

Minneapolis City Council 101

Created by Heather Silsbee for the Southwest Alliance for Equity (SWAE)

02/06/2024

Who am I? (Disclosures)

- Minnesota (Saint Paul) resident since 2010
- Minneapolis resident since 2020 (Ward 13 & Ward 7)
- Editor for a nonprofit (unrelated to local politics)
- On the SWAE leadership team
- Progressive/lefty
- Worked on Mike Norton's Ward 13 City Council campaign in 2021
- Supported Katie Cashman's Ward 7 campaign in 2023
- Big fan of facts and data!

Agenda

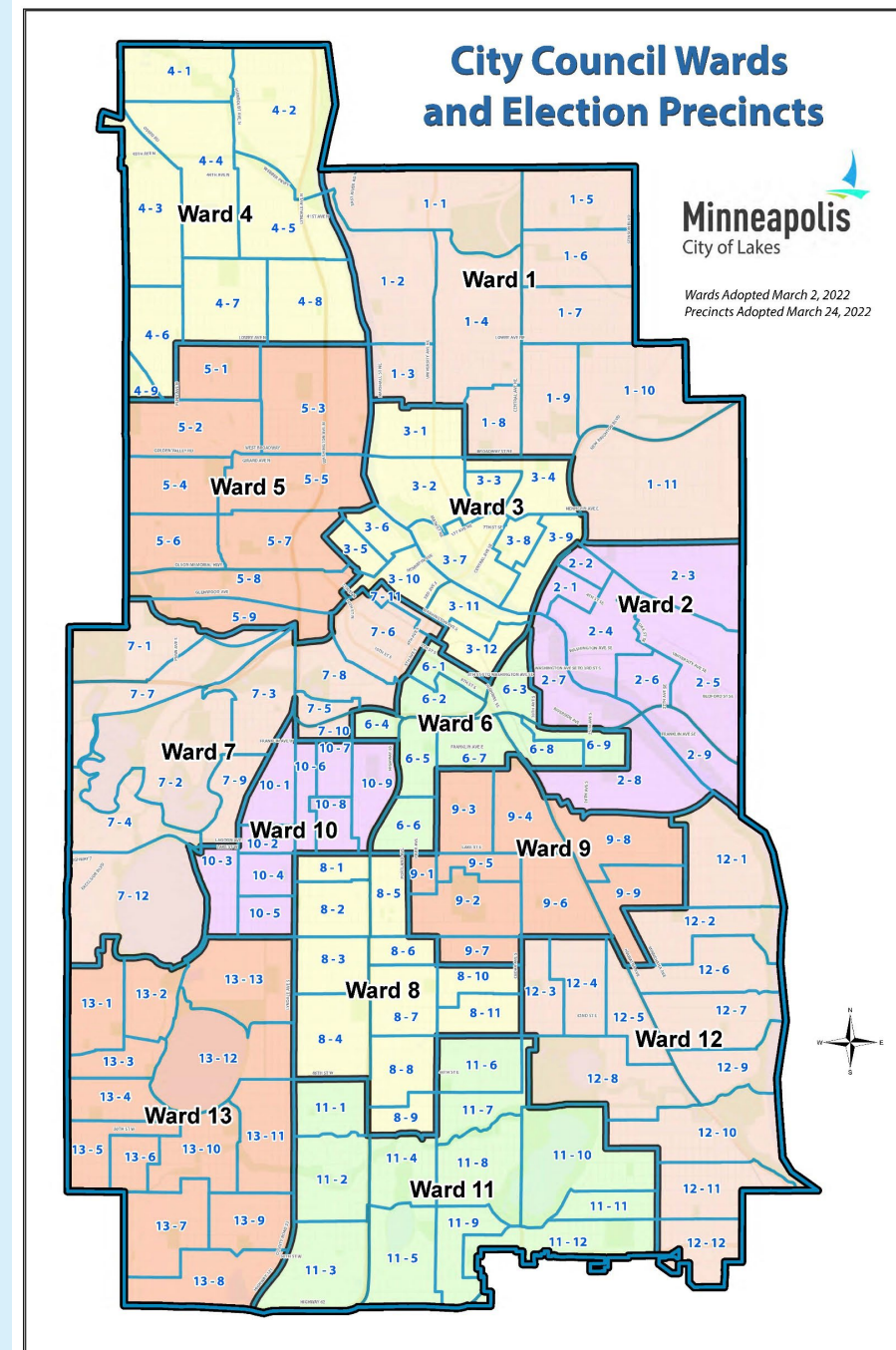
- Who is the Minneapolis City Council?
- How does the City Council work?
- What do they do?
- How can I keep track of Council actions?
- How can I affect Council actions?
- Current Issues to Watch
- City Council Myths



