

**Chapter 35.18 RCW  
COUNCIL-MANAGER PLAN**

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**RCW 35.18.010 The council-manager plan.** Under the council-manager plan of city government, the councilmembers shall be the only elective officials. The council shall appoint an officer whose title shall be "city manager" who shall be the chief executive officer and head of the administrative branch of city or town government. The city manager shall be responsible to the council for the proper administration of all affairs of the city or town. [2009 c 549 s 2019; 1965 c 7 s 35.18.010. Prior: 1955 c 337 s 2; prior: (i) 1943 c 271 s 8, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-17, part. (ii) 1943 c 271 s 12,

part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-21, part. (iii) 1949 c 84 s 2, part; 1943 c 271 s 17, part; Rem. Supp. 1949 s 9198-26, part.]

**RCW 35.18.020 Number of councilmembers—Wards, districts—Terms—Vacancies.**

(1) The number of councilmembers in a city or town operating with a council-manager plan of government shall be based upon the latest population of the city or town that is determined by the office of financial management as follows:

(a) A city or town having not more than two thousand inhabitants, five councilmembers; and

(b) A city or town having more than two thousand, seven councilmembers.

(2) Except for the initial staggering of terms, councilmembers shall serve for four-year terms of office. All councilmembers shall serve until their successors are elected and qualified and assume office in accordance with RCW 29A.60.280. Councilmembers may be elected on a citywide or townwide basis, or from wards or districts, or any combination of these alternatives. Candidates shall run for specific positions. Wards or districts shall be redrawn as provided in chapter 29A.76 RCW. Wards or districts shall be used as follows: (a) Only a resident of the ward or district may be a candidate for, or hold office as, a councilmember of the ward or district; and (b) only voters of the ward or district may vote at a primary to nominate candidates for a councilmember of the ward or district. Voters of the entire city or town may vote at the general election to elect a councilmember of a ward or district, unless the city or town had prior to January 1, 1994, limited the voting in the general election for any or all council positions to only voters residing within the ward or district associated with the council positions. If a city or town had so limited the voting in the general election to only voters residing within the ward or district, then the city or town shall be authorized to continue to do so.

(3) When a city or town has qualified for an increase in the number of councilmembers from five to seven by virtue of the next succeeding population determination made by the office of financial management, two additional council positions shall be filled at the next municipal general election with the person elected to one of the new council positions receiving the greatest number of votes being elected for a four-year term of office and the person elected to the other additional council position being elected for a two-year term of office. The two additional councilmembers shall assume office immediately when qualified in accordance with RCW 29A.04.133, but the term of office shall be computed from the first day of January after the year in which they are elected. Their successors shall be elected to four-year terms of office.

Prior to the election of the two new councilmembers, the city or town council shall fill the additional positions by appointment not later than forty-five days following the release of the population determination, and each appointee shall hold office only until the new position is filled by election.

(4) When a city or town has qualified for a decrease in the number of councilmembers from seven to five by virtue of the next succeeding population determination made by the office of financial management, two council positions shall be eliminated at the next municipal general election if four council positions normally would be

filled at that election, or one council position shall be eliminated at each of the next two succeeding municipal general elections if three council positions normally would be filled at the first municipal general election after the population determination. The council shall by ordinance indicate which, if any, of the remaining positions shall be elected at large or from wards or districts.

(5) Vacancies on a council shall occur and shall be filled as provided in chapter 42.12 RCW. [2015 c 53 s 32; 1994 c 223 s 12; 1981 c 260 s 7. Prior: 1979 ex.s. c 126 s 19; 1979 c 151 s 26; 1956 c 7 s 35.18.020; prior: 1959 c 76 s 1; 1955 c 337 s 3; prior: (i) 1943 c 271 s 6; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-15. (ii) 1943 c 271 s 4, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-13, part.]

