed. These meetings all occurred in December. Additionally, over 70% of the video indexes were found to be within acceptable limits, with only 6% having zero out of three correct.

## ***LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION CENTER'S LEGISLATION SECTION***

Items of business during the 2022 year included resolutions (specific matters such as the authorization of contracts, salaries, appropriations and budget transfers), ordinances (general rules of continuing effect), proclamations (honoring a person or group of persons in a formal way during a meeting of Council), invoices (departmental invoices or purchasing card purchases made for something not covered by a contract and under \$5,000), appointments (persons appointed to boards, commissions, etc.), certificates of election (new councilpersons), communications (audits from the Controller's Office, reports from various departments), reports (legislation is organized by their standing committee), small games of chance (per Pennsylvania code, the licensing of eligible organizations to conduct small games of change), and wills of Council (expresses City Council's support or opposition for certain local initiatives, as well as state and federal activities).

The Table V below shows the types of items of business Council dealt with during the audit period of 2022.

<b>TABLE V</b>	
<b>Types of Items Before City Council in Regular Meetings, 2022</b>	
<b>#</b>	<b>Type</b>
563	Resolutions
41	Ordinances
135	Proclamations
39	Invoices
46	Appointments, requiring votes
17	Appointments, informing
5	Certificates of Election
43	Communications
221	Reports
3	Small Games of Chance

Table V Cont'd

8	Wills of Council
<b>1,121</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>

Data Source: City of Pittsburgh Legislative Information Center

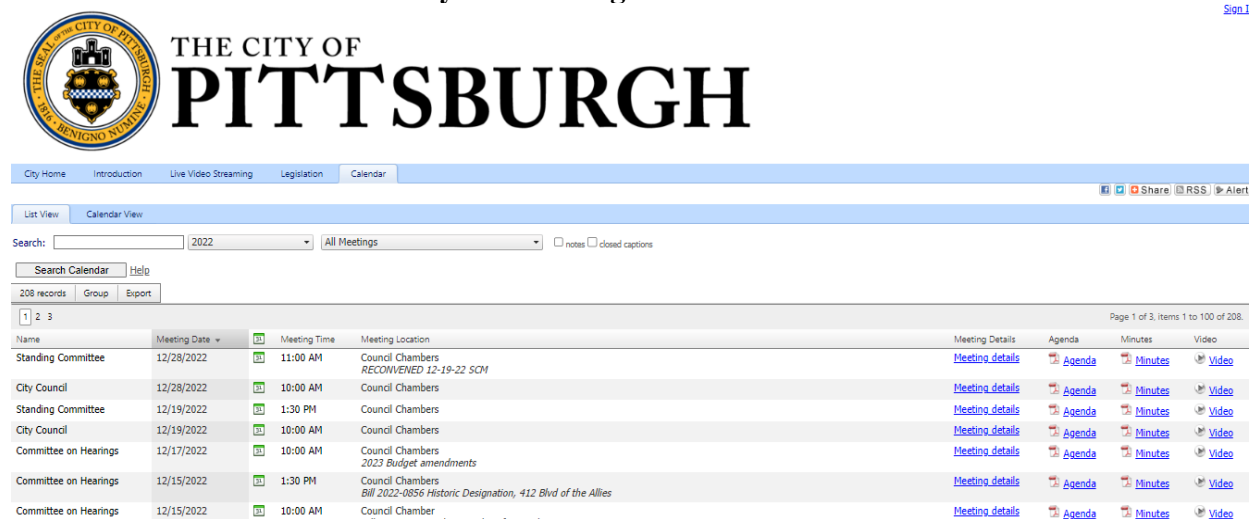
Ordinances are laws created by local governments. Often these ordinances have limited effect on the public, e.g., the changing of the name of a street, an easement, or a change of a zoning category on a parcel of property. In fact, when auditors reviewed all ordinances on Legistar introduced since 2000, nearly 65% were introducing, amending or supplementing code in the areas of Title 1 Administration, Title 2 Fiscal or Title 9 Zoning.

## ***LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION CENTER ACCESSIBILITY***

The City of Pittsburgh has made strides in recent years to make its communications more accessible to all, as the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) mandates that all programs and services be accessible to all. The City has responded to this in multiple ways, from providing sign language interpretation alongside live and recorded Council video feeds, to hiring an ADA Coordinator; and the drafting of a website ADA Compatibility notice with links to ADA policies and personnel to contact for issues. Granicus has teamed up with Meeting the Challenge, Inc. to improve accessibility within their product line for people with disabilities. Among their services assisting state and local governments, Meeting the Challenge conducts website audits to assist entities to implement and improve accessibility.

Granicus offers an ADA option within the software to make small adjustments to the website for easier use for all. The most obvious difference when enabled the ADA setting in Legistar can be seen in Figures 5 and 6.

**FIGURE 5**  
**City of Pittsburgh Calendar View**



The screenshot shows the City of Pittsburgh Legistar website in Calendar View for the year 2022. The page header includes the City of Pittsburgh logo and name. The navigation bar contains links for City Home, Introduction, Live Video Streaming, Legislation, and Calendar. The main content area displays a list of meetings with columns for Name, Meeting Date, Meeting Time, Meeting Location, Meeting Details, Agenda, Minutes, and Video. The list includes meetings for the Standing Committee, City Council, and Committee on Hearings.

Name	Meeting Date	Meeting Time	Meeting Location	Meeting Details	Agenda	Minutes	Video
Standing Committee	12/28/2022	11:00 AM	Council Chambers <i>RECONVENED 12-19-22 SCH</i>	<a href="#">Meeting details</a>	<a href="#">Agenda</a>	<a href="#">Minutes</a>	<a href="#">Video</a>
City Council	12/28/2022	10:00 AM	Council Chambers	<a href="#">Meeting details</a>	<a href="#">Agenda</a>	<a href="#">Minutes</a>	<a href="#">Video</a>
Standing Committee	12/19/2022	1:30 PM	Council Chambers	<a href="#">Meeting details</a>	<a href="#">Agenda</a>	<a href="#">Minutes</a>	<a href="#">Video</a>
City Council	12/19/2022	10:00 AM	Council Chambers	<a href="#">Meeting details</a>	<a href="#">Agenda</a>	<a href="#">Minutes</a>	<a href="#">Video</a>
Committee on Hearings	12/17/2022	10:00 AM	Council Chambers <i>2023 Budget amendments</i>	<a href="#">Meeting details</a>	<a href="#">Agenda</a>	<a href="#">Minutes</a>	<a href="#">Video</a>
Committee on Hearings	12/15/2022	1:30 PM	Council Chambers <i>Bill 2022-0856 Historic Designation, 412 Blvd of the Allies</i>	<a href="#">Meeting details</a>	<a href="#">Agenda</a>	<a href="#">Minutes</a>	<a href="#">Video</a>
Committee on Hearings	12/15/2022	10:00 AM	Council Chamber	<a href="#">Meeting details</a>	<a href="#">Agenda</a>	<a href="#">Minutes</a>	<a href="#">Video</a>