What Is My Ward?

Map Revised in 2022

www.minneapolismn.gov/government/city-council/find-my-ward/



Who Is My Council Member?



Ward 1: Elliott Payne



**Ward 2:
Robin Wonsley**



**Ward 3:
Michael Rainville**



**Ward 4:
LaTrisha Vetaw**



**Ward 5:
Jeremiah Ellison**



Ward 6: Jamal Osman



**Ward 7:
Katie Cashman**



**Ward 8:
Andrea Jenkins**



Ward 9: Jason Chavez



**Ward 10:
Aisha Chughtai**



Ward 11: Emily Koski



**Ward 12:
Aurin Chowdhury**



**Ward 13:
Linea Palmisano**

Meet the New Council Members

Katie Cashman: Ward 7



- Loring Heights resident
- Extensive background in climate policy, including work at the UN and Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
- Replaced Lisa Goodman, who retired and endorsed her opponent
- Part of left coalition/may swing moderate

Aurin Chowdhury: Ward 12



- Lifetime Southside resident, daughter of Bengali immigrants
- Extensive background in community organizing and MN politics, including positions with state Sen. Kari Dziedzic, CM Steve Fletcher, and CM Jason Chavez
- Replaced Andrew Johnson, who left early and endorsed her
- Solid member of left coalition

2024–2025 Council Leadership & Powers



President
Elliott Payne



Vice President
Aisha Chughtai

- President chairs City Council meetings
- Vice President chairs Committee of the Whole meetings
- Manage the Council's agenda
- Appoint members to committees
- Establish culture and decorum of Council

Political Balance of the Council

Ward 2:
Robin Wonsley



Ward 9:
Jason Chavez



Ward 1:
Elliott Payne



Ward 7:
Katie Cashman



Ward 8:
Andrea Jenkins



Ward 13:
Linea Palmisano



Ward 3:
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Ward 10:
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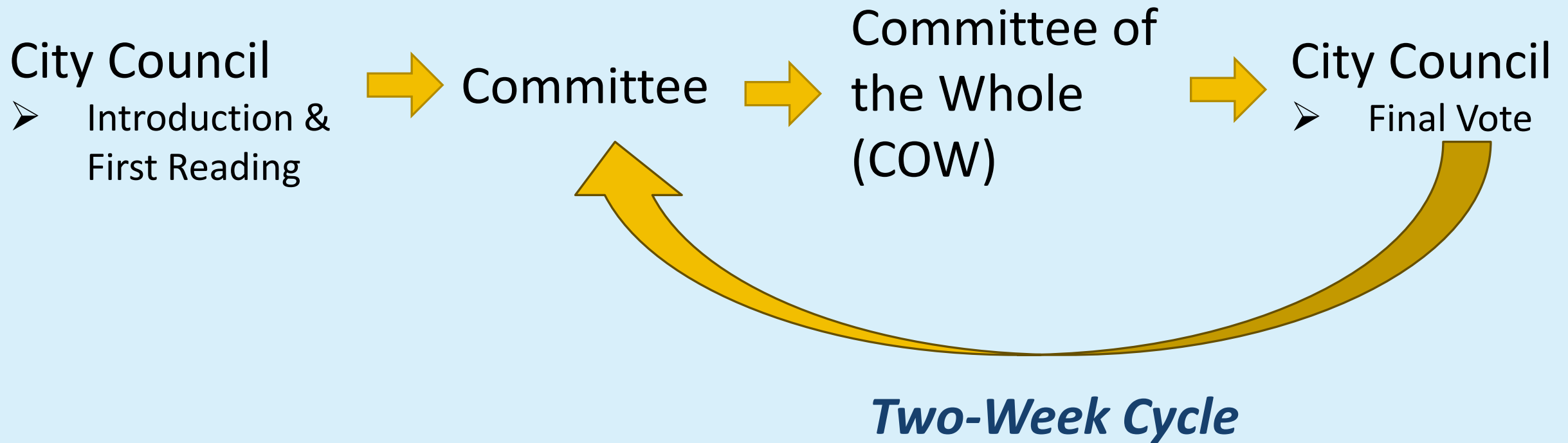
How Does the Council Work?