**Purpose—1979 ex.s. c 126:** See RCW 29A.60.280(1).

*Population determinations, office of financial management: Chapter 43.62 RCW.*

*Times for holding elections: RCW 29A.04.311 through 29A.04.330.*

**RCW 35.18.030 Laws applicable to council-manager cities—Civil service.** A city or town organized under the council-manager plan shall have all the powers which cities of its class have and shall be governed by the statutes applicable to such cities to the extent to which they are appropriate and not in conflict with the provisions specifically applicable to cities organized under the council-manager plan.

Any city adopting a council-manager form of government may adopt any system of civil service which would be available to it under any other form of city government. Any state law relative to civil service in cities of the class of a city under the council-manager type of government shall be applicable thereto. [1965 c 7 s 35.18.030. Prior: (i) 1949 c 84 s 4; Rem. Supp. 1949 s 9198-33. (ii) 1943 c 271 s 10, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-19, part. (iii) 1943 c 271 s 21; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-30.]

**RCW 35.18.035 Second-class cities, parking meter revenue for revenue bonds.** See RCW 35.23.454.

**RCW 35.18.040 City manager—Qualifications.** The city manager need not be a resident. He or she shall be chosen by the council solely on the basis of his or her executive and administrative qualifications with special reference to his or her actual experience in, or his or her knowledge of, accepted practice in respect to the duties of his or her office. No person elected to membership on the council shall be eligible for appointment as city manager until one year has elapsed following the expiration of the term for which he or she was elected. [2009 c 549 s 2020; 1965 c 7 s 35.18.040. Prior: 1955 c 337 s 4; prior: (i) 1949 c 84 s 2, part; 1943 c 271 s 17, part; Rem. Supp. 1949 s 9198-26, part. (ii) 1943 c 271 s 12, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-21, part.]

**RCW 35.18.050 City manager—Bond and oath.** Before entering upon the duties of his or her office the city manager shall take the official oath for the support of the government and the faithful performance of his or her duties and shall execute and file with the clerk of the council a bond in favor of the city or town in such sum as may be fixed by the council. [2009 c 549 s 2021; 1965 c 7 s 35.18.050. Prior: 1955 c 337 s 5; prior: 1943 c 271 s 12, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-21, part.]

**RCW 35.18.060 City manager—Authority.** The powers and duties of the city manager shall be:

(1) To have general supervision over the administrative affairs of the municipality;

(2) To appoint and remove at any time all department heads, officers, and employees of the city or town, except members of the council, and subject to the provisions of any applicable law, rule, or regulation relating to civil service: PROVIDED, That the council may provide for the appointment by the mayor, subject to confirmation by the council, of the city planning commission, and other advisory citizens' committees, commissions and boards advisory to the city council: PROVIDED FURTHER, That the city manager shall appoint the municipal judge to a term of four years, subject to confirmation by the council. The municipal judge may be removed only on conviction of malfeasance or misconduct in office, or because of physical or mental disability rendering him or her incapable of performing the duties of his or her office. The council may cause an audit to be made of any department or office of the city or town government and may select the persons to make it, without the advice or consent of the city manager;

(3) To attend all meetings of the council at which his or her attendance may be required by that body;

(4) To see that all laws and ordinances are faithfully executed, subject to the authority which the council may grant the mayor to maintain law and order in times of emergency;

(5) To recommend for adoption by the council such measures as he or she may deem necessary or expedient;

(6) To prepare and submit to the council such reports as may be required by that body or as he or she may deem it advisable to submit;

(7) To keep the council fully advised of the financial condition of the city or town and its future needs;

(8) To prepare and submit to the council a tentative budget for the fiscal year;

(9) To perform such other duties as the council may determine by ordinance or resolution. [2009 c 549 s 2022; 1987 c 3 s 5; 1965 ex.s. c 116 s 1; 1965 c 7 s 35.18.060. Prior: 1955 c 337 s 6; prior: (i) 1949 c 84 s 2, part; 1943 c 271 s 17, part; Rem. Supp. 1949 s 9198-26, part. (ii) 1949 c 84 s 1; 1943 c 271 s 15; Rem. Supp. 1949 s 9198-24. (iii) 1949 c 84 s 3, part; 1943 c 271 s 18, part; Rem. Supp. 1949 s 9198-27, part.]