Source: City of Pittsburgh Legistar Calendar View

**FIGURE 6**  
**City of Tacoma Calendar View**

Date	Time	Location	Meeting Details	Agenda	Minutes	Video
12/27/2022	Canceled	Webinar Link: www.zoom.us/j/84834233126 Passcode: 349099	Meeting details	Not available	Not available	
12/20/2022	5:00 PM	Webinar Link: www.zoom.us/j/84834233126 Passcode: 349099	Meeting details	Agenda	Minutes	Video
12/13/2022	5:00 PM	Webinar Link: www.zoom.us/j/84834233126 Passcode: 349099	Meeting details	Agenda	Minutes	Video
12/6/2022	5:00 PM	Webinar Link: www.zoom.us/j/84834233126 Passcode: 349099	Meeting details	Agenda	Minutes	Video

Source: City of Tacoma Legistar Calendar View

As seen in the figures above, having the ADA setting enabled does make it easier for all users to view items in the calendar view. The agenda view differences are similar. According to Granicus technical personnel, this makes it easier for limited vision individuals to use the screen as well as making it easier for screen readers to read the screen to their users. Enabling this setting also makes all cover pages, minutes, and agendas ADA compliant. Auditors reviewed many governmental entities currently using Legistar platform and the vast majority do not use the ADA setting.

## ***TYPE AND INDEX KEYWORD USAGE***

As noted in Table V, items before Council are clearly delineated using the 'type' field in Legistar. For example, a knowledgeable user can pull information on all proclamations given in 2022 easily using only the 'type' category. As explored above, the "type" category consists of resolutions, ordinances, proclamations, invoices, appointments (both informing and requiring votes), certificates of election, communications, reports, small games of change and wills of Council. These are the broadest categories in which you can categorize items of business. The "type" category was present and correct for all items in 2022. Having another keyword to further categorize these items is very useful to users endeavoring to obtain specific details.

The auditors reviewed all items of business before City Council in 2022 listed in the LIC, specifically examining the type and index keywords listed and reviewing the legislative details. Auditors acknowledge the difficulties of changing recordkeeping keywords after years of consistent usage, but other municipalities have been able to use pulldown menus that are tied to the year to reflect changes in keywords. For example, if someone wanted all Controller's Office audits submitted to Council in the year 2024, the user would have to select 'Communications' as the 'type' keyword and manually search through each entry. If changes were enacted and the dropdown menu was tied to the year, the user could select 2024 as the year, 'Communications' as the type, and 'Audits' as the index (with the redundant "Communications" not selectable in the index dropdown) and they would be presented with all audits from the Controller's Office.

## ***APPOINTMENTS***

In 2022, there were seventeen appointments which needed to be communicated to Council (called informing votes) and 46 appointments requiring votes. However, the index keywords used were somewhat lacking in detail. There were twelve blank index fields in this category and the index keyword used for the others was “Appointments and Re-Appointments” which duplicated information already contained in the ‘type’ field.

## ***COMMUNICATIONS***

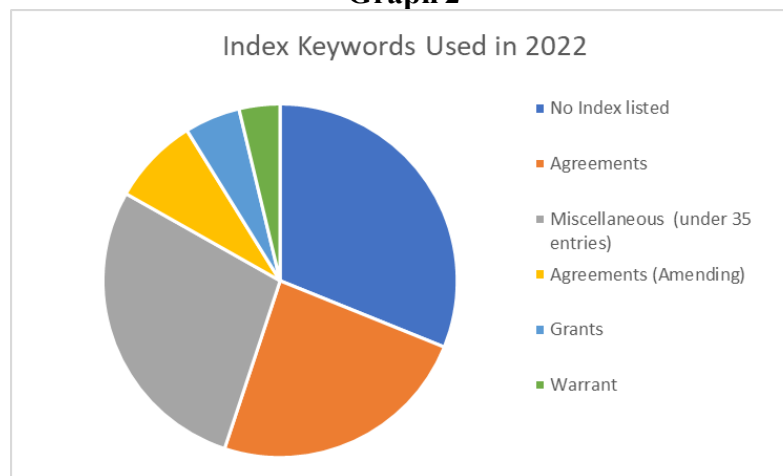
Items under the label of ‘Communications’ include reports, audits, receipts of donations, and special reports. These communications are often made publicly available via an attachment within the legislation and can be found within the LIC. In 2022, there were 43 items labeled “Communication” in the type category. In the index category, ten were missing a keyword, and two were labelled ‘Miscellaneous’ while the others were labeled ‘Communication.’

## ***RESOLUTIONS***

City Council averages 546 resolutions per year since 2007. Having ‘Resolutions’ as a type keyword is helpful as resolutions denotes a specific legal category. However, having this many resolutions per year means that the index keyword must be even more well thought out in order to provide the user with the information they desire.

In 2022, there were 964 index keywords used to describe types of resolutions (multiple index keywords can be used for each resolution). Graph 2 below, shows the proportion of index keywords used. Nearly a third of resolutions had no index keyword listed, but another third of resolutions were for agreements or an amendment to agreements. Eighteen percent of the resolutions were placed under a heading the auditors called Miscellaneous, meaning the index keyword was used fewer than 25 times in 2022.

**Graph 2**



Data Source; City of Pittsburgh LIC

## ***RESOLUTIONS: WARRANTS***

The term warrant in this case means checks that need to be written to pay for specific needs that do not fall under a contract. Council must approve each warrant before it is sent for issuance. Common uses of warrants are to pay settlements, legal services, expert witness fees, and occasionally an emergency contract extension or expansion.

## ***RESOLUTIONS: AGREEMENTS AND AMENDING AGREEMENTS***

The majority of index keywords used in resolutions are describing agreements. However, there are subtle differences in types of agreements, how an agreement has been drawn up and how an agreement is to be amended. Most agreements have a secondary index keyword to help the user discern some more information about the agreement without having to read the lengthy title of the business item.

Auditors identified a need to make these indexes more descriptive and regimented in order for the user to be able to drill down into which agreements they might need. As seen in the chart above, these agreements and amending agreements make a very sizable proportion of the resolutions before Council.

## ***CITY COUNCIL REIMBURSABLE EXPENDITURES***

City Councilmembers can be reimbursed by the City for a variety of expenses. Travel, education, and training expenses are reimbursed from the respective Councilmember's budget. Councilmembers can also be reimbursed for purchasing supplies and food for community events and meetings. These reimbursements need approval from the President of Council, and, in the case that it is the President of Council who is seeking reimbursement, then the President of Council needs approval for these expenses from the President Pro-Tempore.

