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Municipal Form of Government, 2001

Municipal Form of Government, 2001 Trends in Structure, Responsibility, and Composition

August 2001

Dear Municipal Clerk:

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) has conducted a Form of Government Survey for more than thirty years. This survey gathers the most comprehensive information available on form of government, election systems, provisions for referendum/recall, and term limits. In addition, information on characteristics of the local governing body is collected in this survey. A summary of the results will be available on ICMA's web site (<http://icma.org>) after the data have been tabulated.

Please contribute to this significant body of knowledge by completing the survey and returning it in the enclosed postage-paid envelope **within three weeks**. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William H. Hansell, Jr.".

William H. Hansell, Jr.
Executive Director, ICMA

Definitions:

The term *municipality* refers to cities, towns, townships, villages, and boroughs.

The term *council* refers to an elected body whose members may be called council members, aldermen, selectmen, freeholders, trustees, commissioners, or a similar title.

The *chief appointed official* of the local government is often referred to as city manager, chief executive officer, city administrator, chief administrative officer, town administrator, village manager, or a similar title.

The *chief elected official* of the local government may have the title of mayor, president, board chair, etc.

1. Indicate your current form of government as defined by your charter, ordinance, or state law. (*Check only one.*)
 - a. **Mayor-Council** Elected council or board serves as the legislative body. The chief elected official is the head of government, with significant administrative authority, generally elected separately from the council.
 - b. **Council-Manager** Elected council or board and chief elected official (e.g., mayor) are responsible for making policy. A professional administrator appointed by the board or council has full responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the government.
 - c. **Commission** Members of a board of elected commissioners serve as heads of specific departments and collectively sit as the legislative body of the government.
 - d. **Town Meeting** Qualified voters convene to make basic policy and to choose a board of selectmen. The selectmen and elected officers carry out the policies established by the government
 - e. **Representative Town Meeting** Voters select citizens to represent them at the town meeting. All citizens may attend and participate in debate, but only representatives may vote.

 2. How is your municipality's *structure or form of government* established? (*Check only one.*)
 - a. Charter
 - b. State law
 - c. Local ordinance
 - d. Council resolution
 - e. Other (*Please specify.*) _____

 3. Does your municipality have the position of chief appointed official? (*The chief appointed official of the local government is referred to as city manager, chief executive officer, city administrator, chief administrative officer, town administrator, village manager, or a similar title.*) a. Yes b. No
 - A. If your municipality does have the position of *chief appointed official*, what action established the position? (*This question refers only to the establishment of the position, not to the person or group that does the hiring.*)
 - a. Charter
 - b. State law
 - c. Local ordinance
 - d. Council resolution
 - e. Chief elected official created position
 - f. Other (*Please specify.*) _____
 - B. If your municipality does have the position of *chief appointed official*, who appoints the chief appointed official?
 - a. Chief elected official
 - b. Council
 - c. Combination of chief elected official and council
 - d. Other (*Please specify.*) _____
-
4. Who has the independent authority to develop and make recommendations for the budget submitted to the council? (*The term "develop" means that the person has responsibility for content of the budget.*)
 - a. Chief elected official
 - b. Chief appointed official
 - c. Combination of chief elected official and chief appointed official
 - d. Chief financial officer
 - e. Other (*Please specify.*) _____
-
5. Are your department heads (*Check only one.*)
 - a. All elected
 - b. All appointed
 - c. Combination, some are elected and some appointed
 - A. If any of your department heads are appointed, who appoints them?
 - a. Chief elected official
 - b. Chief appointed official
 - c. Combination of chief elected official and chief appointed official
 - d. Council/board of selectmen
 - e. Other (*Please specify.*) _____

6. Does your municipality have a provision for

A. **Initiative?** 1. Yes 2. No

Initiative allows citizens to place charter, ordinance, or home rule changes on the ballot by collecting a required number of signatures on a petition.