**Severability—1987 c 3:** See note following RCW 3.70.010.

**RCW 35.18.070 City manager—May serve two or more cities.**

Whether the city manager shall devote his or her full time to the affairs of one city or town shall be determined by the council. A city

manager may serve two or more cities or towns in that capacity at the same time. [2009 c 549 s 2023; 1965 c 7 s 35.18.070. Prior: 1943 c 271 s 13; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-22.]

**RCW 35.18.080 City manager—Creation of departments.** On recommendation of the city manager, the council may create such departments, offices and employments as may be found necessary and may determine the powers and duties of each department or office. [1965 c 7 s 35.18.080. Prior: 1943 c 271 s 16; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-25.]

**RCW 35.18.090 City manager—Department heads—Authority.** The city manager may authorize the head of a department or office responsible to him or her to appoint and remove subordinates in such department or office. Any officer or employee who may be appointed by the city manager, or by the head of a department or office, except one who holds his or her position subject to civil service, may be removed by the manager or other such appointing officer at any time. Subject to the provisions of RCW 35.18.060, the decision of the manager or other appointing officer, shall be final and there shall be no appeal therefrom to any other office, body, or court whatsoever. [2009 c 549 s 2024; 1965 c 7 s 35.18.090. Prior: 1955 c 337 s 7; prior: (i) 1949 c 84 s 2, part; 1943 c 271 s 17, part; Rem. Supp. 1949 s 9198-26, part. (ii) 1949 c 84 s 3, part; 1943 c 271 s 18, part; Rem. Supp. 1949 s 9198-27, part.]

**RCW 35.18.100 City manager—Appointment of subordinates—Qualifications—Terms.** Appointments made by or under the authority of the city manager shall be on the basis of executive and administrative ability and of the training and experience of the appointees in the work which they are to perform. Residence within the city or town shall not be a requirement. All such appointments shall be without definite term. [1965 c 7 s 35.18.100. Prior: 1955 c 337 s 8; prior: 1949 c 84 s 2, part; 1943 c 271 s 17, part; Rem. Supp. 1949 s 9198-26, part.]

**RCW 35.18.110 City manager—Interference by councilmembers.** Neither the council, nor any of its committees or members shall direct or request the appointment of any person to, or his or her removal from, office by the city manager or any of his or her subordinates. Except for the purpose of inquiry, the council and its members shall deal with the administrative service solely through the manager and neither the council nor any committee or member thereof shall give orders to any subordinate of the city manager, either publicly or privately: PROVIDED, HOWEVER, That nothing herein shall be construed to prohibit the council, while in open session, from fully and freely discussing with the city manager anything pertaining to appointments and removals of city officers and employees and city affairs. [2009 c 549 s 2025; 1965 c 7 s 35.18.110. Prior: 1955 c 337 s 14; prior: 1943 c 271 s 19, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-28, part.]

**RCW 35.18.120 City manager—Removal—Resolution and notice.** The city manager shall be appointed for an indefinite term and may be removed by a majority vote of the council.

At least thirty days before the effective date of his or her removal, the city manager must be furnished with a formal statement in the form of a resolution passed by a majority vote of the city council stating the council's intention to remove him or her and the reasons therefor. Upon passage of the resolution stating the council's intention to remove the manager, the council by a similar vote may suspend him or her from duty, but his or her pay shall continue until his or her removal becomes effective. [2009 c 549 s 2026; 1965 c 7 s 35.18.120. Prior: 1955 c 337 s 17; prior: 1943 c 271 s 14, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-23, part.]