Committees



How Does the Council Work?

Council Cycle

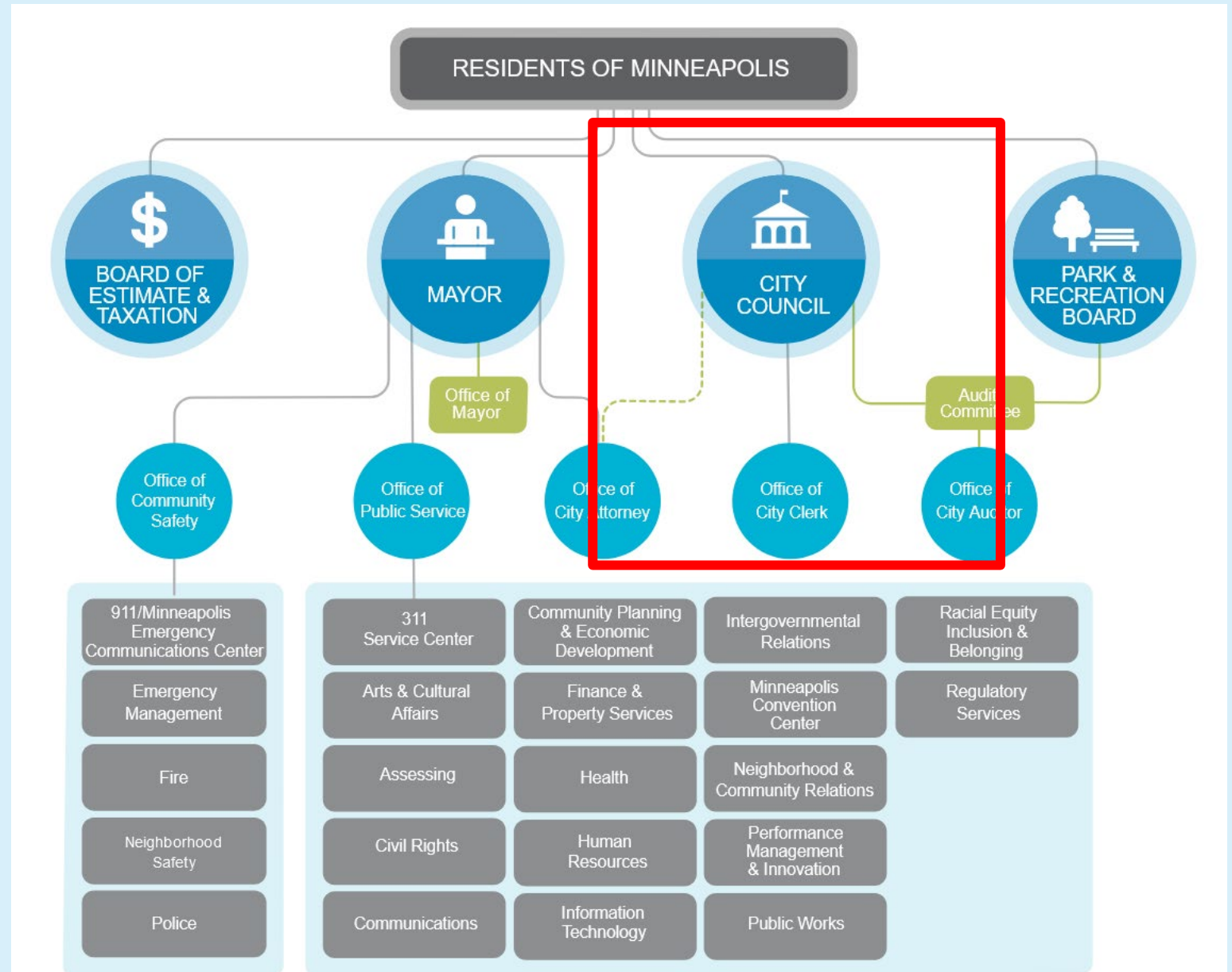


What does the Council do?

- Craft and pass city ordinances (local laws and policies)
- Amend and approve the city budget
- Approve city contracts
- Approve land use and development applications
- Approve infrastructure projects
- Confirm the Mayor's top staff
- Use their platform to put issues on the public record
- Represent the interests of their constituents (you!)

Government (Re)Structure

New structure took effect in 2022



Lasting Effects of Government Restructure

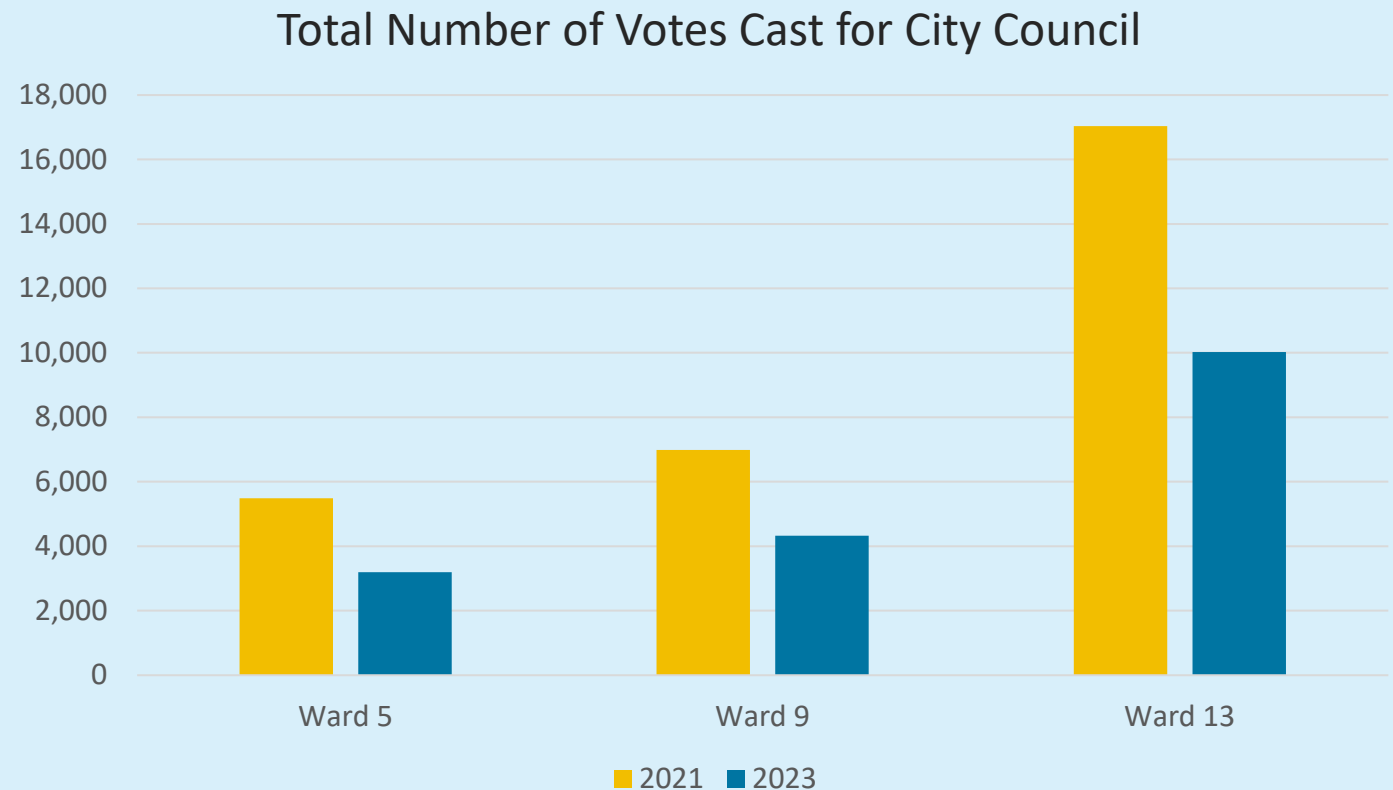
- Confusion over roles & responsibilities of council members, including open disagreements at council meetings
- Need to establish new processes for some common council actions (ongoing)
- Reduced oversight and confirmation power over city department leadership
- Barriers created between council members and city staff
 - All information and analysis now needs to be formally requested through a “legislative directive”
 - Technically, all such directives are fulfilled at the pleasure of the Mayor (he can block access to information)
 - Process of crafting ordinances is slower and more complex – though should also have more staying power