1. If yes, which of the following initiative processes does your municipality provide? (Check all applicable.)

a. **Indirect:** Requires that *before* any charter, ordinance, or home rule change proposed by citizens through a petition process is placed on the ballot for vote, the council must consider it. Vote results are binding on the local government.

b. **Direct:** Requires that any charter, ordinance, or home rule change proposed by the citizens through a petition process must be placed directly on the ballot for a vote. Vote results are binding on the local government.

c. **Non-binding initiative:** Allows citizens to place on the ballot a question for voter approval or rejection. The voter response is non-binding on the local government.

B. **Legislative referendum?** 1. Yes 2. No

Legislative referendum allows the council to place any question on the ballot for voter approval or rejection. The results may be binding or non-binding.

If yes, which of the following items must be placed on the ballot for voter approval (Check all applicable.)

a. Local bond measures

d. Proposed home rule changes

b. Proposed charter amendments

e. Other _____

c. Proposed ordinances

C. **Popular referendum** 1. Yes 2. No

Allows citizens to collect signatures on a petition to place on the ballot any charter, ordinance, or home rule change that has been adopted by the local government before the change can take effect.

D. **Recall** 1. Yes 2. No

Allows citizens to collect signatures on a petition to place on the ballot a question of whether an elected official should be removed from office before the expiration of his/her term.

7. **Since January 1, 1996**, have there been any attempts to change your municipality's *structure or form of government* (e.g., change from at-large to ward or district elections or add or eliminate the position of chief appointed official, etc.)? a. Yes b. No

A. If yes, approximately how many attempts have been made to change your municipality's *structure or form of government* since January 1, 1996? _____

B. Check each item that describes the proposed change(s) and indicate whether the change(s) was approved.

Attempted change	Change was proposed	Not approved	Approve d	Year approved
1. <i>Change</i> from at-large to ward or district elections	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
2. <i>Change</i> to a mixed system with some at-large and some ward or district elections	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
3. <i>Change</i> the mix between the number of council members elected at large and the number elected by ward or district	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
4. <i>Increase</i> the number of council or board members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
5. <i>Decrease</i> the number of council or board members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
6. <i>Change</i> the method of election of the chief elected official	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
7. <i>Increase</i> in powers/authorities of the chief elected official	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
8. <i>Decrease</i> in powers/authorities of the chief elected official	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
9. <i>Add</i> the position of chief appointed official (the appointed professional administrator)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
10. <i>Eliminate</i> the position of chief appointed official (the appointed professional administrator)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
11. <i>Change</i> who appoints the chief appointed official from (enter the previous appointment authority) _____ to _____ (enter proposed)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

12. Change the form of government

a. If a change in form of government was proposed, what was the proposed change? (Place a check in the box in the "From" column that indicates the original form and a check in the box in the "To" column that indicates the proposed form.)

From	To
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Mayor-council	<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Mayor-council
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Council-manager	<input type="checkbox"/> 7. Council-manager
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Commission	<input type="checkbox"/> 8. Commission
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Town meeting	<input type="checkbox"/> 9. Town meeting
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Representative town meeting	<input type="checkbox"/> 10. Representative town meeting

CHIEF ELECTED LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL/MAYOR/BOARD CHAIR

The chief elected official of the local government may have the title of mayor, president, board chair, etc.

8. Is the position of chief elected official in your local government *officially* full-time or part-time? a. Full-time b. Part-time

9. How is your chief elected official selected? (Check only one.)

- a. Voters elect directly
- b. Council selects from among its members
- c. The council member receiving the most votes in the general election becomes the chief elected official
- d. Council members rotate into the position of chief elected official
- e. Other (Please specify.) _____

10. How long is the chief elected official's term of office? (Important: If the chief elected official is a member of the council, specify the term for the position of chief elected official, not of council member.) (Check only one.)

