

Mayor & Councilmember Handbook

AWC Elected Officials Essentials Webinar Series: Mayor & Councilmember Handbook

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Chapter 2 Forms of Government

- City & town classification
- City & town form of government
- Powers by class of city (Home rule vs. Dillon's rule)



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What type of city are we?

Class	Mayor-council	Council-manager	Total
First	6	4	10
Second	5	0	5
Town	68	0	68
Code	147	50	197
Unclassified	1	0	1
Total	227	54	281



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Quick Poll – What is your city classification?

- Code
- First Class
- Second Class
- Third Class
- Towns
- I don't know



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Home rule

- Home rule – what is it?
- Authority depends on class of city/town
- First Class and Code Cities: Broadest powers
 - Exceptions: finance, tax, debt
- Second Class & Towns: Limited powers (Dillon’s Rule)



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Chapter 3 Getting started

- Orientation
 - Key documents
 - Org Chart
 - Mandatory Training
- Working with Staff
 - Mayor & Manager Role



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Quick Poll – which **key documents** have you reviewed and found the most valuable? (Check all that apply.)

- Personnel manual
- Comprehensive Plan
- Municipal code
- Budget
- City ethics policy



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Practical advice

Helpful pointers from other elected officials.

Initial words of wisdom ...

- **Listen.** Listen to everyone. Listen until your ears fall off. Soak it up. After six months in office, you will round out the picture of the complexities of city government and your role.
- **Take notes for the first six months on relevant city business items.**
- **Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know."**
- **Don't make promises you can't deliver!** Most major decisions and actions require approval of the council.
- **Gear your mind to process a tremendous amount of seemingly conflicting information.**
- **Don't enter office with an unmovable set agenda.** Learn as much as possible before taking on a major program or effort. Don't be strangled by campaign promises that were made without sufficient information.
- **If you come on board as a big critic of the "way things have been done,"** you may be surprised to find how hard the job really is. You'll soon gain better appreciation for those who came before you.
- **The job can be very complex.** Try to stay focused on the big issues.

Mayors will want to...

- **Meet with each department head separately.** Learn all you can. Spend time with the previous mayor, if feasible.
- **Ask for help when you need it.** Don't be afraid to use outside resources (your attorney, AWC, MRSC, a neighboring city or county).
- **Don't be intimidated by larger cities.** Bigger cities have many of the same problems and may be willing to lend expertise or staff resources.
- **Network with others in the same boat.** Have monthly lunches with mayors from neighboring communities. They can provide support, new ideas, and an opportunity to vent.
- **Find an experienced mentor from another city.** Ask for advice when you need help. You'll get empathy and a clearer vision from someone who has been there.
- **Ask opinions, and listen.** Spend time with those individuals who have different opinions than yours (maybe even your opponent in the election). Listen, don't argue the points, then rethink your positions.
- **Don't reinvent the wheel.** Someone has probably done it elsewhere. Use information available from MRSC and AWC. Attend workshops and conferences, especially the AWC Annual Conference.



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Chapter 4 - The mayor's leadership role

The **mayor** is often the focus regardless of form of government, **communication is the key to success.**

- Setting goals
- Leadership roles of the mayor
 - Regional (intergovernmental relations)
 - Public relations
 - Working with residents
 - Dealing with the media



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Chapter 5: The mayor as chief executive

- **Administrative role**
 - Chief executive
 - City administrator
 - Relationship with City Attorney
- **Labor relations**
- **Human resources**
- **Emergency management**
 - Response plan (practice makes perfect)



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Quick poll – Whose role is it?

- Hire/fire employees (Mayor or Council?)
- Set employee salary (Mayor or Council?)
- Supervise (Mayor or Council?)
- Direct work (Mayor or Council?)
- Discipline (Mayor or Council?)
- Set job duties (Mayor or Council?)
- Evaluates job performance (Mayor or Council?)



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Chapter 6: Job of the councilmember

- Adopting policy & ordinances
- Interactions with constituents
- Working with the city attorney
- HR
- Labor Relations



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Chapter 7: Legislative advocacy

- Build a relationship with your legislators
- Develop your city's legislative agenda
- AWC legislative resources:
 - AWC Legislative Priorities
 - AWC Advocacy Guide
 - Sample city legislative priorities
- PDC requirements: How is lobbying different from campaigning?



