



FORMS OF GOVERNMENT

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Agenda – FEB. 20TH 2018

1. Background history of various forms of government
2. Basics of Mayor-Council form
3. Pros and Cons of Mayor-Council form
4. Mayor-Council form with City Administrator
5. Basics of Council-Manager form
6. Pros and Cons of Council-Manager form
7. Resources
8. Questions?



Classification and Forms of Government



Class	Mayor-Council	Council-Manager	TOTAL
First	6	4	10
Second	5	0	5
Town	68	0	68
Code	148	49	197
Unclassified	1	0	1
TOTAL	228	53	281

Code City Classification



The optional municipal code was drafted by the legislature in the late 1960s.

Code cities have broad “home rule” authority except in matters of statewide concern.

“Home rule” refers to the authority to carry out responsibilities with a minimum of control by the state legislature.

Mayor-Council Form



Mayor (elected at-large) serves as the city's chief administrative officer

A council (elected either at-large or from districts) serves as the legislative body.

The council formulates and adopts policies and the mayor carries them out.

The mayor attends and presides over council meetings but does not vote, except in the case of a tie.



Pros: Mayor-Council Form

Election of a mayor establishes political leadership.

The city has a political spokesperson with a high degree of visibility.

An elected mayor has higher standing and greater voice in regional affairs.

The mayor has veto power, and can check an unpopular council decision.

Cons: Mayor-Council Form



May give too much power and authority to one person (the mayor).

Permits chief executive to make decisions based on politics and to use office to further political objectives.

A mayor may not have much management training and experience.

If mayor proves to be incompetent they cannot be removed until the end of their term, or after an expensive and divisive recall election.

Mayor-Council Form with CAO



Many mayor-council cities hire professional administrators to assist the mayor with administrative duties.

These cities gain the benefits of professional management, allowing the mayor to focus on policy development and political leadership roles.

Council Manager Form



An elected city council which is responsible for policy making --

A professional city manager, appointed by council, is responsible for administration.

City manager provides policy advice, directs daily operations, handles personnel functions (including appointment and removal of employees) and prepares the city budget.

Council Manager Form



State law prohibits council from interfering with the manager's administration.

Manager is directly accountable to and can be removed by a majority vote of the council at any time.

The mayor presides at council meetings and is head of the city for ceremonial purposes, but has no regular administrative duties.

Pros: Council Manager Form



Administration of city business is removed from politics.

Attention can be given to selecting a qualified manager from a large pool. City managers are paid better than mayors and candidates can be recruited nationwide.

Managers serve at the pleasure of the council and can be removed at any time, limiting the danger of an abuse of authority.



Cons: Council Manager Form

Gives too much power to one person-the city manager.

Managers chosen from outside the city do not know the community.

Councils may leave too much decision making to the manager, who is not directly accountable to the public.

This form is too much like a business corporation which may not be suitable for managing a community.

City managers may cost too much. They may leave when offered higher salaries and greater responsibilities in other cities

Electing Mayor in Council-Manager City



In council-manager cities the council typically chooses, biennially, who shall serve as mayor and chair the meetings.

RCW 35A.13.033 enables a council-manager city to designate one council position as the mayor (or council president) and have the voters choose who shall hold that position.

However, the change to having an elected mayor cannot be done at the same time as making the change to the council-manager form of government.

Resources



MRSC website topic pages:

[City and Town Forms of Government](#)

[Trends in City and Town Forms of Government](#)

Articles linked from the first of the above two pages:

[Common Issues and Pro/Con Arguments in Elections to Change Form of Government](#)

[The Unofficial Role of the Administrator](#)

Questions?



Thank you!

Ask MRSC

Have a question we did not answer today?

Submit your questions online at mrsc.org

Call us at 800-933-6772 (toll free) or 206-625-1300

