

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Chicago Riverwalk is a 1.25-mile-long path adjacent to the south bank of the Main Branch of the Chicago River which enhances residents' and visitors' enjoyment of Chicago, drawing thousands of people each year to enjoy recreational, entertainment, food and beverage and retail facilities on the Riverwalk; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Fleet and Facility Management (2FM) manages the Riverwalk and issues requests for proposals inviting the submission of proposals from vendors to operate concessions along the Riverwalk – 2FM's procurement specifically aims to provide opportunities to businesses offering concession services reflective of the cultural diversity and neighborhoods of the City; and

WHEREAS, in response to recent criticism of the program in the press, the Mayor's Office noted that "the purpose of the RFP process is to ensure that Chicagoans benefit from a competitive bidding process that takes into account a number of factors"; and

WHEREAS, according to the 2FM's request for proposals for 2025, "[a]ll timely responses to this RFP will be reviewed and evaluated by an evaluation committee appointed by the Commissioner, which will recommend to the Commissioner Respondent(s) for tentative award of a contract"; and

WHEREAS, though the RFP mentions the transparency of the program, and the evaluation criteria are detailed enough to assign specific point values for proposals, in reality, the awarding of a vendor contract is in the "sole and absolute discretion" of the Commissioner and Budget Director; and

WHEREAS, the RFP process has been described as a black box hidden from public view – with no apparent public meetings of the evaluation committee; and

WHEREAS, without a transparent and public facing RFP process, the City has missed out on revenue opportunities such as the unexplained nonrenewal of a Riverwalk tenant in 2023, which resulted in the City losing out on about \$800,000 in taxes and fees because the space was left vacant – money that the City sorely needs at this time of historic budget deficits; and

WHEREAS, City government should strive to be as transparent as possible and avoid leaving significant governmental and budgeting decisions in the discretion of one or two unelected officials; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that we, the members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, call on the Committee on Contracting Oversight and Equity to hold a subject matter hearing on the City's process for awarding vendor contracts for the Riverwalk; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the following City officials or their designees should be invited to provide testimony at such hearing: the Commissioner of Fleet and Facility Management, the Budget Director, and the Corporation Counsel.



GILBERT VILLEGAS
Alderman, 36th Ward