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Chapter 8: Budget basics

- Council's role:
 - Budget calendar
 - Strategic goals and plans
- Mayor's role:
 - Preliminary budget
 - Estimates
 - Implementation
- Financial role doesn't stop when the budget is adopted
- Auditing and accountability



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Quick Poll: What is the **council's** role in the budget (Click all that apply.)

- Adopting the budget
- Implementing the budget
- Strategic goals
- Developing estimates



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Chapter 9: Resolving and preventing mayor-council conflict

- Separation of Powers
- Areas of conflict:
 - Personnel
 - Policy implementation
 - Communication
 - Access to City Attorney
- Authority over municipal/district court employees



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Roles of the mayor and council

Polymaking & implementation

Mayor	Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep council informed on city affairs. Propose policy. Implement policy adopted by council. Report back to council regarding policy implementation and possible improvements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to city residents – keep track of their concerns and wishes. Discuss, develop, and adopt city policies governing many aspects of city operations.

City expenditures, contracts

Mayor	Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sign contracts, supervise contract performance, enforce contracts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve contracts and all city expenditures.

Relationships with other entities

Mayor	Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Represent city as official spokesman, in accordance with views or goals set by council. Act as official head of city for ceremonial events such as ribbon cuttings and sister-city contacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide whether city will participate in optional government organizations, provide guidance to mayor or other city representatives. May serve as city representative on certain intergovernmental bodies where mayor is not designated member.

Human resources matters

Mayor	Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hire, fire, supervise, and discipline all city employees (in some cities, council confirmation of certain appointments can be required). Civil service rules and labor contracts must be followed, if applicable. Negotiate labor contracts (sometimes mayor is not a member of negotiating team). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt personnel policies, establish positions, set wages and benefits – council should not meddle in mayor's supervision of employees or interfere with work of employees. Establish bargaining parameters and approve final labor contract.

Land use and planning

Mayor	Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervise planning staff, who make recommendations to the planning commission and council on a broad range of planning issues. Supervise staff who enforce building codes and other development regulations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt and amend zoning, development regulations, and comprehensive plan after receiving input from staff, residents, planning commission, and others. Act in quasi-judicial capacity to decide land use issues. Amend planning documents as necessary.

City budget

Mayor	Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with staff to develop preliminary budget. Lead council in process of establishing goals and priorities for the city. Implement budget adopted by council, provide regular financial reports, and present alternatives when council needs to deal with budget problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish goals and priorities which provide framework for budget – discuss and adopt final budget – amend budget as needed. Set city tax rates, to the extent permitted by statutes. Set utility rates and other fees as required.

Council meetings

Mayor	Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare agenda, preside over meetings, report to council about city administration, propose policy initiatives or changes. Vote on measures allowed by the statutes. Veto ordinances, as permitted by statutes. As presider, facilitate an orderly meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt council rules of procedure. Participate in preparation of council meeting agenda as provided in council rules. Discuss all policy matters and make decisions following the adopted rules.



Chapter 10: Council meetings

- Types of meetings
- Mayor & Council roles
- Council rules of procedure
- Agenda setting
- Voting
- Veto power





Practical advice

Helpful pointers from other Washington mayors.

Presiding over meetings ...

- **Work at running an efficient meeting.** Even if you live in a small town, it's important to run your meetings professionally and act professionally.
- **It is very important to have formal meetings and know Roberts Rules of Order.** One of the mistakes (particularly in small cities) is trying to be very informal. Recognize "Councilmember Smith" rather than "George." This also helps keep the debate from getting too personal.
- **Be careful with executive sessions.** Only use executive sessions for issues that are specifically allowed.
- **Bring some humor to the council meetings.** Keep your cool!
- **Insist upon decorum in council meetings.** Be courteous to members of the public and let them know you appreciate their comments.
- **Don't spring surprises on your councilmembers or city staff,** especially at public meetings. If a matter is worth discussing, it is worth putting on the agenda. Surprises may get you publicity, but they may embarrass others and tend to erode the "team" approach to governance.
- **Have your city attorney attend your council meetings,** but don't expect the attorney to know all the answers right on the spot. Give the attorney time to research issues.



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Chapter 11: Community participation at meetings

- **Public participation – what is required?**
- **Agenda management**
- **Free speech considerations**
 - Limited vs public forum
- **Strategies for managing difficult meetings**



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Chapter 12: Ethical issues

- State and local ethics laws and policies
- PDC rules



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Thank you!

Ask MRSC - - <https://mrsc.org/research-tools/ask-mrsc>

Contact AWC - - OnlineEducation@awcnet.org



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