

OVERVIEW OF CITY ORGANIZATION COUNCIL-MANAGER FORM OF GOVERNMENT

Dallas' government has changed and grown - from a mayor and six aldermen, to a commission with a mayor and four commissioners elected at-large, to the present council-manager system that has been in place since 1931.

Originally, the council was composed of nine members and the mayor, who was elected by council vote. In 1951, the eight council members and mayor were all elected at-large. The structure changed again in 1968 to 10 council members and the mayor, who were all elected at-large, but eight council members represented specific districts. Later, in 1979, eight council members were elected from single-member districts with two council members and the mayor elected at-large. Our current system began in 1991 with 14 council members elected from single-member districts and a mayor elected at-large.

The mayor is elected for four years, and council members are elected for two-year terms. Council members can serve up to four consecutive two-year terms. A mayor's term is limited to two consecutive four-year terms.

Council-manager government combines citizen input-through elected council members-with the professional training and experience of a city manager.

The City's organization under this plan is similar to that of a corporation. The mayor and city council serve as the equivalent of a board of directors. They set the public agenda, adopt policy and laws and appoint the city manager, city auditor, city attorney, and city secretary.

In Dallas, the manager oversees City operations with an executive team of assistant city managers, each responsible for various departments. The City organization currently has over 13,000 employees and a total budget of more than 2.1 billion.

Four of the ten largest cities in the United States have the council-manager form – Dallas, Phoenix, San Antonio and San Jose.

Council's and Manager's Responsibilities

The council and manager have specific and separate responsibilities, outlined by municipal law. The following chart illustrates the differences:

Mayor

Chief elected official

- presides over council meetings
- represents the City at official and ceremonial functions
- appoints council members to council committees
- names chairs and co-chairs of committees
- appoints advisory committees
- maintains relationship with other governmental agencies and civic groups
- votes as a member of the City Council

City Council

Legislative body for the City

- sets policy
- approves annual budget
- determines tax rate
- with the Mayor, appoints City Manager, City Attorney, City Auditor, City Secretary, Municipal Court Judges, and citizen boards and commissions
- approves plans for capital improvements
- issues and sells municipal bonds
- purchases and sells property
- establishes City departments
- holds weekly public meetings
- approves City ordinances
- determines City services

City Manager

Administrator and chief advisor to council

- implements policy decisions
- prepares recommended budget
- hires City employees
- supervises City personnel
- directs and coordinates City operations and programs
- enforces municipal laws and ordinances
- recommends improvements in operations