



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL
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SAINT PAUL, MN 55102

To: Members of the Saint Paul City Council

From: Jay Willms, Director of Council Operations

Date: August 5, 2026

Re: Additional Background on Proposed Deputy City Clerk Classification

In response to AFSCME Local 2508's concerns regarding the proposed Deputy City Clerk position, I want to provide additional context on the purpose and structure of the position.

Argument: There is no clear need for this position to be non-represented.

The Deputy City Clerk is more than a clerical or administrative position. State law and our City Charter provides that the Deputy serves at the pleasure of the City Clerk and may exercise the same powers and duties as the Clerk when the Clerk is absent or unable to serve. The proposed structure reflects that unique authority and direct accountability to the Clerk and, by extension, the Director of Operations.

Argument: This work is currently performed by a union employee.

Some duties overlap, but the positions are not equivalent. The Deputy would have broader leadership responsibilities and authority to act on behalf of the City Clerk. The current out-of-title arrangement itself demonstrates that these responsibilities exceed the Executive Assistant classification.

Argument: This will result in the loss of a union job.

The purpose of the proposal is not to eliminate represented work. It is to establish a higher-level position with responsibilities and authority beyond the existing Executive Assistant role. Represented employees will continue to perform important work within the Office of the City Council. In addition, if a represented employee is appointed to the Deputy City Clerk position, they would retain reinstatement rights under the City Charter. If the appointment ended, the employee would resume an Executive Assistant position.

Argument: Classified status is necessary for continuity and preventing politicization.

Appointed status does not make a position political. The City has numerous appointed professional staff who provide continuity across elections and changes in Council

membership. The Deputy's responsibility would be to the professional administration of the Clerk's Office, not to a political agenda.

Argument: Previous Deputy or Assistant City Clerks were represented.

The Assistant City Clerk has been a represented position. However, based on the history I have reviewed, the Deputy City Clerk role has not been a represented position. While the history of the Assistant City Clerk position is relevant, it is not an apples-to-apples comparison and does not determine how the proposed Deputy position must be structured today. The relevant question is whether the authority, responsibilities, and accountability of the proposed position support its classification. In my view, the Charter provisions governing the Deputy City Clerk support an unclassified, appointed role.

Argument: Union employees can already sign legally binding documents.

That is true, but signing documents is not the central issue. The Deputy's statutory authority is broader: the Deputy may exercise the powers and duties of the City Clerk. The relevant distinction is the authority to act in the Clerk's place *as a public officer*, not simply the ability to sign a document.

Argument: An Executive Assistant has already performed these responsibilities.

The employee has performed higher-level duties through an out-of-title assignment precisely because those responsibilities exceed the Executive Assistant classification. The proposal establishes a permanent position with authority, compensation, and accountability that appropriately reflect that higher-level work.

In closing, the proposed Deputy City Clerk position is intended to formalize a longstanding operational need, establish clear authority when the City Clerk is unavailable, and appropriately align the position's responsibilities, authority, compensation, and accountability.

This approach is also consistent with the Council's existing staffing model, which distinguishes between represented professional positions and higher-level appointed positions with greater responsibility, discretion, and accountability. Similar structures exist within the Policy Analyst, Budget Analyst, and Hearing Officer series. The proposal applies that same organizational principle to the Clerk function by creating a position that reflects the distinct authority and responsibilities expected of a Deputy City Clerk as outlined in State Law and our City Charter.