- a. 1 year
- b. 2 years
- c. 3 years
- d. 4 years
- e. Other (Please specify.) _____

11. Is there a legal limit on the number of terms allowed for the position of chief elected official?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No (go to question 12)

A. If yes, what is the maximum number of terms allowed by law?

- a. 1 term
- b. 2 terms
- c. 3 terms
- d. 4 terms
- e. Other (Please specify.) _____

B. If yes, when was the term limitation for the position of chief elected official enacted? _____ (year)

C. If yes, what authority limits the number of terms for the position of chief elected official? (Check only one.)

- a. Ordinance
- b. Charter
- c. State law
- d. Other (Please specify.) _____

12. Is the chief elected official a member of council, that is, does the chief elected official serve on the council? 1. Yes 2. No

A. If yes, does the chief elected official receive supplemental compensation for these additional duties? 1. Yes 2. No

13. Under what circumstances does the chief elected official have the authority to vote in council meetings?

- a. On all issues
- b. Only to break a tie
- c. Never
- d. Other (Please specify.) _____

14. Does the chief elected official have the authority to veto council-passed measures? 1. Yes 2. No

A. If yes, is a "super majority" vote of the council required to overturn the mayoral veto? 1. Yes 2. No

15. Does the chief elected official have the authority to (Check all applicable.)

- a. Assign council members to chair or serve on committees and make assignments to those committees
- b. Appoint citizens to serve on advisory or quasi-judicial authorities, boards, or commissions
- c. Receive the annual budget developed by the chief appointed official and present the budget with comments and suggestions to the council for consideration
- d. Make an annual report to the council and citizens on the state of the community
- e. Initiate the hiring and/or involuntary termination of the chief appointed official

16. Since 1996 have any recall initiatives been filed against the chief elected official? 1. Yes 2. No

A. If yes, were any successful? 1. Yes 2. No

17. How many staff work directly for the chief elected official? a. Full-time staff _____ b. Part-time staff _____

COUNCIL/BOARD OF SELECTMEN/TRUSTEES

The term **council** refers to the elected governing body of the local government. The elected body may be called the board of selectmen, trustees, aldermen, etc.

18. Does the political party affiliation of council candidates appear on the ballot in a local general election? 1. Yes 2. No
19. What is the current filing fee for running for a seat on the council? (If there is no fee, enter zero.) \$ _____
20. How many council positions are there on your council? _____ (Include the chief elected official if that position serves on the council. If the chief elected official is a member of the council, your answer to question 12 should be "yes.")
21. Are all of these council positions filled? 1. Yes 2. No A. If no, how many council positions are filled? _____
22. How many current council members are (Total number of council members should equal the total in question 20 if all are filled. If all are not filled, this number should equal the total in 21A.) a. Male _____ b. Female _____
23. How many current council members fall into the following age groups? (Total number of council members should equal the total in question 20 if all are filled. If all are not filled, this number should equal the total in 21A.)
- a. Under 22 _____ c. 30-39 _____ e. 50-59 _____
b. 22-29 _____ d. 40-49 _____ f. 60 and over _____
24. How many current council members are (Total number of council members should equal the total in question 20 if all are filled. If all are not filled, this number should equal the total in 21A.)
- a. Native American _____ d. White, not of Hispanic origin _____
b. Hispanic _____ e. Black, not of Hispanic origin _____
c. Asian or Pacific Islander _____
25. How many current council members are in each of these occupational categories? (Count members only once. If any member has more than one occupation, include that person in the category where he or she spends the greatest amount of time. Total number of council members should equal the total in question 20 if all are filled. If all are not filled, this number should equal the total in 21A.)
- _____ a. Lawyers _____ g. Homemakers
_____ b. Other professionals (medicine, engineering, etc.) _____ h. Teachers and other educational personnel
_____ c. Business executives/managers _____ i. Clergy
_____ d. Business/industry employees _____ j. Retired persons
_____ e. Service industry employees _____ k. Other (Please specify.) _____
_____ f. Farmers or ranchers
26. How many council members are selected by the following methods. (If none are elected by one of the methods, indicate zero.) (Number should equal the total in question 20.) a. Elected at large _____ b. Elected by ward or district _____
27. Indicate the length of term for council members. (Even if the chief elected official is a member of council, specify the length of term for other council members, not for the chief elected official.)
- A. Council members elected at large
 a. 2 years b. 3 years c. 4 years d. 6 years e. Other _____
- B. Council members elected by ward or district
 a. 2 years b. 3 years c. 4 years d. 6 years e. Other _____
28. Terms of office are (Check only one.) a. Staggered b. Concurrent
29. Is there a legal limit on the number of terms a council member may serve? a. Yes b. No
- A. If yes, what is the maximum number of terms allowed by law? _____
B. When was the term limitation enacted? _____ (year)
C. By what authority is the number of terms limited? (Check only one.)
 1. Ordinance 2. Charter 3. State law 4. Other (Please specify.) _____
30. How many incumbents ran for reelection to council in the last general election? _____
a. How many of those incumbents were reelected? (If none, enter zero.) _____