**RCW 35.18.130 City manager—Removal—Reply and hearing.** The city manager may, within thirty days from the date of service upon him or her of a copy thereof, reply in writing to the resolution stating the council's intention to remove him or her. In the event no reply is timely filed, the resolution shall upon the thirty-first day from the date of such service, constitute the final resolution removing the manager, and his or her services shall terminate upon that day. If a reply shall be timely filed with its clerk, the council shall fix a time for a public hearing upon the question of the manager's removal and a final resolution removing the manager shall not be adopted until a public hearing has been had. The action of the council in removing the manager shall be final. [2009 c 549 s 2027; 1965 c 7 s 35.18.130. Prior: 1955 c 337 s 18; prior: 1943 c 271 s 14, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-23, part.]

**RCW 35.18.140 City manager—Substitute.** The council may designate a qualified administrative officer of the city or town to perform the duties of manager:

(1) Upon the adoption of the council-manager plan, pending the selection and appointment of a manager; or

(2) Upon the termination of the services of a manager, pending the selection and appointment of a new manager; or

(3) During the absence, disability, or suspension of the manager. [1965 c 7 s 35.18.140. Prior: 1955 c 337 s 19; prior: 1943 c 271 s 14, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-23, part.]

**RCW 35.18.150 Council—Eligibility.** Only a qualified elector of the city or town may be a member of the council and upon ceasing to be such, or upon being convicted of a crime involving moral turpitude, or of violating the provisions of RCW 35.18.110, he or she shall immediately forfeit his or her office. [2009 c 549 s 2028; 1965 c 7 s 35.18.150. Prior: 1955 c 337 s 15; prior: (i) 1943 c 271 s 19, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-28, part. (ii) 1943 c 271 s 9, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-18, part.]

**RCW 35.18.160 Council—Authority.** The council shall have all of the powers which inhere in the city or town not reserved to the people or vested in the city manager, including but not restricted to the

authority to adopt ordinances and resolutions. [1965 c 7 s 35.18.160. Prior: (i) 1943 c 271 s 9, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-18, part. (ii) 1943 c 271 s 10, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-19, part.]

**RCW 35.18.170 Council meetings.** The council shall meet at the times and places fixed by ordinance but must hold at least one regular meeting each month. The clerk shall call special meetings of the council upon request of the mayor or any two members. At all meetings of the city council, a majority of the councilmembers shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, but a less number may adjourn from time to time and may compel the attendance of absent members in such manner and under such penalties as may be prescribed by ordinance. Requests for special meetings shall state the subject to be considered and no other subject shall be considered at a special meeting.

All meetings of the council and of committees thereof shall be open to the public and the rules of the council shall provide that citizens of the city or town shall have a reasonable opportunity to be heard at any meetings in regard to any matter being considered thereat. [2009 c 549 s 2029; 1965 c 7 s 35.18.170. Prior: 1955 c 337 s 20; prior: 1943 c 271 s 7; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-16.]

**RCW 35.18.180 Council—Ordinances—Recording.** No ordinance, resolution, or order, including those granting a franchise or valuable privilege, shall have any validity or effect unless passed by the affirmative vote of at least a majority of the members of the city or town council. Every ordinance or resolution adopted shall be signed by the mayor or two members, filed with the clerk within two days and by him or her recorded. [2009 c 549 s 2030; 1965 c 7 s 35.18.180. Prior: 1959 c 76 s 3; 1943 c 271 s 11; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-20.]

**RCW 35.18.190 Mayor—Election—Vacancy.** Biennially at the first meeting of the new council the members thereof shall choose a chair from among their number who shall have the title of mayor. In addition to the powers conferred upon him or her as mayor, he or she shall continue to have all the rights, privileges and immunities of a member of the council. If a vacancy occurs in the office of mayor, the members of the council at their next regular meeting shall select a mayor from among their number for the unexpired term. [2009 c 549 s 2031; 1969 c 101 s 1; 1965 c 7 s 35.18.190. Prior: 1955 c 337 s 9; prior: 1943 c 271 s 8, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-17, part.]

**RCW 35.18.200 Mayor—Duties.** The mayor shall preside at meetings of the council, and be recognized as the head of the city or town for all ceremonial purposes and by the governor for purposes of military law.