Lasting Effects of Government Restructure: Responses from Council

- To compensate from their reduced access to city staff, Council has been creating many new staff positions in the legislative department.
 - Several added in 2023 and several more just recently approved in the 2024 budget
- Progressive CMs have been filing a lot of legislative directives to get data, research, and history on specific issues from staff
- New Council President Payne & VP Chughtai seem interested in making better use of their “power of the purse”
 - VP Chughtai chairs the Budget Committee and has changed it from being a seasonal committee to meeting year-round
 - Progressive CMs have proposed moving the annual budget discussions earlier in the year to allow more time for CM and public responses
 - Progressive CMs are researching the creation of a participatory budgeting system

Is the Council still useful? Is it even worth paying attention to?

- My opinion:
 - Yes, it is still useful (see slide 11).
 - If equity is the goal, a powerful City Council is essential.
 - Every ward gets 1/13th of the power on the Council.
 - In contrast, city-wide offices (e.g., the Mayor) are disproportionately elected by whiter, wealthier areas of the city (e.g., ward 13).



Source: <https://vote.minneapolismn.gov/results-data/election-results/>

How do I pay attention?

- [LIMS](#) (Legislative Information Management System)
- [@mplsclerk](#) on Twitter
- [Budget Information](#)
- [Watch Meetings](#) (City of Minneapolis on YouTube)
- [Ward Newsletters](#)
- [Minneapolis Documenters](#)
- [Josh Martin's Document Library](#)
- [WedgeLIVE](#) (Twitter & Podcast)

How can I participate?

- Attend [public hearings](#)
 - Register ahead of time
 - Plan and practice remarks, maximum of 2 minutes
- Submit [public comments](#)
- Attend your Council Member's events
- Request a meeting with your Council Member
- Call & email your Council Member
 - Mention in your email that you want it added to the public record
- Vote! Next City Council election will be next year (2025)
- Encourage your neighbors to do the same

Current Issues to Watch

- Participatory budgeting
- Encampment response ordinances
- New Third Precinct
- Future of George Floyd Square
- Appointment of “Effective Law Enforcement For All” to monitor MPD consent decrees
- Expansion of residents’ power to develop ballot initiatives
- Charter Commission: Currently discussing a potential charter amendment that would significantly reduce the number of positions that are subject to Council confirmation

