



MEMO

Mayor's Office

To: Legislative Committee
From: Mayor Penterman
Date: August 1, 2022
Re: Mayor Term length Change Follow up

This is a follow up to the discussion from the May 16, 2022, Legislative Committee. Below is additional information regarding the Mayor term. The committee asked staff to check in to other communities to see what they are doing for term lengths. On the following page you will find a table that has 38 municipalities with similar populations to Kaukauna. Some larger and some smaller. The source of the population data is <https://worldpopulationreview.com/states/cities/wisconsin>.

Also included are the three communities we spoke with during the Clerk/Treasurer referendum topic. During these conversations with staff members in those Cities, it inspired the idea of changing the length of Mayor term in the City of Kaukauna. These communities are highlighted green, while Kaukauna is highlighted blue. The Cities listed above Kaukauna are similar in size while the ones below have a range on both sides of Kaukauna and include Villages and Cities.

The more pronounced pattern in the data set is if the city has an administrator or a village President, the mayor's term is either 2 or 3 years. If there is not an administrator, the mayor's term seems to be at 4 years. Full table of data is on next page.

Municipalities surveyed on Mayor term who are similar in size to Kaukauna

<u>Size Rank</u>	<u>Municipality</u>	<u>2022 Population</u>	<u>Administrator (Y or N)</u>	<u>Mayor (Y or N)</u>	<u>Term of Mayor?</u>
26	Manitowoc*	32,510	N	Y	4
28	Neenah*	27,089	N	Y	4
34	De Pere	24,847	Y	Y	2
39	Middleton	20,835	Y	Y	3
40	South Milwaukee	20,441	Y	Y	3
42	Onalaska	19,753	Y	Y	4
44	Marshfield	19,005	Y	Y	2
45	Menasha*	18,002	N	Y	4
46	Cudahy	17,873	Y	Y	3
47	Oconomowoc	17,458	Y	Y	2
48	Wisconsin Rapids	17,382	N	Y	2
50	Menomonie	16,638	Y	Y	2
51	Beaver Dam	16,553	Y	Y	3
54	River Falls	16,258	Y	Y	2
55	Hartford	15,886	Y	Y	3
52	Kaukauna	16,465	N	Y	2
27	West Bend	31,647	N	Y	3
29	V. Mount Pleasant	27,031	Y	Y (Village Pres)	2
30	Superior	25,716	N	Y	4
31	V. Caledonia	25,424	N	Y (Village Pres)	2
32	V. Muskego	25,304	N	Y	3
33	Stevens Point	25,109	N	Y	4
35	Mequon	24,442	N	Y	2
36	Watertown	23,071	N	Y	3
37	V. Pleasant Prairie	21,553	N	Y (Village Pres)	2
38	V. Howard	20,951	Y	Y (Village Pres)	3
41	V. Germantown	20,083	Y	N	0
43	V. Fox Crossing	19,387	N	Y (Village Pres)	2
49	V. Ashwaubenon	17,047	N	Y (Village Pres)	3
53	V. Bellevue	16,427	N	Y (Village Pres)	3
56	V. Weston	15,296	N	Y (Village Pres)	2
57	V. Salem Lakes	15,047	Y	Y (Village Pres)	2
58	Chippewa Falls	14,927	N	Y	2
59	Whitewater	14,883	Y	N	
60	Pewaukee	14,748	N	Y	3
61	V. Hudson	14,604	N	Y	2
62	V. Waunakee	14,469	N	Y (Village Pres)	2
63	V. Greendale	14,416	N	Y (Village Pres)	3

Similar
Size
Cities

Range of
Similar Size
Villages and
Cities

Staff Feedback

Feedback from department heads was requested on their interactions with the Mayor position. The request asked to provide feedback on their preference on term length and why. Four responses were received which are listed below.

Staff Feedback #1

4 Year Term

Pros:

More time to see projects through

More continuity for the organization as a whole as the Mayor sits at the top; frequent changes here could mean the potential for frequent changes to policy, procedure, and communication, often resulting in a lack of communication

Better for strategic planning

Con:

If the candidate in office is not good at their job it makes the situation go on longer

The only comment I have on a three-year term is that it seems more like a compromise for those who feel strongly about two or four years. I don't personally like odd numbers though.

My opinion would be to opt for a four-year term because it would be better in terms of visioning for the City to have someone in office long enough to enact a five-year strategic plan almost in its entirety.

Staff Feedback #2

Obviously, there are pros and cons to lengthening a mayor's term. Operationally, I think it makes sense to move to a 3-year term to allow the elected mayor an opportunity to operate under their own budget

I think the City really needs to evaluate hiring a City Manager or City Administrator. I think having this position would allow consistent, long-term direction regardless of who is holding the office of Mayor. This would also allow the Mayor to focus on their initiatives more intimately while working with the City Manager to oversee City operations.

Staff Feedback #3

I am in favor of a 4-year term for a few reasons. The first being the time it takes for anyone to get up to speed in a new job. I do not think 2 years is enough in fact it is about the time when someone is fully understanding the landscape of an organization and the role. Another reason is it would allow that person more time to create strategic initiatives and see some of them through. With a two-year term we only get 18-20 months of focus before campaigning happens which then takes away the focus from operating the city.

We have also received feedback from staff who ultimately turned away from Kaukauna in fear of the possibility of the mayor position changing so often. The feedback was because the initiative and goals could change more often than she was comfortable with. So, from an operational way of thinking a 4-year term will eliminate many of those challenges as well give more continuity to keep moving the City forward.

Staff Feedback #4

I am in support of a 4-year term mayor.

In other communities I've worked for, they all had 4-year mayors and it worked great. From a staff perspective, we had assurances that programs and objectives, that we were working on, were not going to change every other year. When many plans take years to complete, it is important that the mayoral position has stability and is granted a long enough term to carry out those plans.

Most communities with a full-time mayor have a four-year term. While Kaukauna has not experienced a lot of mayoral turn over, it could happen. If there were a string of 2-year term mayors, that would be difficult for staff, planning, and the citizens of Kaukauna. A city can't function if the direction changes every two years. We also must remember that in many cases, a newly elected mayor has to leave his or her job to take office. The likelihood of "losing" your job after 2 years may scare away qualified individuals. Whereas a four-year term would give candidates reassurance that they have job stability for a longer period. I believe Tony has done an exemplary job as mayor, but this issue is isolated from whomever the mayor is now. We need to be proactive for the future and set the City up for success whenever we can. I believe extended the term from 2 to 4 years will do just that.

As a reminder, the Mayor term is solidified by City Code 2011, § 1.04. Any change to the position term will 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.

City Attorney Office to come back to Legislative Committee with the updated ordinance to reflect the new term.