31. How is a council member's seat filled if it is vacated before the term has expired? (Check only one.)
- a. Method depends on length of term remaining d. Appointed by chief elected official
- b. Special election e. Position left vacant until next regular election
- c. Appointed by council f. Other (Please specify.) _____

32. Since 1996, have any recall initiatives been filed against council members? 1. Yes 2. No
- A. If yes, were any successful? a. Yes b. No

33. Are any council members (excluding the chief elected official) paid an annual salary or stipend for any of their services?
1. Yes 2. No
- A. If yes, please indicate the approximate annual dollar amount that your council members receive.
1. Full-time council member \$ _____ 2. Part-time council member \$ _____

34. How often does the council meet in formal session? (Check only one.)
- a. More than once a week e. Once a month
- b. Once a week f. Less than once a month
- c. Three times a month g. Other (Please specify.) _____
- d. Twice a month

35. Does the council have standing committees (permanent bodies with set memberships and regularly scheduled meeting times) that consider specific policy matters? 1. Yes 2. No

A. If yes, approximately how many standing committees did the council have as of January 2001?

- a. 1-2 standing committees d. 11-15 standing committees
- b. 3-5 standing committees e. More than 15 standing committees
- c. 6-10 standing committees

36. Does the council use citizen authorities, boards, or commissions? 1. Yes 2. No

A. If yes, are members 1. Elected 2. Appointed (Check all applicable.)

B. If yes, in what capacity do they serve? (Check all applicable.)

1. Advisory 2. Decision/policy making 3. Quasi-judicial

C. If yes, in which areas are they used? (Check all applicable in the list below.)

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a. Growth | <input type="checkbox"/> i. Civil service | <input type="checkbox"/> q. Architectural review |
| <input type="checkbox"/> b. Transportation | <input type="checkbox"/> j. Libraries | <input type="checkbox"/> r. Code enforcement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> c. Zoning | <input type="checkbox"/> k. Housing | <input type="checkbox"/> s. Parks and recreation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> d. Finance | <input type="checkbox"/> l. Community-police relations | <input type="checkbox"/> t. Ethics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> e. Airports | <input type="checkbox"/> m. Economic development | <input type="checkbox"/> u. Charter review commissions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> f. Art | <input type="checkbox"/> n. Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> v. Other (Please specify.) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> g. Beautification | <input type="checkbox"/> o. Environmental issues | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> h. Cable TV | <input type="checkbox"/> p. Historic preservation | |

37. How many staff are employed by the council to work exclusively on council business?

a. Full-time staff _____ b. Part-time staff _____

38. When does your next fiscal year begin (i.e., 07/2001)? Month _____ Year _____

Name: _____ Title: _____

Telephone number: _____ Email: _____

Thank you for completing the survey. Please return to:
 Evelina Moulder, Director of Survey Research, ICMA
 777 North Capitol Street, NE, Suite 500, Washington DC 20002-4201.