



Roles and Responsibilities of Local Government Leadership

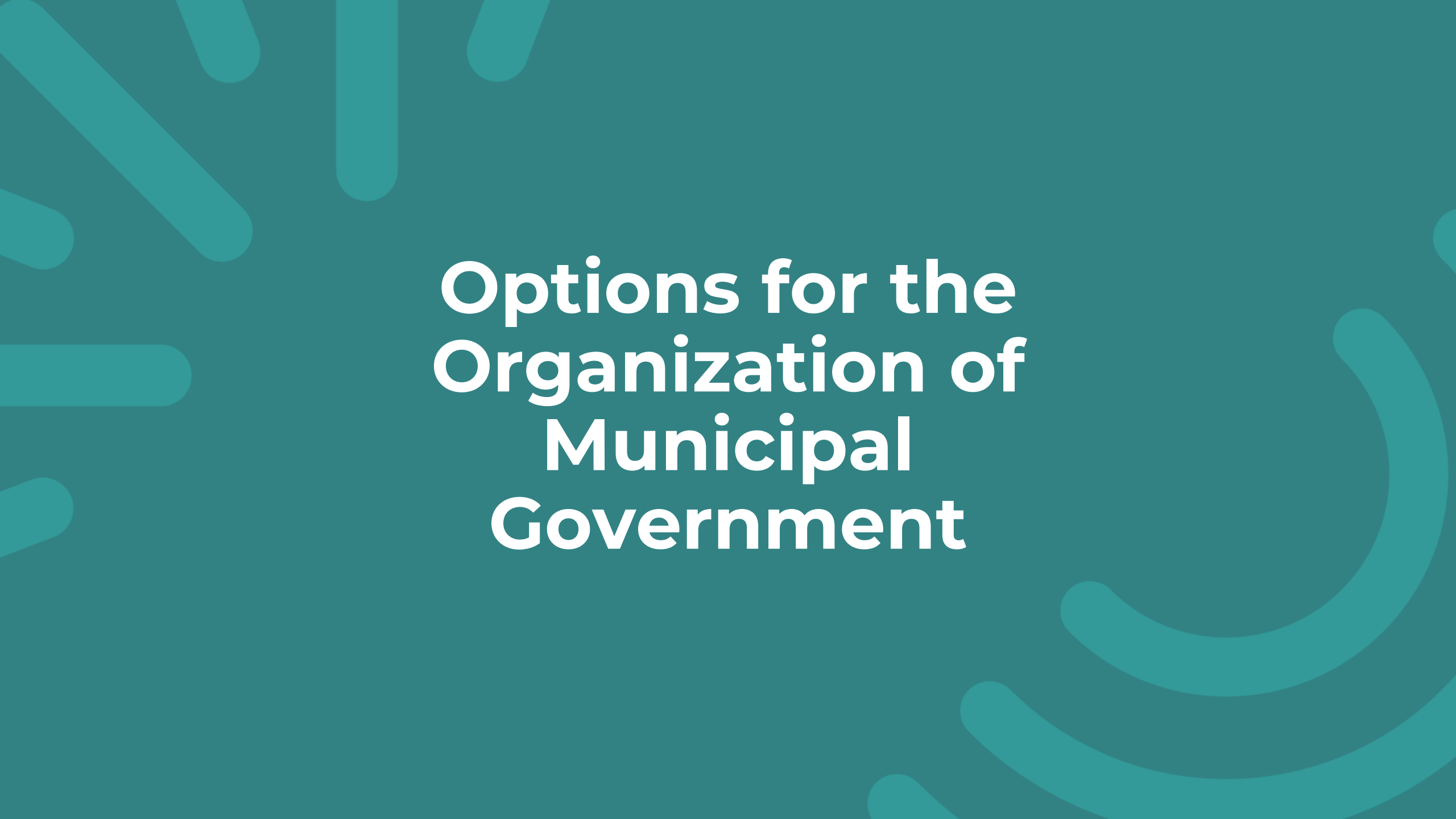
Committee of the Whole

June 16, 2026



SUN PRAIRIE

revolves around you

The background is a solid teal color. It features several abstract, organic shapes in a slightly darker shade of teal. These shapes include elongated, rounded rectangles and curved, comma-like forms scattered across the frame, primarily on the left and right sides, leaving the center clear for the text.

Options for the Organization of Municipal Government

Forms of Government Available

- Council/Manager under Wis. Stat. Ch. 64
- Commission form under Wis. Stat. Ch. 64
- Mayor/Council under Wis. Stat. Ch. 62

Municipal Government Structure in Wisconsin

Table 1. Combined Wisconsin Forms of Government

Forms	City	Village	Total	%
Council-Manager	10	8	18	12.8%
Mayor-Council-Administrator Appointed/Approved	58	35	93	66.0%
Strong Mayor-Council without Administrator	24	0	24	17.0%
Weak Mayor/-Council without Administrator	4	2	6	4.2%
Total	96	45	141	100%

Nollenberger, K., & Simmons, J. (2016). Municipal government structure in Wisconsin: Does form matter? *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs*, 2(2), 82-100. doi:10.20899/jpna.2.2.82- 100

Council/Manager Form

- Organized under Wis. Stat. Ch. 64
- Duties of the Manager are set by statute
 - Serves as Chief Executive Officer
 - Appoints and supervises all department heads
 - Presents monthly reports and accounts to Council
- Council President has no veto authority
- Termination of Manager requires statutory procedure
- Council/manager cities do not have a Mayor
- Used by approximately 10 cities in Wisconsin



Commission Form of Government

- Commission consists of Mayor and two Council members
 - Elected at large
 - Six-year terms for each member of commission
 - Mayor and two commissioners serve full-time
- Not currently in use by any City in Wisconsin



Mayor/Council Form

- Duties of Mayor set by Wis. Stat. § 62.09(8)
 - Chief Executive Officer of City
 - Takes care that all ordinances and laws are enforced
 - Ensures all employees discharge their duties
 - Has veto power to acts of the Council
- Council sets policies, approves levy and budget, and enacts laws
- Council may establish position of city administrator under this form



What are the differences?

City without Administrator

- Mayor exercises authority under Wis. Stat. § 62.09(8)
 - Directly supervises daily operations
 - Department heads report to Mayor and receive assignments from Mayor
- Mayor ensures that Council's policy decisions are carried out

City with Administrator

- Mayor exercises authority under Wis. Stat. § 62.09(8)
 - Indirect executive responsibility
 - Monitors activities of administrator and departments
- Administrator
 - Reports to Mayor and Council
 - Directly supervises daily operations
 - Supervises department heads

Duties of a Mayor in Council/Mayor/Administrator Form

Serves as CEO of city

Presides over Council

Monitors activities of administrator

Sees that ordinances and laws are enforced

Serves as policy leader for community

Holds tie vote at Council

Has veto power over Council

Chief media representative

Receives public comments and complaints and works with administrator to resolve

Peer Communities

Manager

Janesville

Beloit

Eau Claire

Oshkosh

Fond du Lac

De Pere

Menomonee Falls*

Council/Mayor/Administrator

Waukesha

West Allis

Sheboygan

Wauwatosa

Sun Prairie

Oak Creek

West Bend

Mequon

Middleton

Mt. Pleasant*

Caledonia*

Howard*

Pleasant Prairie*

Germantown*

Council/Mayor

Milwaukee

Madison

Green Bay

Kenosha

Racine

Appleton

La Crosse

Wausau

Manitowoc

Superior

Stevens
Point

Neenah

Watertown

Brookfield**

New Berlin**

Franklin**

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Roles of Leadership

Sun Prairie Structure

Council

- Legislative branch
- Passes laws and resolutions
- Financial duties, including approving budget and tax levy

Mayor

- Executive Branch
- Ensures ordinances are enforced
- Ensures employees discharge duties
- Presides at Council meetings

Judge

- Judicial Branch
- Presides over ordinance violations

Administrator

- Serves as chief administrative officer
- Directs and coordinates administration of government in accordance with policies set by Council



Elected Duties Set By State Statute

Mayor - Wis. Stat. § 62.09(8)

- Serves as CEO of city
- Presides over Council
- Monitors activities of administrator
- Sees that ordinances and laws are enforced
- Serves as policy leader for community
- Holds tie vote at Council
- Has veto power over Council

Council - Wis. Stat. § 62.11(5)

- Management and control of city property, finances, highways, and public services
- Power to act for government and good order of the city
- Power to license, regulate, suppress, borrow money, levy taxes, appropriate funds
- Limited only by express language

Elected Duties as Set Forth in Ordinance

Mayor

- Presents balanced budget annually outlining the mayor's vision for the future
- Requests creation of committees
- Makes appointments to boards, commissions, and committees
- Serves as official salesperson of the city

Council

- Approves mayor's executive budget and levies taxes
- All duties not otherwise vested elsewhere by law

Administrator Duties as Set Forth in Ordinance

- Responsible for day-to-day operations and services
- Supervision of all departments
- Implementation of ordinances, statutes, resolutions, and council directives
- Recommend candidates for appointment to certain offices
- Promote economic well-being of city
- Serves as city's chief personnel officer
- Direct and coordinate preparation of annual budget for mayor
- Oversee purchasing policy



Employee Statutory Offices

Treasurer

Clerk

Comptroller*

Attorney

Chief of Police

Constable*

Engineer*

Assessor

Street
Commissioner*

Fire Chief



Concrete Examples

Policy v. Operations

- Mayor develops vision through mayor's executive budget
- Council establishes policies for the city
- Administrator is responsible for daily operations and carrying out the vision and policies set forth by elected officials
- Staff leadership and their teams are responsible for executing these operations



Budget

Council

- Adopts budget (can amend)
- Approves warrants
- Authorizes borrowing
- Reviews and authorizes amendments as presented by staff

Mayor

- Presents budget
- Reviews recommendations of staff

Administrator

- Assists mayor with budget preparation
- Directs departments to prepare budgets
- Ensures daily operations comply with budget

Staff

- Prepares draft budgets for review
- Presents budget initiatives
- Manages department budget throughout year



Traffic Regulation

Council

- Sets Vision Zero Policy
- Establishes speed limits
- Approves budget for police, engineering, etc.

Mayor

- Recommends appropriate funding to enforce policies
- Ensures laws are enforced

Administrator

- Directs day-to-day operations to ensure funding
- Provides guidance to department heads

Staff

- Engineering designs streets in accordance with policies
- Planning requires development meets policies
- Police enforces law
- Attorney prosecutes citations written by police



Street Construction and Maintenance



Council

- Authorizes funding for road repair
- Approves Capital Improvement Plan
- Adopts formal policies

Mayor

- Recommends policy on street repair, replacement, and construction through budget
- Ensures laws are enforced

Administrator

- Directs day-to-day operations to ensure streets are maintained
- Provides guidance to department heads

Staff

- Engineering designs streets
- Planning requires construction of streets meet city standards
- Public Works maintains streets with assistance from external contractors

Swimming Lessons at Family Aquatic Center

Council

- Authorizes funding for lifeguards
- Approves policy on scholarships
- Approves fees for lessons

Mayor

- Recommends funding for lifeguards
- Recommends budget to operate pool
- Ensures lessons are offered

Administrator

- Directs staff to offer lessons
- Provides guidance to PRF leadership
- Ensures scholarship program is operational

Staff

Recreation

- Hires and trains lifeguards
- Collects fees and registration for lessons
- Maintains pool in accordance with state regulations

SAFR Grant Application

Council

- Authorizes application for grant
- Approves budget consistent with grant requirements
- Approves Fire collective bargaining agreement – negotiated at their direction

Mayor

- Recommends funding for grant in budget
- Recommends staffing levels of fire department

Administrator

- Reviews grant application
- Assists mayor with review of budget from fire chief
- Ensures budget is consistent with grant
- Oversees negotiation of union contracts

Staff

- Fire Department writes grant
- Fire Chief recommends hires to the PFC
- PFC authorizes the hire of firefighters
- Onboard and train firefighters

Review

- Mayor sets vision through budget
- Council approves budget and develops policy and goals of the city
- Administrator directs daily operations and ensures staff comply with budget and work towards council's goals
- Staff determine how to execute the vision and policy

