

PLANS AND POLICIES COMMITTEE MEETING

November 12, 2025

2:00 p.m.

Councilman Denny Whayne Conference Room (Busch Building, 4th Floor)
840 Boonville Avenue

MEMBERS

PRESENT: Abe McGull, Chair; Callie Carroll; Craig Hosmer; and Heather Hardinger.

MEMBERS

ABSENT: None.

COUNCIL/ STAFF

PRESENT: Jordan Paul, City Attorney; Maurice S. Jones, Deputy City Manager; Collin Quigley, Deputy City Manager; Melissa Hart, Assistant Director of Public Information and Civic Engagement; Cora Scott, Director of Public Information and Civic Engagement; Tonia Stopka, City Clerk Administrative Specialist; and Anita Cotter, City Clerk.

GUESTS: Kai Sutton, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Lexi Amos, Missouri Jobs with Justice; Laura Ransin, Missouri Jobs with Justice; Joe Schlesinger, Missouri Jobs with Justice; Roman Moody, Missouri Jobs with Justice; Ben Sonnuntaez, Missouri Jobs with Justice; Keira Richardson, Missouri Jobs with Justice; Johnny Delmonico, Missouri Jobs with Justice; Liz Wertz, Missouri Jobs with Justice; Rachel Jamieson, Missouri Jobs with Justice; Davonna Liccvans, Missouri Jobs with Justice; Linda Simkins, citizen; Jack McGee, *Springfield Daily Citizen*; Karen Craigs, *Springfield Business Journal*; Mana Mize, *Springfield News-Leader*; and Ben Verstraete, KSMU Radio.

Chair/Committee Opening Remarks

Councilmember Abe McGull, Chair, called the meeting to order at approximately 2:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

Councilmember McGull indicated, consideration of a proposed ordinance to amend the City Code by enacting a new section 46-6 "Campaign Finance," would be the meeting topic.

Roll call was conducted. Present: Callie Carroll, Heather Hardinger, Craig Hosmer, and Abe McGull. Absent: None.

Councilmember Carroll moved to approve the October 15, 2025, meeting minutes as presented. Councilmember Hardinger seconded the motion, and it was approved by the following vote: Ayes: Hardinger, Carroll, Hosmer, and McGull. Nays: None. Absent: None. Abstain: None.

Plans and Policies approved on
December 10, 2025

Presentation: Campaign Finance

Councilmember McGull introduced Maurice S. Jones, Deputy City Manager, who turned the meeting over to Jordan Paul, City Attorney.

Mr. Paul explained individual contribution limits were constitutional if enacted for the purpose of avoiding quid pro quo candidate corruption. He shared Missouri State Law limits individual contributions to \$2,825 state-wide, \$2,400 for state senators, \$2,000 for state representatives, and \$0 for local office. He noted the contribution limits did not apply to Political Action Committees (PACs), campaign committees, candidate committees, and continuing committees as they had different rules.

Mr. Paul noted the overarching local trend had been to not enforce individual contribution limits. He shared the trend was disrupted on September 3, 1996, when General Ordinance 4640 was adopted to enact local campaign finance rules; however, General Ordinance 6627 repealed those rules on December 14, 2020. He explained the purpose of the Missouri Ethics Commission (MEC) was to report contributions and expenditures and enforce civil and administrative fines. He noted the County Prosecutor could also impose criminal charges.

Mr. Paul provided examples of campaign finance ordinance structures in Kansas City and St. Louis, including their contribution limits, local MEC equivalents, enforcement methods, and penalties.

Mr. Paul introduced Councilmember Hosmer's draft campaign finance ordinance which would limit contributions to \$2,600, utilize the City Clerk's Office for reporting, be enforced by City Attorney prosecution, and be penalized by fine and/or jail. He shared that the investigation process was still unclear and required more attention.

Committee Questions and Responses

In response to Committee member questions, Mr. Paul indicated the local 2020 campaign finance ordinance repeal effort had gained momentum due to a change to State contribution limits. He added contribution limits for Kansas City were in effect in 2014 and in effect for St. Louis in 2016; neither ordinance had been successfully challenged.