The auditors researched the Controller's Office OnBase database and found that, from 2022 to the end of the first quarter of 2024, City Councilmembers were reimbursed \$15,266.31. Table VI shows that the largest percentage of reimbursement was for councilmembers travel and travel-related expenses to conferences and talks, which totaled \$12,574.80. The other \$2,691.51 were reimbursements for condolence flowers and food/supplies for community meetings and for the office.



TABLE VI	
City Council Reimbursements by Reason and Amount, 1/1/2022 - 4/1/2024	
Reason	Amount
Condolence Flowers	\$130.96
Food	\$1,075.69
Travel	\$12,574.80
Supplies	\$1,331.11
N/A	\$153.75
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$15,266.31</b>

Data Source: Controller's Office OnBase

There were nineteen total non-travel reimbursements to City Councilmembers from 2022 to April 2024 totaling \$2,691.51. One of the nineteen reimbursements for \$153.75 was missing the description of the reimbursable expense.

Reimbursements require the City Council President's approval before they can be paid out, or the City Council's President Pro-Tempore if the City Council President is seeking reimbursement. Out of the thirty reimbursements that the auditors looked at on OnBase, nine of them did not have the City Council President's or President Pro-Tempore's signature on their Pittsburgh City Council Professional Service Invoice Form. These nine reimbursements represented \$7,248.97, over 47% of all reimbursements.

## ***REIMBURSABLE TRAVEL EXPENDITURES***

The City of Pittsburgh's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) maintains financial management policies for the City, among them policies and procedures around employee travel. Several main aspects are taken from the City's Code of Ordinances, commencing at [§181.06](#). Employees traveling on City business, including travel to and from conferences, seminars and training sessions relevant to the employee's position, are allowed to receive reimbursements for expenses incurred. In order for these expenses to be reimbursed, the employee must submit a travel packet two weeks prior to the trip. This travel packet is required even if there is no cost to the City, for example when the cost is absorbed by the host, and a packet must be completed for each individual employee making the trip. The travel packet must consist of both a travel letter and a completed travel cost calculation sheet.

The travel letter must be addressed to the President and Members of City Council as a notification of the request. The letter must be signed by the department head on departmental letterhead and include a description of the purpose of travel, along with the name of the employee, dates of travel, destination, total cost and the account to be charged. The travel cost

calculation sheet captures the cost of travel, including registrations, lodgings, transportation, per diems, incidentals and contingency. OMB updates this document in January every year to reflect allowable expenses and do not allow submissions on out-of-date versions.

Elected officials are not considered employees of the City but they are specifically mentioned in Code as able to be reimbursed for travel, and able to be reimbursed for travel expenses in their own vehicle. As outlined above, Councilmembers' rules around travel and other reimbursable expenses revolve around the approval of the President of Council, or the President Pro-Tempore in the case of the President's own travel. The City Clerk's Office does not have a written policy for reimbursable expenses for Councilmembers but do have a set of procedures.

Procedures around reimbursable travel expenditures begin with all travel documents, including OMB's Travel Cost Calculation, commonly called OMB's Travel Form (included in the Appendix), the Pittsburgh City Council Invoice Form and receipts, submitted to the Internal Accounts Monitor. The Internal Accounts Monitor then submits the information to the Council President and the City Clerk where it is reviewed pending approval. Then original documents are submitted to the Controller's Office for payment along with a letter from the Council President authorizing the reimbursement.

The auditors reviewed reimbursable travel expenditures submitted and approved from 2022 until April 2024 in the Controller's Office OnBase database for accuracy in recordkeeping and sufficient reasoning for the trip. Table VII below shows the reason for Council travel, cost and documentation found. Materials submitted to the Controller's Office should be in a finalized version ahead of processing for payment. It is also important to note that the travel expenditures below are only the expenditures that Councilmembers were reimbursed for from January 2022-April 2024.

TABLE VII		
City Council Reimbursable Travel Expenditures, January 2022 - April 2024		
Reason	Cost	Documentation
Travel for Councilmember and a staff member to attend Responsible Hospitality Institute's Social City Summit in Washington DC	\$2,985.30	This is a travel allowance in advance of travel. No council president signature. Two employees on the same voucher. No OMB Travel Form.
	\$645.21	The above trip was an advance, this voucher submitted to reimburse for additional expenses. No council president signature. Two employees on the same voucher. No OMB Travel Form.

Table VII Cont'd

Reimbursement for hotel room of staff member of the City of Pittsburgh for the 2023 Sociable City Academy on Nighttime Management	\$1,199.34	No OMB Travel Form. No employee or Council President signatures. No Receipts. No reasoning why employee did not file for reimbursement. No dates of event.
Reimbursement for expenses incurred during trip to Boston to meet the new Penguins owners	\$1,655.27	Request for reimbursement took place after travel. No OMB Travel Form.
Reimbursement for expenses incurred during trip to Louisville, KY to meet with Family Scholar House to learn a tour their model for housing to implement a similar development in Pittsburgh.	\$1,258.30	Request for reimbursement took place after travel. No OMB Travel Form.
Reimbursement for travel expenses incurred during trip to Oglebay, WV for the 2022 Pittsburgh Black Collective to create measurable outcomes for progress for the African American community.	\$75.00	Request for reimbursement took place after travel. No OMB Travel Form. No Council President signatures.
Reimbursement for travel expenses for trip to Baltimore with the GVI team and Directors Schmidt and Jones to review best practices to reduce gun violence.	\$1,226.61	Request for reimbursement took place after travel. No OMB Travel Form.
Reimbursement for mileage (480 miles) and per diem expenses for a trip to Wilmington DE to meet with Bicinni/Pollin Group at their headquarters and to tour some of their housing developments and meet that Mayor and Congresswoman of Wilmington.	\$550.40	Request for reimbursement took place after travel. No OMB Travel Form.
Reimbursement for expenses incurred on a trip to Cleveland to meet with the Cleveland Foundation, local officials, and developers to discuss affordable housing and development, and a potential program related to investment to the URA.	\$419.36	Request for reimbursement took place after travel. No OMB Travel Form.
Reimbursement for lodging, per diem, mileage incurred during a trip to Arlington VA to meet with German Marshall Fund.	\$728.46	Request for reimbursement took place after travel. No OMB Travel Form.
Voices Empowering Generational Change in Washington DC.	\$1,831.55	

Data Source: Pittsburgh OnBase system

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### ***FINDING #1: USABILITY OF LEGISTAR WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA***

Auditors performed a review of the usability of Legistar, City Council's website, and social media accounts. In doing so, auditors noted the following:

