



MEMO

Mayor's Office

To: Legislative Committee
From: Mayor Penterman
Date: May 16, 2022
Re: Mayor Term length Change

The City of Kaukauna has a strong track record of having mayors in the seat for a longer period. Going back a few mayors Mayor Rosin served for 12 years, Mayor Lambie served for 12 years, and Mayor Vande Hey for 9 years. It shows that the constituents of Kaukauna like to see some consistently at the helm when they vote on who to run the City.

When you look at this from the surface it appears everything is slow and steady for longer terms in the City of Kaukauna. However, when you get into the details you will see it is a bit fragmented. When a Mayor is elected for the first time or even reelected this happens in the month of April. With that a Mayor has one budget year that he/she will have from start to finish. The first year a new mayor takes office, they are getting the previous Mayor's budget. If an incumbent mayor isn't reelected, they only have 4 months of the budget they created for their last year of their 2-year term.

Aside from the budget there are some projects and initiatives that take much longer than 2 years to see through. Even if a project starts on the first day a Mayor is in office, they are really limited to 20 months of dedicated focus on seeing that project come to fruition. Come December prior to the (re)election year (20 months later) they are likely gearing up for campaigning which takes, time, effort, and focus away from running the City.

This doesn't account for the learning curve a Mayor has the first year he/she is in office. There is a lot to learn from the day-to-day administrative duties. If you think of any other job, it takes a good 2-3 years before someone is truly settled in and gets up the learning curve. Two years doesn't allow enough time for a new mayor to get settled in and make a difference in the City.

If one looks at the City's track record of reelecting mayors for more than one term you can argue that regardless of the length of term, historically the City has had longer standing Mayors. Though this is true, if you assume from December to April are campaigning months on the second year of the terms, each of the previous mayors spent almost one full 2-year term (6 terms x 4 months) focusing on campaigning to get reelected. Which took time away to focus on running the city and making critical decisions during the last 4 months of each term.

Furthermore, when the City went through the process of deciding how to handle the Clerk/Treasurer position back in 2019, we learned that Kaukauna is one of the few of our size in the state with a Mayor on a 2-year term. Most other City's of our size have a Mayor with a 4-year term.

The Mayor term is solidified by City Code 2011, § 1.04. Any change to this would have to come in the form of an ordinance change that is done at the council level.

Recommended Action:

Make a motion to change the term of the Mayor from a two-year term to a four-year term. Making this Change effective on April 16, 2024.