Councilmember Carroll invited discussion on how fundraising created opportunities for candidate name recognition and noted term limits were needed to keep lesser-known candidates in the mix.

Councilmember McGull emphasized how the ordinance created legitimacy and transparency but could also complicate the process and create limitations. He referenced Section D and E of the proposal and questioned whether tasking the City Clerk's Office with reporting created a conflict of interest when the MEC was available and efficient. He also emphasized the voluntary role of Council members in contrast to the paid City Council positions in Kansas City and St. Louis.

In response to questions, Mr. Paul highlighted how the City Clerk's Office, the MEC, or an MEC equivalent, or a combination of those resources, could be utilized. He indicated the MEC

equivalents utilized in St. Louis and Kansas City were composed of a volunteer board with staff support.

Mayor Pro Tem Hardinger inquired if there were cities with unpaid Council members who also had term limits. She emphasized the difference in motivation between a candidate who campaigned for a paid job versus a candidate who wished to voluntarily serve.

Councilmember Hosmer noted that the proposal to utilize the City Clerk's Office along with the MEC was not very different from the current process for financial disclosures and should therefore not complicate the matter. He suggested the City model Springfield like other benchmark cities of Missouri. Mayor Pro Tem Hardinger remarked benchmark cities had paid positions which created a different dynamic.

Councilmember Hosmer shared his view that if the governor, state senators, and state representatives had reasonable contribution limitations, then local government should have them, as well. He expressed his belief the Committee may decide that another amount was more reasonable, but a limit was needed.

Councilmember McGull indicated the Committee members seemed to agree with term limits but questioned if the contribution limits would add another layer of bureaucracy and potentially direct money to PACs.

Mayor Pro Tem Hardinger questioned if an additional task force was needed to document reported contributions. Mr. Paul clarified that with the investigation process of the draft unclear, a group may be needed to ensure all contributions were disclosed.

Councilmember McGull pointed to the draft language which indicated all reports may be made public upon request and emphasized the likeness to Sunshine requests. He expressed concern with the burden of additional responsibilities, time commitments, and costs to the City Clerk's Office.

Councilmember Hosmer called attention to page 3, section D2, line 96 of the draft proposal for discussion. The section directed any political committee not required by State law to file a disclosure report with the MEC to instead file a disclosure with the City Clerk. Mr. Paul clarified the four types of committees defined in chapter 130 were campaign committees, candidate committees, continuing committees, and PACs; and that the term, political committee, did not exist in State law. The Committee members agreed that Section D2 could be removed for clarity.

Mayor Pro Tem Hardinger shared her concern with duplicate reporting to the MEC and City Clerk's Office. Councilmember McGull concurred but expressed his belief a mechanism to enforce campaign limits was needed.

Mr. Paul clarified that the MEC could be used but would not enforce the ordinance because there was no State regulation on local limits. He referred to the MEC equivalent in Kansas City and St. Louis, which was called the Municipal Officials and Officers Ethics Commission. He

emphasized that they went beyond cross-checks into the realm of investigation and enforced penalties by way of the Municipal Court.

Councilmember McGull inquired if the ordinance could be made to include term limits. Mr. Paul responded that a change to the Charter would be needed to add term limits.

Mayor Pro Tem Hardinger suggested reporting and other details of the ordinance be further workshopped and the Committee members agreed to look more closely at examples from other cities.

Anita Cotter, City Clerk, noted public comment cards had been collected and provided to the Committee members. Councilmember Hosmer invited the public to speak. Johnny Delmonico shared her belief that individual contribution limits would foster fairness and concurred Springfield should model themselves after ordinances in benchmark cities.

Councilmember McGull expressed his hope for a more complete draft to be presented at the next Plans and Policies Committee meeting on December 10, 2025.

Adjournment

Councilmember Carroll moved to adjourn. Councilmember Hardinger seconded the motion, and it was approved by the following vote: Ayes: Hardinger, Carroll, Hosmer, and McGull. Nays: None. Absent: None. Abstain: None.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:53 p.m.
Prepared by Tonia Stopka