City Council Myths

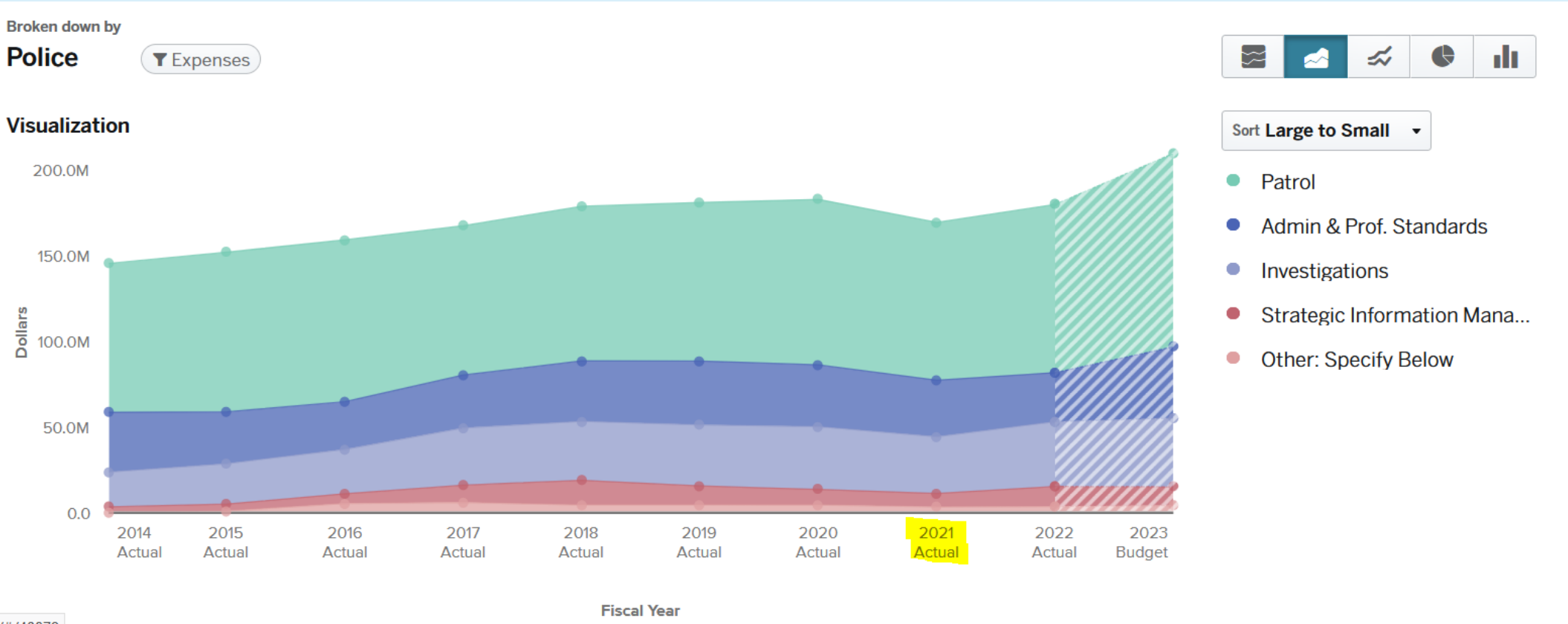
MYTH: The Minneapolis City Council defunded the police

FACTS:

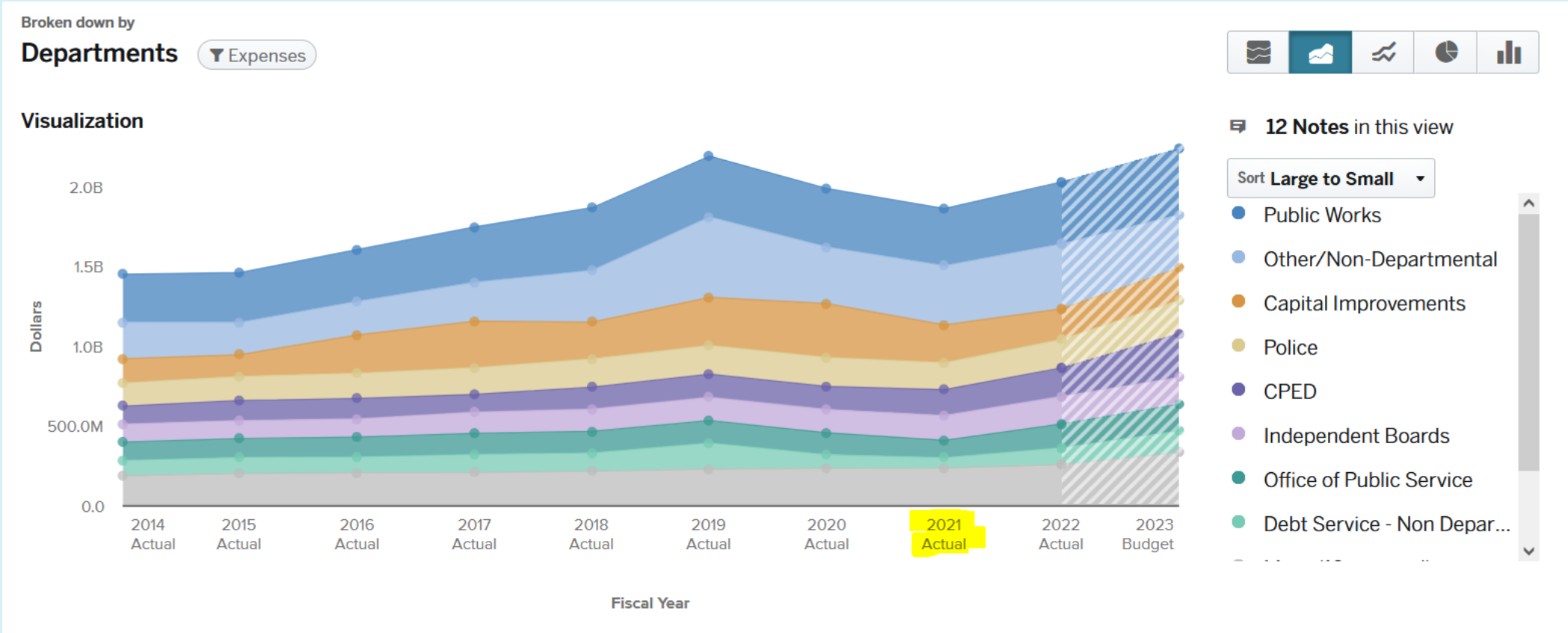
- Source of the myth: A majority of the 2020 City Council came up to the stage when community activists asked them to pledge to defund the police
- While several CMs do still agree with that approach, several others have since said they regretted that action and/or didn't understand what they were being asked
- Standing on a stage is not an official Council action
- “In 2021, \$8 million was reallocated from the police budget. Then later that year, the city voted down a ballot initiative that would've remade the police department into a department of public safety. It was a defeat for the Defund movement. By the 2022 budget the MPD had more cash on hand than they did before Floyd's murder.”

Source: www.motherjones.com/politics/2022/08/minneapolis-police-defund-george-floyd-city-budget/

MYTH: The Minneapolis City Council defunded the police



MYTH: The Minneapolis City Council defunded the police



MYTH: Mayor Frey has his hands tied by the City Council.

FACTS:

- The Mayor has always had unilateral control of the MPD
<https://twitter.com/i/status/1412789240509960193>
- The government structure implemented in 2022 significantly reduced the power of council to affect the actions of city departments & leadership
- The Mayor has veto power – 9 votes required to overturn a veto

Questions?