- The Clerk's Office accounts are not easily found unless the user knows and understands the relationship between City Council and the City Clerk's Office. Instead, typically a search for Pittsburgh City Council will land the user on pages personal and professional for current and past Councilmembers. As of December 2023, on Instagram, the account handle is cityclerk\_pgh; on Facebook, the handle is CityClerkPGH; and, on Twitter/X, the handle is @CityClerk\_Pgh with names of the accounts listed as "City Clerk's Office."
- The most easily found set of Council maps reside in the City Council portion of the website, outside of the LIC. The current Rules of Council is published on the City Clerk's webpage. However, older versions are not available on the Clerk's website, but these can still be found elsewhere on the City's website.
- A link to the City's Code of Ordinances was not found in the summary of legislation of the Legistar. When an ordinance is passed and amends as code, the public sees a brief summary of the amendment but not the surrounding code for context.
- Viewing PDFs requires users to fully download the file, rather than opening the link in a new window. The City's ADA and Disability Resources Coordinator reviewed meeting agendas, minutes, and supporting files and found no issues around their ability to be read by a screen reader.
- Meeting minutes make no note of whether the councilmember attended remotely or in-person. For the year 2022, all Council Districts had over 90% attendance at Regular Council meetings and over 85% at Standing Committee meetings. No fines were levied for any Councilmember in 2022. Pittsburgh's City Clerk personnel do not monitor the amount of time a Councilmember remains at the meeting, but an absence at a vote is noted in the minutes.
- While the ability to pull all appointments already exists in Legistar, if the user wanted to see a specific commission appointment, they would have to go through 63 appointments in 2022, for example, to find the appointment. All of the 35 warrants considered in 2022 are simply indexed under warrants, as well.
- City Clerk's Office personnel report that there is no documentation how each keyword is defined and used in the context of describing agreements. When auditors reviewed the 563 resolutions before Council in 2022, we found almost 12% were missing an index keyword. While this is an unfortunate finding, it should be noted that it is not a critical

deficiency and may in fact be an opportunity to reflect on how types and index keywords are used in concert and how this can be improved.

- Although outside of the scope of the audit, it was found that Regular Council meeting videos were missing on the City's LIC website for the year 2012. Auditors made the Clerk's Office aware and there are plans to relink all videos to the Calendar. Granicus was consulted by the Clerk's Office and the missing video links were a probable casualty of a software upgrade. The videos do exist in the Legistar inhouse application.
- YouTube video recordings do not link to the meeting agenda or meeting minutes in the video description.
- None of the briefings' details and dates prior to December 13, 2022, are available on Legistar.
- Three executive sessions from 2022 were missing their agenda, meeting minutes, and meeting details. According to the City Clerk's office, this issue came from a public/private disconnect, where the documents were available on the private version of Legistar, but not on the public version Legistar. As of February 2024, this issue has been resolved, and the formerly missing details are available.
- Granicus reported to the auditors they have no plans for a mobile version of Legistar.

### ***RECOMMENDATION #1***

- In order to be a true central repository of information related to Pittsburgh City Council, the City Clerk's Office administration should standardize the names of their social media accounts. For example, "City of Pittsburgh's City Clerk's Office" would make it easier for public users to find and delineate who is responsible for the upkeep of the account.
- A link entitled "map" should be added to send the user to an interactive map showing current council districts. The City Council map page could also be used to acquaint the user with the principles of reapportionment and a historical listing of where Council boundaries once were.

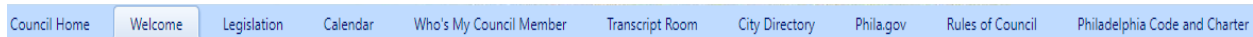
Cities such as New York and Washington DC have provided an address lookup feature to make this even simpler for new residents, and I&P have already done this here. Having this information easily obtainable within the LIC homepage would save users' time.

- The City Clerk's administration should also continue to host the current Rules of Council on the Clerk's Office website, providing a link to old versions with amendments identified and dated. It is important that citizens can find information about how their local legislative body operates. It also provides historical information on the legislative rules and how they changed over the years. Additionally, as the Rules of Council are amended, it is imperative that all references to the Rules of Council are updated within City Code. For example, §161.29 - PAYMENT OF CITY COUNCIL GRANTS

(effective date of March 30, 1995) and §161.27 - REPORTS ON CITY COUNCIL GRANTS (effective date of October 19, 1994, amended November 22, 2013) references a Rule XVIII in the Rules of Council, which no longer exists.

If Rules of Council and map links were added to the tabular menu, Pittsburgh's tabs would look more similar to Philadelphia's, as shown in Figure 4.

**FIGURE 4**



Source: Philadelphia's Legislative Information Center

- Pittsburgh's Office of the City Clerk, along with representatives from I&P, should continue to pursue the line of inquiry as to why the technical issue of requiring PDFs to download instead of opening a new window is occurring when the issue does not occur for all entities. Users' ability to gather and view materials quickly is a core function of Legistar and any impediments should be remediated as soon as possible. The City Clerk's administration should also discuss with Granicus enabling the ADA setting to make further efforts to provide accessible information to all. Adobe Acrobat already have made strides towards providing users with the tools to make their files more accessible. Fortunately, the PDF files will retain their accessibility whether they are downloaded or hopefully opened directly via link.
- The City Clerk's administration should maintain attendance reports on the LIC platform. Legistar already offers the ability to generate reports of Councilmember's attendance at official meetings.

The City Clerk's administration should also add a section to the LIC homepage detailing past and present ordinances by year and their statuses. The City Clerk's administration should also have a link to the [eCode360](#) section provided in the summary of the legislation in Legistar to assist users in finding passed ordinances. Once [eCode360](#) is updated, the user will be able to see both the older version of Code as well as the amended version. The City Clerk's administration should verify that publicly facing information after each major software upgrade is complete and available on the LIC page.

- The City Clerk's Office should add more descriptive index fields for appointments. Keeping the overall "Appointments" category in use, adding subcategories such as "Appointments/Authority Boards" and "Appointments/City Boards and Commissions" will allow the user to access information without combing through all of the appointments while searching specifically for a type of appointment. Similarly, the City Clerk's administration should add more descriptive subcategories while keeping the overall Communications category in use. For example, using "Communications/Audits", "Communications/Reports", "Communications/Donations" and "Communications/Acting Pay" as index entries would allow more precise information to be found if needed.

The City Clerk's administration should consider changing the structure of the warrant index to include some more information for easier use. Keeping "Warrant" as the broad

category and adding subcategories such as “Warrant/Settlement” or “Warrant/Expert Witness” would save the user time in information retrieval. The City Clerk’s administration should reflect on a more robust usage of index keywords in Legistar to aid the user in finding information more quickly. Adding some index keywords to describe types of communications, appointments, warrants, resolutions and other items of Council business would be invaluable to both city workers and the general public. The City Clerk’s administration should create a listing for how index keywords are defined and post those definitions online to aid users who are not as familiar with the terminology. Having both new agreements and amended agreements distinct from each other and the adding of keywords describing the type of agreement would give the user the ability to draw the information out without a lengthy reading of the item titles.

Lastly, there is the issue of index keywords not having an entry for a sizable proportion of Council’s resolutions in 2022. Many of the items missing index keywords seem to be missed because there is not a keyword available in the current list of index keywords. Having a miscellaneous keyword with a listing of what the category contains would be helpful. The auditors also understand that the City Clerk’s Office has been using this software for many years, and they have used it very well. The addition of a multitude of new index keywords at this point makes it difficult when there is an enormous number of previous records to go through to make the keywords consistent. However, we suggest that the Clerk’s Office should determine from their years of experience what is important to include. It is hoped that the suggestions above regarding warrants and resolutions are helpful in this process.

- YouTube videos should link to either the meeting details page or meeting agendas/minutes. If that is not feasible, YouTube videos should link to the Legistar calendar page. The City Clerk’s administration should also consider implementing a system for retroactively auditing the video indexes and making adjustments that might be beneficial to improving the video experience for the user.
- The City Clerk’s administration should highlight the title of public notices for ordinance approval by making it bolded to better capture the attention of potential readers. It should also include “City of Pittsburgh” in the title. Newspaper notices should also clearly state City of Pittsburgh City Council in the title. City Council notices should also include the address where the meetings take place and the specific dates and times of all the regular and standing committee meetings, similar to the Allegheny County Council Notice Exhibit B in the Appendix of this audit.

## ***FINDING #2: EXECUTIVE SESSIONS AND BRIEFINGS***

Auditors performed a review of the City Council’s use of Executive Sessions and Briefings. In doing so, auditors noted the following:

- In 2022 and 2023, all public meetings by City Council had an agenda and meeting minutes attached. The Clerk’s Office captured all votes which were taken in 2022 and 2023.

- Meeting minutes that were attached to public meeting sessions in Legistar included the names of citizens did not include the written subject of the Citizen’s testimony, which was instead included in the video recording.
- There are no attendance sheets documenting which Councilmembers attend which briefings. There were 15 briefings held in 2022 and 27 briefings in 2023, representing an 80% increase.

## ***RECOMMENDATION #2***

- City Council should have a written policy available to the public that explains the procedures of briefings, topics that can be held in briefings, and any restrictions on what cannot be discussed in briefings. This would increase public transparency to what occurs in these sessions and ease public concern.
- The City Clerk’s administration should include the subject of citizen testimony in the written meeting minutes to completely fulfill the requirements of §706(4) of the Sunshine Act. An example of accomplishing this would be for City Council to request that I&P add another entry box into the Speaker Sign-up document on City Council’s website to allow the subject of their testimony to be included.
- For City Council briefing sessions, the City Clerk’s administration should make and retain attendance sheets that record the following information: Date, Name, Briefing Subject, Time in, and Time out. Doing so can improve the administration’s capacity for verifying each session’s compliance with the regulations of the Sunshine Act. City Council and the City Clerk’s administrations should also add all missing available briefing details and dates to Legistar for completeness.
- City Councilmembers should take advantage of the free trainings on the Sunshine Act offered by the State’s Office of Open Records. Records of who attended these trainings should be maintained. These trainings are available in weekly online webinars and are also posted online with other Right-to-Know Law tutorials on the Office of Open Records website.

## ***FINDING #3: REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES***

Auditors performed a review of the City Council’s use of reimbursable expenses. In doing so, auditors noted the following:

- No written reimbursable expense policy exists for Councilmembers and their staff.
- 30% of Pittsburgh City Council Invoice forms for reimbursable expenses from 2022 – early 2024 are missing a proper signature from the President or President Pro-Tempore of Council. 79% of Pittsburgh City Council Invoice forms for non-travel reimbursements



from 2022 – early 2024 are missing a proper signature from the requesting councilmember. Overall, reimbursable travel documentation is often incomplete.

### ***RECOMMENDATION #3***

The City Clerk's and City Council's administrations, along with the Mayor's and Controller's Offices, should draft a written policy to publicly document what types of expenses are permitted to be reimbursable to Councilmembers. Complete records should include proper signatures, copies of receipts and a description of the expense on the Pittsburgh City Council Invoice form. For reimbursable travel expenses, the City Clerk's office and City Council administrations should draft a written policy to document what types of travel are permitted to be reimbursed and bring the required documentation in line with what is required.

KIMBERLY CLARK-BASKIN, CMC  
CITY CLERK



ASHLEY ROBINSON  
ASSISTANT CITY CLERK

CITY OF PITTSBURGH  
**OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK**  
CITY-COUNTY BUILDING

June 17, 2025

Rachael Heisler, City Controller  
Office of the City Controller  
414 Grant Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

RE: Performance Audit on City Council and Office of City Clerk

Dear Controller Heisler,

Below, please find our responses to your audit on Pittsburgh City Council and the Office of the Pittsburgh City Clerk.

**AUDITEE RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATION 1:**

>On Instagram and X, the Clerk's account handle is @cityclerk\_pgh. The Facebook account (@CityClerkPGH) was created first by one member of the office and the Instagram and Twitter/X accounts were created by another member, and for whatever reason at the time, "CityClerkPGH" was unavailable.

>After the website updates and changes (that the Department of Innovation and Performance ["I&P"] controls), interactive map and district map links are now available through the "Neighborhood & Wards" link in the left column of the Clerk's webpage.

>Since this Audit began, we have since moved to a new code platform as there were many inaccuracies with legislation passed in Council and what was displayed on the MuniCode website. We are currently going through the legal review process which should catch any and, hopefully all inconsistencies in the Code.

>Again, the Clerk's Office does not have control of the servers or how things are downloaded. We do not have the authority to change the ability of PDFs to open in a new window as opposed to being downloaded.

>The Clerk's Office does not have control of what is maintained on the Legislative Information Center (LIC) homepage. Council meeting agendas do show which members are in attendance and which are absent for those meetings.

>The Clerk's Office does not control the recording of council meetings; the recordings and postings of YouTube videos are done through I&P/City Channel Pittsburgh. Videos are linked on Legistar once they're uploaded by I&P.

>Newspaper notices have been shortened or certain formatting was removed for monetary purposes.

**AUDITEE RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATION 2:**

>Procedures and decorum relative to executive sessions and briefings are available in the Rule of Council, which are available in the left column on the Clerk's webpage.

>While the Clerk's Office does request that council members advise us on which briefing sessions they will attend, they do not always let us know. Prior to the Clerk's Office being notified of the updates to the Sunshine Act in 2022, we were not required to post executive session and briefing information on Legistar. Because executive sessions can deal with confidential matters (legal matters; personnel matters; etc), we do not post more details, just the titles of the legislation that it deals with, or "personnel matters". During this time, we've also updated our meeting agendas to include "Motion to Amend the Agenda".

>The Clerk's Office is not notified if members attend any training, especially if they attend on their own or are notified of training through an outside entity (state, federal, or governmental organizations).