He or she shall have no regular administrative duties, but in time of public danger or emergency, if so authorized by the council, shall take command of the police, maintain law, and enforce order. [2009 c 549 s 2032; 1965 c 7 s 35.18.200. Prior: 1955 c 337 s 10; prior: 1943 c 271 s 8, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-17, part.]

**RCW 35.18.210 Mayor pro tempore.** In case of the mayor's absence, a mayor pro tempore selected by the members of the council from among their number shall act as mayor during the continuance of the absence. [1969 c 101 s 2; 1965 c 7 s 35.18.210. Prior: 1955 c 337 s 11; prior: 1943 c 271 s 8, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-17, part.]

**RCW 35.18.220 Salaries.** Each member of the council shall receive such compensation as may be provided by law to cities of the class to which it belongs. The city manager and other officers or assistants shall receive such salary or compensation as the council shall fix by ordinance and shall be payable at such times as the council may determine. [1965 c 7 s 35.18.220. Prior: (i) 1943 c 271 s 9, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-18, part. (ii) 1943 c 271 s 20; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-29.]

**RCW 35.18.230 Organization on council-manager plan—Eligibility.** Any city or town having a population of less than thirty thousand may be organized as a council-manager city or town under this chapter. [1965 c 7 s 35.18.230. Prior: 1959 c 76 s 2; 1943 c 271 s 1; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-10.]

**RCW 35.18.240 Organization—Petition.** Petitions to reorganize a city or town on the council-manager plan must be signed by registered voters resident therein equal in number to at least twenty percent of the votes cast for all candidates for mayor at the last preceding municipal election. In addition to the signature and residence addresses of the petitioners thereon, a petition must contain an affidavit stating the number of signers thereon at the time the affidavit is made.

Petitions containing the required number of signatures shall be accepted by the city or town clerk as prima facie valid until their invalidity has been proved.

A variation on such petitions between the signatures on the petition and that on the voter's permanent registration caused by the substitution of initials instead of the first or middle names or both shall not invalidate the signature on the petition if the surname and handwriting are the same. Signatures, including the original, of any voter who has signed such petitions two or more times shall be stricken. [1965 c 7 s 35.18.240. Prior: 1955 c 337 s 22; prior: (i) 1943 c 271 s 2, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-11, part. (ii) 1943 c 271 s 5; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-14.]

**RCW 35.18.250 Organization—Election procedure.** Upon the filing of a petition for the adoption of the council-manager plan of government, or upon resolution of the council to that effect, the mayor, only after the petition has been found to be valid, by proclamation issued within ten days after the filing of the petition or the resolution with the clerk, shall cause the question to be submitted at a special election to be held at a time specified in the proclamation, which shall be as soon as possible after the sufficiency of the petition has been determined or after the said resolution of the council has been enacted, but in no event shall said special



election be held during the ninety day period immediately preceding any regular municipal election therein. All acts necessary to hold this election, including legal notice, jurisdiction and canvassing of returns, shall be conducted in accordance with existing law. [1965 c 7 s 35.18.250. Prior: 1959 c 76 s 4; 1955 c 337 s 23; prior: 1943 c 271 s 2, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-11, part.]

*Canvassing returns, generally: Chapter 29A.60 RCW.*

*Conduct of elections—Canvass: RCW 29A.60.010.*

*Times for holding elections: RCW 29A.04.311 through 29A.04.330.*

**RCW 35.18.260 Organization—Ballots.** At the election for organization on the council-manager plan, the proposition on the ballots shall be: "Shall the city (or town) of . . . . . adopt the council-manager plan of municipal government?" followed by the words: "For organization as a council-manager city or town . . . ." "Against organization as a council-manager city or town . . . ." The election shall be conducted, the vote canvassed and the results declared in the same manner as provided by law in respect to other municipal elections. [1965 c 7 s 35.18.260. Prior: 1943 c 271 s 3; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-12.]

