



CITY OF WASHINGTON, ILLINOIS

Committee of the Whole Agenda Communication

Meeting Date: August 11, 2025

Prepared By: Police Chief Jeff Stevens

Agenda Item: Review of Door-to-Door Soliciting Code

Explanation: The City Code, Section 16-98, prohibits door-to-door solicitation in a broad sense (<https://washingtonpolice.link/16-98>). Although enacted to protect residents' privacy, the ordinance predates recent First-Amendment case law. Most Illinois municipalities now regulate solicitation through content-neutral time-, place-, and manner-based rules that include permits and cost-recovery fees.

Washington's blanket prohibition is broader than these modern ordinances, leaving the City vulnerable to constitutional challenge, defense costs, and potential damages; enforcement has therefore been suspended. In recent practice, staff collect basic identification from solicitors and issue a written acknowledgment—an informal measure not authorized by § 16-98 and affording residents minimal protection because it is neither universal nor enforceable.

Resident complaints via phone calls, in-person conversations, and social-media posts show continued concern about uninvited solicitation. Updating the ordinance with clear, objective controls would both reassure residents and provide enforceable standards for staff and police.

Regulations might include:

Commercial solicitation permit with photo ID and employer details

Criminal-history exclusions (e.g., felony, theft, or sex-offense convictions)

Limit of two solicitors at an address at one time

Hours restricted (e.g. 8 a.m.–8 p.m., no Sundays or enumerated holidays)

Content-neutral exemptions (e.g., charitable or political canvassing)

Cost-recovery fees covering administration and background checks

Optional "No-Solicitation" registry in addition to posted signs

Permit-display requirement

Revocation/appeal process for fraud or abuse

Fiscal Impact: Initial expenses include legal review and ordinance drafting. Ongoing costs arise from processing applications, maintaining any registry, and enforcing compliance. Appropriately structured permit and background-check fees can offset ongoing costs, making the program near revenue-neutral after implementation.

Action Requested: Provide a consensus on strategic direction of a revised ordinance, including types of regulatory elements to include in a draft revision of § 16-98, so staff can prepare an ordinance for formal consideration. Note that interaction between soliciting regulation and other types of commerce addressed in Section 16, such as itinerant vendors, transient merchants, and mobile vendors, may necessitate review beyond § 16-98.