**AUDITEE RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATION 3:**

>The Council and Clerk's Office follows the reimbursable policy that is listed in the Rules of Council, Rule X. Council Expenditures. Travel requests are approved by the Council President and/or the City (or Assistant) Clerk. Documentation must be provided to the Internal Accounts Manager, who processes the reimbursements upon Council President's approval.

Thank you for your attention to these responses.

Sincerely,



Ashley Robinson  
Assistant City Clerk

cc: Kimberly Clark-Baskin, City Clerk  
R. Daniel Lavelle, President of Council

## APPENDIX

**EXHIBIT A**  
**2022-2023**  
**Pittsburgh City Council**  
**Executive Sessions**

Date	Time	Purpose	Details
1/5/2022	1:30 PM	Wilkinsburg Annexation	Litigation involving Wilkinsburg Annexation
1/20/2022	1:00 PM	Purdue Pharma/Opioid Litigation	Purdue pharma/opioid litigation in which the City of Pittsburgh is a Plaintiff
1/25/2022	12:00 PM	Bill 2022-0015 & 2022-0035	Payment of Legal Settlements
2/2/2022	4:00 PM	Personnel Matters & Bridges	Personnel matters & bridges.
2/5/2022	1:00 PM	Bill 2022-0092 Personnel Matters	Resolution further amending resolution number 885 of 2021, entitled "Resolution fixing the number of officers and employees of the City of Pittsburgh for the 2022 fiscal year, and the rate of compensation thereof, and setting maximum levels for designated positions" so as to decrease the salaries of Councilmembers
2/16/2022	11:00 AM	Possible Claims Related to Infrastructure Bill 2022-0077	Per the Rules of Council, Executive Session was held to consult with its attorney or other professional advisor regarding information or strategy in connection with litigation or with issues on which identifiable complaints are expected to be filed.
2/16/2022	9:30 AM	Pending Litigation Related to the Fern Hollow Bridge Collapse	Per the Rules of Council, Executive Session was held to consult with its attorney or other professional advisor regarding information or strategy in connection with litigation or with issues on which identifiable complaints are expected to be filed.
2/21/2022	1:30 PM	Bills 2022-0060 and 2022-0061	Payment of Legal Fees/Settlement
2/23/2022	1:30 PM	Bill 2022-0109	Payment of Legal Settlement
3/1/2022	1:30 PM	Bill 2022-0104	Adopt certain settlement terms and enter into a settlement agreement with Norfolk Southern Railway, Manchester Citizens Corporation, Northside Leadership Conference, and Rail Pollution Protection Pittsburgh in order to resolve claims arising from the Application of Norfolk Southern Railway Company for approval to reconstruct the crossing of the North Avenue / Brighton Road bridge docketed at Public Utility Commission Docket No. A-2018-3006432; and from Northside Leadership Conference, et. al, v. Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission appeal docketed at No. 611 CD 2019 in the Commonwealth Court.

3/16/2022	3:00 PM	Bill 2022-0154	Receipt of Payment for Legal Settlement from Purdue Pharma; yearly allocation of funds into a special revenue account
3/23/2022	2:30 PM	Bill 2022-0168	Payment for Engineering Services in connection with claims and litigation for the Fern Hollow Bridge Collapse
4/19/2022	1:30 PM	Bill 216, 217, 218, 219	Payment of Legal Fees and Settlements
5/23/2022	1:30 PM	Bills 309, 344 & 345	Payments of Legal Settlements and for Professional Services regarding investigation into the cause of the Fern Hollow Bridge Collapse and statistical analysis of current voting patterns in the City of Pittsburgh
5/24/2022	1:30 PM	Bills 308 & 343	Payment of Legal Settlements
6/7/2022	1:30 PM	Bill 378	Payment of Legal Fees
6/7/2022	1:30 PM	Inclusionary Zoning	Per the Rules of Council, Executive Session was held to consult with its attorney or other professional advisor regarding information or strategy in connection with litigation or with issues on which identifiable complaints are expected to be filed.
6/14/2022	1:30 PM	Bill 407	Acceptance of Payment for a Contract Dispute
7/5/2022	1:30 PM	Bill 452	Payment of Legal Fees
7/13/2022	2:30 PM	Bills 518 & 519	Payment of Legal Fees
7/13/2022	1:00 PM	Rules of Council	Updates on the Rules of Council from City Council's attorney regarding legal matters
7/19/2022	9:30 AM	Bill 588	Payment of Legal Fees
1/4/2023	12:30 PM	Bill 2022-1060	Payment of Legal Settlement
1/24/2023	2:30 PM	Bill 1115	Payment of Legal Settlement
2/1/2023	4:00 PM	Bill 1116	Appointing Krysia Kubiak as a Member of the Board of Directors for the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority for a term to expire January 4, 2026.
2/1/2023	3:30 PM	Bills 1149,1150,1151,1152,1153	Payment of Legal Services/Settlement
2/14/2023	1:30 PM	Bills 1127 & 1176	Payment of Legal Settlement
2/21/2023	1:30 PM	Bills 1151 & 1153	Payment of Legal Services
3/7/2023	1:30 PM	Bills 1253 & 1254	Payment of Legal Settlement
3/21/2023	3:00 PM	Bill 1293	Payment of Legal Settlement
3/28/2023	3:00 PM	Bills 1309,1313 &1314	Union negotiations
3/30/2023	3:00 PM	RECONVENED from 3-28-23 Bills 1309, 1313 & 1314	Union negotiations
4/4/2023	1:30 PM	Grants legal opinion/RECONVENED from 3-30-23 Bills 1385, 1309, 1313 & 1314	Union negotiations/Payment of Legal Services
4/18/2023	2:00 PM	Bill 2023-1390	Payment of Legal Settlement

5/2/2023	12:00 PM	Personnel Matters	Please be advised that an executive session has been scheduled regarding personnel matters.
6/26/2023	1:30 PM	Bill 2023-1614	Payment of Legal Settlement
6/30/2023	1:00 PM	Bill 2023-1612	Resolution authorizing the Mayor and the Director of the Department Finance to enter into a Cooperation Agreement or Agreements with the Urban Redevelopment Authority
7/10/2023	11:00 AM	Bill 2023-1649 & Ethics Commission's response to appointments	Payment of Legal Services
9/12/2023	1:00 PM	Bill 2023-1833	Payment of Legal Settlement
9/28/2023	11:00 AM	Bill 2023-1937; agreement for legal services related to real estate matters	Payment of Legal Services
10/12/2023	11:00 AM	Litigation Matters	Payment of Legal Settlement
10/24/2023	2:00 PM	Legalities and Procurement	Please be advised that an Executive Session for members has been scheduled as it relates to legalities and procurement.
10/30/2023	2:30 PM	Bill 2023-2055	Encumbrance for legal settlements
10/31/2023	12:30 PM	Procurement Regulations	Please be advised that an executive session is scheduled regarding procurement regulations.
11/3/2023	3:00 PM	Bill 2023-2122	Payment of Legal Settlement
12/5/2023	12:00 PM	Bill 2023-2184	Resolution providing for an Agreement and a Lease by and between the City of Pittsburgh and First Vehicle Services pursuant to which First Vehicle will furnish all work and services needed to manage and maintain the City's Vehicle fleet



**Exhibit B**  
**Allegheny County Council**  
**Public Notice for 2022**

**OFFICE OF COUNTY  
COUNCIL**  
County of Allegheny  
119 Courthouse – 436  
Grant Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219  
Phone (412) 350-6490 · Fax  
(412) 350-6499  
[www.alleghenycounty.us/council](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/council)

**ALLEGHENY COUNTY  
COUNCIL**

**2022 MEETING NOTICE**

Monday January 3, 2020  
5:00 p.m.