**RCW 35.18.270 Organization—Election of council, procedure.** If the majority of the votes cast at a special election for organization on the council-manager plan favor the plan, the city or town shall elect the council required under the council-manager plan in number according to its population at the next municipal general election. However, special elections shall be held to nominate and elect the new city councilmembers at the next primary and general election held in an even-numbered year if the next municipal general election is more than one year after the date of the election at which the voters approved the council-manager plan. The staggering of terms of office shall occur at the election when the new councilmembers are elected, where the simple majority of the persons elected as councilmembers receiving the greatest numbers of votes shall be elected to four-year terms of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year, or three-year terms of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year, and the remainder of the persons elected as councilmembers shall be elected to two-year terms of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year, or one-year terms of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year. The initial councilmembers shall take office immediately when they are elected and qualified, but the lengths of their terms of office shall be calculated from the first day in January in the year following the election. [1994 c 223 s 13; 1979 ex.s. c 126 s 20; 1965 c 7 s 35.18.270. Prior: 1959 c 76 s 5; 1955 c 337 s 12; prior: (i) 1943 c 271 s 8, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-17, part. (ii) 1943 c 271 s 4, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-13, part.]

**Purpose—1979 ex.s. c 126:** See RCW 29A.60.280(1).

**RCW 35.18.280 Organization—Holding over by incumbent officials and employees.** Councilmembers shall take office at the times provided by RCW 35.18.270 as now or hereafter amended. The other city officials and employees who are incumbent at the time the council-manager plan takes effect shall hold office until their successors have been selected in accordance with the provisions of this chapter. [2009 c 549 s 2033; 1965 c 7 s 35.18.280. Prior: 1943 c 271 s 8, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-17, part.]

**RCW 35.18.285 Organization—First council may revise budget.** If, at the beginning of the term of office of the first council elected in a city organized under the council-manager plan, the appropriations for the expenditures of the city for the current fiscal year have been made, the council, by ordinance, may revise them but may not exceed the total appropriations for expenditures already specified in the budget for the year. [1965 c 7 s 35.18.285. Prior: 1955 c 337 s 24.]

**RCW 35.18.290 Abandonment of council-manager plan.** Any city or town which has operated under the council-manager plan for more than six years may abandon such organization and accept the provisions of the general laws then applicable to municipalities upon the petition of not less than twenty percent of the registered voters therein, without changing its classification unless it desires to do so. [1965 ex.s. c 47 s 4; 1965 c 7 s 35.18.290. Prior: 1943 c 271 s 22, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-31, part.]

**RCW 35.18.300 Abandonment—Method.** The sufficiency of the petition for abandonment of the council-manager form of government shall be determined, the election ordered and conducted, and the results declared generally as provided for the procedure for reorganizing under the council-manager plan so far as those provisions are applicable. [1965 c 7 s 35.18.300. Prior: 1943 c 271 s 23, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-32, part.]

*Organization on council-manager plan: RCW 35.18.240 through 35.18.285.*

**RCW 35.18.310 Abandonment—Special election necessary.** The proposition to abandon the council-manager plan must be voted on at a special election called for that purpose at which the only proposition to be voted on shall be: "Shall the city (or town) of . . . . . abandon its organization under the council-manager plan and become a city (or town) under the general law governing cities (or towns) of . . . . . class?" [1965 c 7 s 35.18.310. Prior: 1943 c 271 s 22 part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-31, part.]

**RCW 35.18.320 Abandonment—Effect.** If a majority of votes cast at the special election favor the abandonment of the council-manager form of government, the officers elected at the next succeeding biennial election shall be those then prescribed for cities or towns of like class. Upon the qualification of such officers, the

municipality shall again become organized under the general laws of the state, but such change shall not affect in any manner or degree the property, rights, or liabilities of the corporation but shall merely extend to such change in its form of government. [1965 c 7 s 35.18.320. Prior: 1943 c 271 s 23, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 s 9198-32, part.]