

2024 Budget Opening Statement

Dept 72 - Office of Climate and Environmental Equity/ Department of Environment

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Good morning, Chair Ervin, Vice Chair Lee, and honorable members of City Council. Thank you for this opportunity to address you today on behalf of the Office of Climate and Environmental Equity, and under the proposed 2024 budget, the restored City of Chicago Department of Environment. I am before you today to address the critical matter of the Department of Environment's budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Before I delve into both the accomplishments of last year and the initiatives ahead, I want to express our deepest gratitude to the Chicago City Council. Your support and partnership over the past few years have been instrumental in our pursuit of a sustainable, just, and equitable Chicago.

In our collaborative efforts with this Council, local advocates, civic leaders, business leaders and partner departments we have developed a comprehensive environmental agenda that places equity at the forefront. We have worked tirelessly with various departments to ensure that sustainability is prioritized throughout our operations and functions as a City. The Office of Climate and Environmental Equity is guided by the 2022 Climate Action Plan. The plan lays out a suite of actions to drastically lower our greenhouse gas emissions as a city - 62% by 2040 - while delivering deep meaningful benefits across all of Chicago's 77 communities.

FY 2023 Update

In the FY 2023 budget, the Office of Climate and Environmental Equity (OCEE) was formed to equitably advance the climate and environmental priorities of the City of Chicago. The Office is tasked with coordinating across departments to mitigate the threats of climate change, alleviate environmental harm in Chicago's most overburdened communities, generate community wealth building opportunities in the green economy, and foster health and resiliency in all 77 community areas.

The Office of Climate and Environmental Equity has convened the Environmental Equity Working Group, fostering collaboration with frontline leaders from environmentally overburdened communities, technical advisors and other stakeholders to co-develop and propel important policies forward.

Along with the Environmental Equity Working Group, we partnered with CDPH on the development of a Cumulative Impacts Assessment, laying the foundation for strategies and policy changes to equitably alleviate environmental harm. Through the development of the CIA, the OCEE and CDPH also convened an interdepartmental working group to develop environmental justice action plans for many departments like DWM, CDPH, DPD, AIS and DPS.

In coordination with CDPH, we also took tremendous strides this year in strengthening the City's effort on heat health and mitigation by co-developing a heat vulnerability index, in

coordination with Northwestern University and informed by public health data and community input.

Furthermore, the OCEE partnered with AIS, DPD, DOH, DSS, CDPH, CDOT, and DWM, to implement various climate and environmental justice initiatives within the Chicago Recovery Plan, one of the largest portfolios in the Recovery Plan with over \$188 million dedicated to this important agenda.

Some of the highlights include:

- Chicago Electric, our ambitious program to electrify 100% of the municipal fleet by 2035, launched successfully in 2023, with the installation of nearly 200 EV charging stations across the city.
- Our first-ever Climate Infrastructure Fund was launched granting over \$6 million dollars to non-profit organizations and small-businesses to accelerate the city's equitable transition to the green economy. Grants were awarded to increase uptake in renewable energy and energy efficiency systems, electric vehicles (EV) and EV charging infrastructure, and green infrastructure. Selection for a second round of funding is underway.
- OCEE partnered with Civic Consulting Alliance, Bloomberg Strategies and OBM to study the City's future of environmental governance and environmental services in order to plan for a reinstated DOE.

Finally, as our new Mayor transitioned into his role, we took formal steps to formalize our new office. In June 2023, we transitioned to a new office space and in September 2023 the City formalized the role of the CSO as the Director of the office when this body approved my appointment.

FY 2024 Initiatives

Looking ahead to 2024, we are focused on increased capacity to achieve our environmental and climate justice goals. We will lay the foundation for a successful department by hiring personnel with the administrative, financial, communications and grants management skills necessary for a fully functioning DOE. We will also begin evaluating a strategy for transferring appropriate existing environmental functions and duties to the Department. The Department of Environment intends to move aggressively and intentionally to realize the climate priorities of the City of Chicago alongside our partner departments, communities, and sister agencies. We are committed to maximizing federal funding such as the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, Climate Pollution Reduction Grants, and clean energy tax incentives made possible by the Inflation Reduction Act.

We intend to make even more progress alongside Parks, CDPH, CDOT and DSS toward Our Roots Chicago, the City's plan to equitably plant over 75,000 trees over the next five years. By the end of 2023, we will reach the halfway point of our goal and intend to maintain the same level of investment for the 2024 fiscal year.

We will continue to work closely with FFM to evaluate opportunities to lower emissions and generate on-site renewable energy on our public assets beginning first with our community-serving buildings.

We will remain in partnership with DSS who just announced their expanded commitment to City-wide composting at 15 sites throughout the city. We will continue to evaluate an expanded commitment to composting and other materials management strategies outlined in the Chicago Waste Strategy.

In collaboration with FFM, we will develop a fleet electrification plan with actionable goals and recommendations, ensuring that we remain at the forefront of sustainable transportation.

As we consider the budget for the future Department of Environment, I ask you to reflect on the extraordinary progress we have made and the incredible potential that lies ahead. We look forward to working with you, in partnership to ensure that we increase capacity for the Department of Environment, as a critical next step to achieving our city's climate and environmental justice goals.

Thank you for your time, your partnership, and your dedication to building a better, more sustainable, and more just Chicago.