Tuesday January 25, 2022  
5:00 p.m.

Tuesday February 8, 2022  
5:00 p.m.

Tuesday February 22, 2022  
5:00 p.m.

Tuesday March 8, 2022  
5:00 p.m.

Tuesday March 22, 2022  
5:00 p.m.

Tuesday April 12, 2022  
5:00 p.m.

Tuesday April 26, 2022  
5:00 p.m.

Tuesday May 10, 2022  
5:00 p.m.

Tuesday May 24, 2022  
5:00 p.m.

Tuesday June 7, 2022  
5:00 p.m.

Tuesday June 21, 2022  
5:00 p.m.

Tuesday July 5, 2022  
5:00 p.m.

Tuesday July 12, 2022



## **Exhibit B Cont'd**

5:00 p.m.

Tuesday August 23, 2022

5:00 p.m.

Tuesday August 30, 2022

5:00 p.m.

Tuesday September 13, 2022

5:00 p.m.

Tuesday September 20, 2022

5:00 p.m.

Tuesday October 11, 2022

5:00 p.m.

Tuesday October 25, 2022

5:00 p.m.

Tuesday November 8, 2022

5:00 p.m.

Tuesday November 22, 2022

5:00 p.m.

Tuesday December 6, 2022

5:00 p.m.

Tuesday December 13, 2022

5:00 p.m.

All Regular Meetings of Allegheny County Council will be held in the 4th Floor Gold Room of the Allegheny County Courthouse, 436 Grant Street, Pittsburgh, PA, 15219.

Standing & Special Committee Meetings of Allegheny County Council will be held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays of each week beginning at 3:00 p.m. in Suite 119 of the Allegheny County Courthouse, Pittsburgh, PA, 15219.

# **Exhibit C** **Travel Cost Calculation/Office of Management and Budget Travel Form**

THIS FORM MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH EACH TRAVEL REQUEST.

UPDATED JAN. 2024

THE FULL TRAVEL POLICY IS AVAILABLE ON THE OMB SECTION OF THE CITY OF PITTSBURGH INTRANET.

## **TRAVEL COST CALCULATION**

NAME OF EMPLOYEE \_\_\_\_\_

PURPOSE, ORGANIZATION, CONFERENCE, ETC. \_\_\_\_\_

DESTINATION (CITY AND STATE) \_\_\_\_\_

DURATION OF TRIP DEPART PITTSBURGH \_\_\_\_\_

RETURN PITTSBURGH \_\_\_\_\_

LINK TO ADDITIONAL TRAINING INFORMATION \_\_\_\_\_

1) REGISTRATION \_\_\_\_\_ X  $\frac{1}{\text{\# of Attendees}}$  = \$ -  
 Fee

2) LODGING COST \_\_\_\_\_ X \_\_\_\_\_ X  $\frac{1}{\text{\# of Travelers}}$  + \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ -  
 # of Days Daily Rate Tax  
 (If unknown, use 15%)

### 3) TRANSPORTATION

A) FLIGHT \_\_\_\_\_ X  $\frac{1}{\text{\# of Travelers}}$  = \$ -  
 Round-Trip

B) AIRPORT GROUND TRANSPORTATION - Receipts Required \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ -  
 Cab, rideshare, or public transportation fare to and from airport, parking Pittsburgh Destination

C) OTHER GROUND TRANSPORTATION - Receipts Required \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ -  
 Cab, rideshare, or public transportation fare to and from training site, hotel parking, tolls

D) PERSONAL AUTOMOBILE \_\_\_\_\_ X  $\frac{0.67}{\text{per mile (1/1/2024 IRS rate)}}$  = \$ -  
 Mileage should be measured from the City-County Building Round Trip Mileage

E) MOTOR POOL VEHICLE - Receipts Required \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

F) OTHER - Description and Receipts Required \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ -  
 Type description here.

### 4) MEALS Do not include meals that are provided as part of the event.

Breakfast \_\_\_\_\_ X \$ 14.00 (2024 GSA Pittsburgh amount, \$64 total) = \$ -

Lunch \_\_\_\_\_ X \$ 16.00 (2024 GSA Pittsburgh amount, \$64 total) = \$ -

Dinner \_\_\_\_\_ X \$ 29.00 (2024 GSA Pittsburgh amount, \$64 total) = \$ -

5) INCIDENTALS \_\_\_\_\_ X \$ 5.00 per day (2024 GSA Pittsburgh amount, \$64 total) = \$ -

