

November 5, 2023

Dear Members of the City Council and Mayor Brandon Johnson:

On November 2, 2023, the City Council was called to a Special Meeting to hear resolutions proposed by several Chicago Aldermen to place referendum questions on the March 2023 primary ballot. During this meeting, several incidents occurred that require the City Council to censure one of our members.

This letter represents notice that the undersigned Alderpersons will move during Miscellaneous Business to censure Alderperson Carlos Ramirez-Rosa (35th Ward) for abuse of power and serious misconduct that occurred during and around the November 2nd Special Meeting.

Under our Rules of Order and the Open Meetings Act, in order to proceed with any City Council meeting, a quorum of 26 of the 50 members must be present. During a quorum roll call – as with any vote of the City Council – all members present in Council Chambers are required to cast a vote under Rule 14, and any member in the anteroom should enter to cast their vote for the quorum roll call under our Rules and longstanding City Council custom and practice.

During the second quorum roll call, Alderperson Ramirez-Rosa physically blocked Alderperson Emma Mitts by forcibly using his elbow and shoulder to prevent her from entering Council Chambers. His use of force intimidated Alderperson Mitts by instilling fear and apprehension while she was attempting to enter Council Chambers to cast her vote. Although she was able to eventually get around Alderperson Ramirez-Rosa and enter Council Chambers, his use of intimidation to prevent Alderperson Mitts from voting – the quintessential function of a legislator, and indeed her duty under Rule 14 – is a wrongful act requiring censure.

Alderperson Ramirez-Rosa further violated Rule 14 by not only ignoring the roll call vote while entering and exiting the anteroom, but also by entering Council Chambers and remaining out of sight to avoid casting a vote in spite of the fact that there was a pending roll call vote. Not only was it inappropriate and contrary to longstanding City Council custom and practice for Alderperson Ramirez-Rosa to remain in Council Chambers during a pending roll call while hiding from the Clerk's view, it was also in direct violation of his duty under Rule 14: "Every member who shall be present when a question is stated from the Chair shall vote thereon electronically or, at the discretion of the Chair, verbally, unless excused by the Council."

Further, during a recess of the Special Meeting, Alderperson Carlos Ramirez-Rosa obstructed a meeting of the Committee on Economic, Capital and Technology Development – of which he is not a member – by verbally threatening both Alderperson Felix Cardona in an attempt to pressure the Alderperson from returning to Council Chambers when the Special Meeting resumed.

During the relative same timeframe, while the special meeting was being called to quorum, Alderperson Ramirez-Rosa went directly to Alderperson Nicole Lee at her seat on the council floor and pressured her to leave the council chambers.

Finally, during the debate on the council floor, Alderperson Ramirez-Rosa approached Alderperson Chris Taliaferro in the annex area of the council chambers and asked him to leave the meeting. When informed that he would stay for the meeting Alderperson Ramirez-Rosa stated that If Alderperson Taliaferro did not leave the meeting, he should not expect any support from him in his committee.

Alderperson Ramirez-Rosa's threats included blocking any future zoning legislation in Alderperson Cardona's, Alderperson Lee's and Alderpersons Taliaferro's respective wards from passing out of the Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards, where Alderperson Ramirez-Rosa currently serves as Chair, not only violating the rights of those Alderpersons, but also potentially violating the due process rights of their constituents.

Such threats made by Alderperson Ramirez-Rosa were not mere legislative "horse trading", but rather are a clear abuse of power reminiscent of the worst aspects of our City's political history. This body has seen the censure and expulsion of members for similar acts of misconduct throughout its history, and members have also resigned or been removed as Chair of a committee for similar conduct.

Simply put, Alderperson Carlos Ramirez-Rosa's conduct demands censure.

While City Council may censure its members under Rule 50, we are also under an obligation to "report, directly and without undue delay, to the inspector general any and all information concerning conduct which such employee or official knows or should reasonably know to involve corrupt or other unlawful activity ... by another city employee or official which concerns such employee's or official's employment or office" under Section 2-156-018 of the Ethics Ordinance. As such, we will be filing complaints with the Chicago Inspector General and the Board of Ethics. We therefore ask for both entities to undertake further investigation of the physical and verbal threats, or any other unlawful or prohibited conduct, made by Alderperson Carlos Ramirez-Rosa, and report the results of such investigations to the public in accordance with the City Code.

Despite the often-heated debates in City Council, these known acts committed by Alderperson Carlos Ramirez-Rosa are unbecoming of a member of City Council. These acts are an affront to the Council members and all Chicagoans and require immediate action. Therefore, in addition to offering a motion to censure Alderperson Ramirez-Rosa during the next regular meeting of City Council, we call upon the Mayor to remove Alderperson Ramirez-Rosa as his floor leader, and will be introducing a resolution to remove Alderperson Ramirez-Rosa as Chair of the Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards.