

CITY GOVERNMENT: WHY SHOULD I CARE???

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When hearing that we are going to be talking about city government today, which image best describes you and why?



Basics of Municipal Government

- ❑ Municipalities (cities, towns, and villages) are **incorporated** within counties because people living there desire an even more localized provision of public services and decision-making
- ❑ Municipalities must be incorporated by act of the General Assembly, which defines the geographic boundaries of the municipality and approves its charter.
- ❑ The **charter** may call the municipality a city, a town, or a village
 - ❑ In North Carolina, these terms carry no special legal meaning and are not tied to the population of the municipality as in some other states.



Municipal government services



- ❑ Municipal governments often provide the same types of services as counties, such as water supply, wastewater treatment, police and fire protection, garbage collection, planning and zoning, and building inspection.
- ❑ Some municipalities operate additional services, such as airports, auditoriums, bus systems, cemeteries, electric or gas systems, parks and recreation programs, public housing, and traffic control.
- ❑ Oftentimes, counties and municipalities will work together to coordinate for the most efficient provision of services.

Major Services Provided by Counties and Municipalities in North Carolina

This chart shows a general listing of the services local governments are authorized to provide. Counties and municipalities may choose to contract for these services rather than operate them directly.

Services Usually Provided by Counties Only

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 1. Community colleges | 7. Public health services |
| 2. Cooperative extension | 8. Public schools |
| 3. Court facilities (construction and maintenance only) | 9. Register of Deeds |
| 4. Elections | 10. Social services |
| 5. Jails | 11. Soil and water conservation |
| 6. Mental health services | 12. Tax assessment |
| | 13. Youth detention facilities |

Services Provided by Both Counties and Municipalities

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Airports | 18. Law enforcement |
| 2. Ambulance service | 19. Libraries |
| 3. Animal shelters | 20. Open space and parks |
| 4. Art galleries and museums | 21. Planning, land use regulation, and code enforcement |
| 5. Auditoriums/coliseums | 22. Property acquisition, sales, and disposition |
| 6. Building inspection | 23. Public housing |
| 7. Buses/public transit | 24. Recreation programs |
| 8. Cable television regulation | 25. Rescue squads |
| 9. Community and economic development | 26. Senior citizen programs |
| 10. Community appearance | 27. Sewer systems |
| 11. Emergency management | 28. Solid waste collection and disposal |
| 12. Environmental protection | 29. Storm drainage |
| 13. Fire protection | 30. Tax collection |
| 14. Historic preservation | 31. Veterans' services |
| 15. Human relations | 32. Water supply and protection |
| 16. Industrial development | |
| 17. Job training | |

Services Usually Provided by Municipalities Only

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Cemeteries | 5. Street lighting |
| 2. Electric systems | 6. Streets |
| 3. Gas systems | 7. Traffic control |
| 4. Sidewalks | 8. Urban development |

From *Local Government in North Carolina* by Gordon Whitaker

So who is in charge?

- ☐ Citizens?
- ☐ Mayor?
- ☐ City Manager?
- ☐ City Council?
- ☐ Voters?
- ☐ A combination of all these?



Authority in Municipalities

- ❑ **Voters** in each municipality elect their own governing board, called a **council**, **board of aldermen**, or **board of commissioners**.
- ❑ In some municipalities, a **mayor** is elected separately from other members of the governing board, while in other municipalities, citizens elect members of the governing board and then the governing board appoints a mayor from within the group.
- ❑ The governing board makes all official decisions for the city, including setting the local tax rate, adopting the budget, making policies for services, passing ordinances to regulate behavior, and entering agreements on behalf of the municipality.
- ❑ **Advisory boards** made up of citizens appointed by the governing board often offer recommendations in areas such as planning and parks and recreation, but nearly all final decisions are made by the municipality's governing board.

City Managers

- ❑ In every North Carolina county, and in all but the smallest municipalities, a *professional manager* serves as the chief executive for the local government; this is called the **council-manager form of government**.
- ❑ The **city manager** is responsible for carrying out the governing board's policies and for running the local government's operations, including coordinating the work of departments, advising the board on policy issues, proposing a balanced budget, and monitoring the adopted budget throughout the year.
- ❑ Managers serve "at the pleasure of" the governing board," which means that he or she can be fired at any time whenever a majority of the board decides they want a new manager.

You're a City Council Member – What Projects Will You Prioritize?

- ❑ You are a city council member on your way to an important budget meeting. At the meeting, you and your fellow councilmembers must decide how to allocate \$10,000, despite numerous city needs.
- ❑ Study your role and strategize how to get what you want. (Even if you don't personally agree with this stance, you must work hard to play this role!)
- ❑ Your role also includes a specific meeting duty (i.e., Time Keeper, Secretary, Spokesperson, etc.)
- ❑ After a few minutes of individual planning, each group's "Mayor" will facilitate the conversation, during which each city council member will be given two minutes to explain how you believe the \$10,000 should be allocated.
- ❑ After each of the five council members have shared their thoughts, your group will have up to 10 minutes to try and decide how to allocate the money.



November 2015 Municipal Elections in NC



Only
13.66%*
of registered voters
voted

* (422,016 out of
3,090,134)

Public Service | Public Servants

- While elected officials are responsible for making many of the important decisions in counties and municipalities, they rely on staff for day-to-day operations.
- People working in all levels of government including local, state and federal are often referred to as public servants.
 - ▣ Elected officials such as legislators, judges, mayors and governors are public servants.
 - ▣ Employees in community or non-profit organizations may also be included in this description.
 - ▣ Public servant professions include police officers, judges and firefighters, as well as jobs that keep the government operating such as accounting, finance, information technology and logistics management.