Sub-Total \$ -

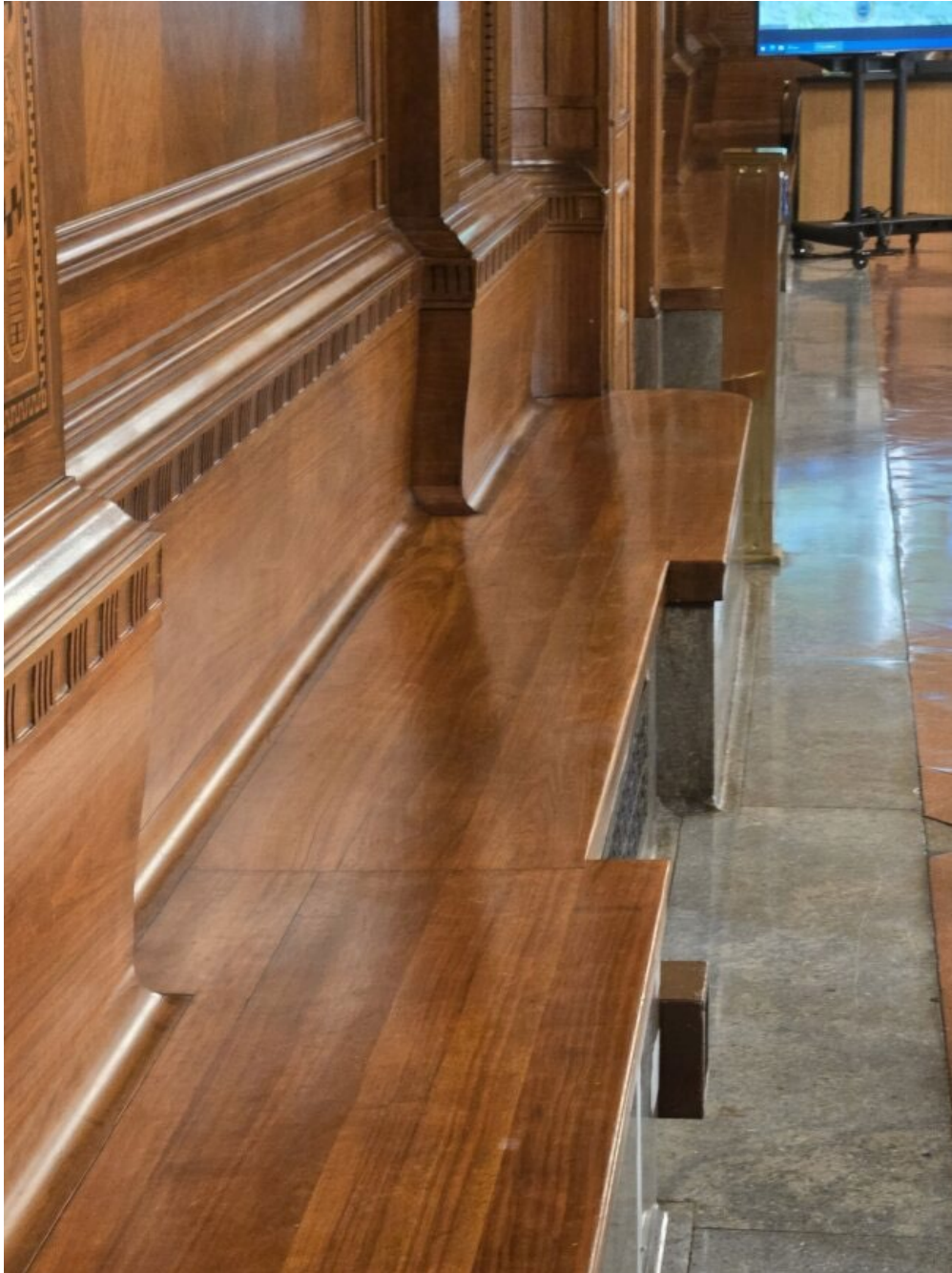
6) CONTINGENCY 10% of Sub-Total, excluding registration and incidentals = \$ -

TOTAL \$ -

**Exhibit D**  
**Pittsburgh City Council**  
**Council Chambers**

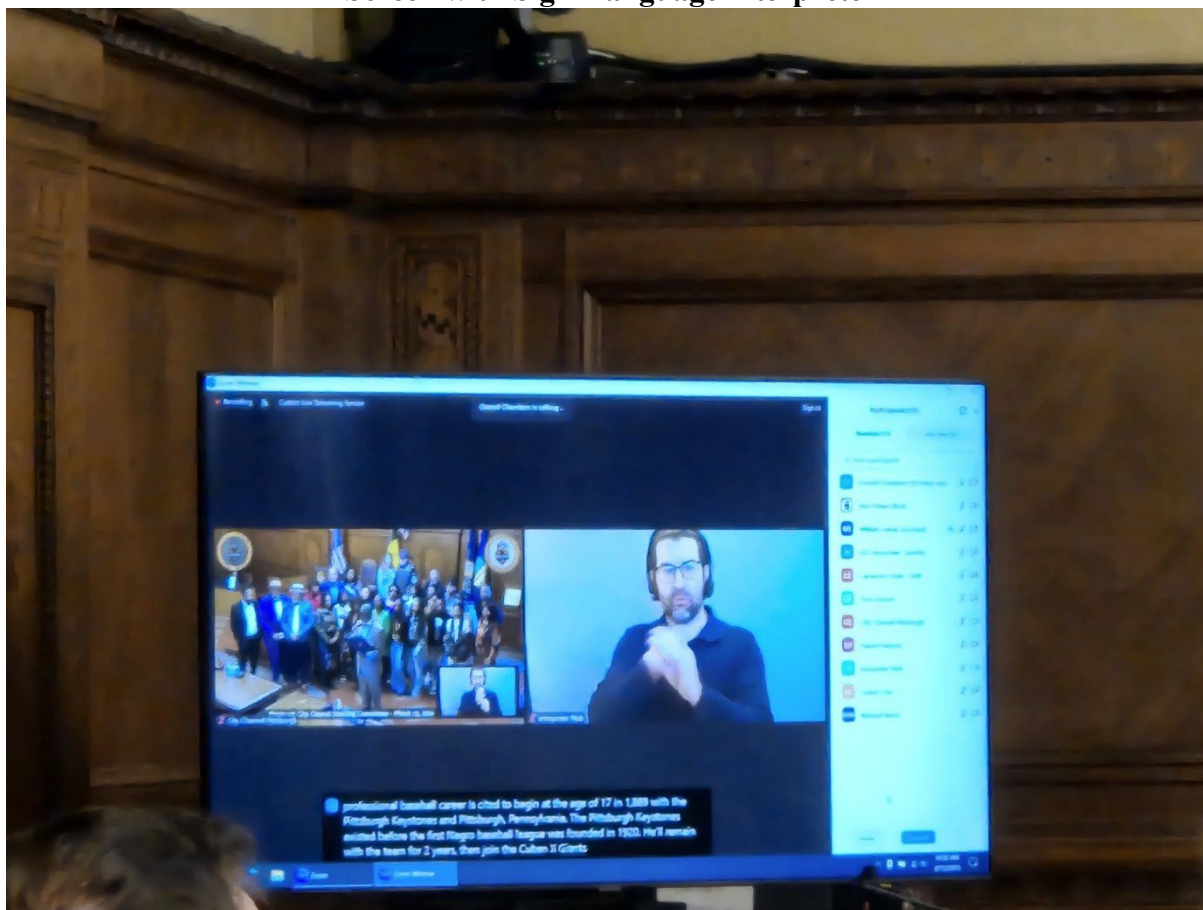


**Exhibit E**  
**Pittsburgh City Council**  
**Council Chambers**  
**Side Benches**





**Exhibit F**  
**Pittsburgh City Council**  
**Council Chambers**  
**Screen with Sign Language Interpreter**



**Exhibit G**  
**Pittsburgh City Council**  
**Council Chambers**  
**Screen with Sign Language Interpreter**  
**From the Back of the Chambers**



**Exhibit H**  
**Pittsburgh City Council**  
**Council Chambers**  
**Speakers**





**Exhibit I**  
**Pittsburgh City Council**  
**Council Chambers**  
**Agenda**

