



Charles A. Smyth
City Clerk

City of Urbana
400 South Vine Street
Urbana, IL 61801
(217)384-2366
FAX (217)384-2301
casmyth@urbanaininois.us

August 6, 2018

To: City Council Members, Mayor Marlin
CC: Carol Mitten, City Administrator; Jim Simon, City Attorney

RE: Consent Agenda

Council Members and Mayor:

It is my understanding that there is interest in developing a procedure to speed up approval of routine city items with nearly unanimous support and little controversy. Other communities in Illinois and elsewhere use a procedure known as a "Consent Agenda" as part of their regular meeting procedures.

The consent agenda is a version of omnibus voting. Under current rules, a move to consider a group of ordinances and resolutions together in a single vote takes a motion and second to group them as omnibus followed by unanimous consent (voice vote) of the corporate authorities. A roll call vote on the omnibus package would follow based on the strictest requirements of any given ordinance or resolution. That is, if a supermajority is required by Ordinance Y then it would take a supermajority to pass ALL of the items in the omnibus vote. If one of the items in the omnibus requires the mayor's vote (the corporate authorities), then the mayor would vote as part of the single omnibus vote. In other words, different kinds of ordinances and resolutions may be combined but the voting requirements reflect the strictest item in the omnibus content.

In giving thought to how we could accomplish this within Urbana's current agenda structure using the Committee of the Whole, as set by City Ordinance, I would suggest creating a category within the committee report to council for the consent items:

F. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

1. **Committee Of The Whole** – Items Recommended to Be Considered in Omnibus Fashion (*Council Member*)
Ordinances/Resolutions a, b, c, etc.
2. **Committee Of The Whole** – (Items to be Considered in Regular Order *Council Member*)
Ordinances/Resolutions a, b, c, etc.

At Committee meetings, instead of sending to council with a recommendation for approval, the motion could be to send to council with a recommendation for approval and direction to the clerk to place in the consent section. If it's obviously unanimous this could be a single motion. If it's not, two steps required here as some might object to sending to council but once going, would support it being part of the omnibus. Alternatively, you could allow the Clerk in consultation with the Mayor to place obvious items in the consent agenda portion.

For council meetings, under Reports of Standing Committees, the reporting committee chair would report that there are **n** items in the consent portion for omnibus vote. If anyone objects, including



the mayor, to any of the items being in the omnibus vote or something has come up affecting the item, the ordinance or resolution is automatically moved out for separate discussion and vote into the Regular Order portion. Then a motion accepting the “consent agenda” placing these items before council in omnibus fashion should be made by the reporting chair. As stated earlier, this takes unanimous consent, including the mayor. The chair would then read the titles of each item noting committee recommendations moving passage, the usual second, and then a subsequent roll call vote after any discussion desired for the package of items in the omnibus.

If council wants to try this approach, I would recommend beginning with resolutions and ordinances that require a simple majority, are routine, and have unanimous support. Once the mechanisms are understood and worked out, more time can be saved by adding in those items requiring supermajority or corporate authority level voting. There would be no need to change city code at this time as the City Council is free to suspend its rules if it sees fit in the meantime. However, long term, if successful, it would be appropriate to amend Section 2-27 of city code and make this a standalone item on the agenda.

The efficiency of such omnibus procedures is gained only if there are 3 or more items because of the mechanics involved. However, if organized properly for a string of routine items, this could make meetings faster.

If there are any questions, please email me. If this is of interest to a majority of council members, we can place this on committee for discussion.

-Charlie

