

BECOME AN ADVOCATE - MUNICIPAL

Colorado has **271** incorporated municipalities: 196 towns, 73 cities, and 2 consolidated cities and counties. Colorado has 61 home rule cities and 35 home rule towns. Some positions may serve “at large” while others may be “districted.” Terms are generally 4 years, staggered and elections held in odd years.

HOME RULE: Article XX of the Colorado Constitution, gives home rule local municipalities the power to make legislation relevant to their areas, exercising control over issues of “local concern” while minimizing state intervention in municipal affairs. Home rule cities are still subject to state laws on matters of “statewide concern.”

WHY DOES IT MATTER - SCOPE? Knowing whether your city or town is “home rule” will impact **the topics** and jurisdiction of the matters over which they can legislate. A home rule city has greater freedom to deviate from state or federal laws (unless of statewide concern or pre-empted federally).

WHY DOES IT MATTER - GOOD OR BAD? If your home rule city has leaders who are more thoughtful and visionary than at the state or federal level you **want** them to exercise their home rule power to **lead**, extend **greater rights**, and **more innovative** ideas and solutions. They can also be an important **check and balance** on federal or state policies.

WHO ARE YOUR CITY OR TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERS & WHAT DO THEY DO?

Council Members: Council members make city laws, set the city budget and priorities, oversee city departments and provide constituent services. City departments can range from finance, jobs, water, libraries, parks, recreation, property, police, fire, transportation, code enforcement and more! <https://www.cml.org/cml-member-directory> or your local website.

1. **MEET WITH THEM PERSONALLY.** Get to know your Council Member, regardless of party, ideally before you need to advocate on any particular topic. Then take the next step and get to know all of the other members of council, whether they are yours or not.
2. **GET TO KNOW THEIR COMMITTEE STRUCTURE.** Most cities or towns have policy or working committees that do the initial work to take testimony and adopt recommendations for

consideration by the full council. **Engage early.** You can get items on the agenda and help shape the agenda and the debate before and during committee meetings.

3. **WHEN DO THEY MEET?** Meeting schedules, frequency and topics vary by city and town. Call the City Clerk or go online to find out when and where your council meets.
4. **SHOW UP - OPEN MEETINGS & OPEN RECORDS.** Your City and Town Government are subject to the Open meetings requirement, which means all meetings (date, time, and agenda) are required to be publicly posted. You have a right to attend (unless executive session) and get copies of the minutes or public county documents.
5. **TIP: ALERTS & E-NEWSLETTERS.** Many now have alerts or newsletters you can sign up for in order to get notice of what items will be under consideration, when.
6. **TESTIFY.** Public testimony is typically allowed and welcomed, but may be regulated as to time, place, topic at hand and duration. Your testimony might sway votes and can be the basis for legal challenges in the future. Best practice includes your name, where you live and a brief explanation (stories or data) about why you support or oppose.
7. **CALL, EMAIL, OR ASK FOR A MEETING.** If you care about issue up for a vote or want to get an item put on a meeting agenda, you can call, email or schedule a meeting before the vote.
8. **PUBLIC OPINION & PUBLIC ACTION.** You can grow attention to a local decision through Petitions, Op Eds, Facebook Groups, Twitter, local newspapers, radio station, press releases, press conference and organizing with allied groups.

TIPS:

- **Be Courteous.** No matter how contentious or frustrating the issue may be, courtesy will always get you further.
- **Be Personal.** Share your own story about why this matters to you. Data can be helpful to.
- **Be Relevant.** Make sure your testimony is closely connected and related to the topic under debate or consideration.
- **Civics Club.** You can organize to have different people in the community adopt different committees or meetings so you always have eyes and years on the Council's work.
- **Citizen Power.** The more people who show up and participate the less power can be wielded by wealthy special interests.
- **Be Known (in a good way).** Regularity of attendance will help them remember you. Your credibility matters on your first impression so that more weight will be given to your ideas and your solutions.
- **Read the Charter.** Familiarize yourself with the City Charter. That may impact what laws the city can or cannot pass.

MAYOR OR CITY MANAGER? Cities also vary in terms of the role of their Mayor (strong or weak) or City Manager. The Council generally sets the policy direction and the city manager handles the day-to-day administrative tasks. The Mayor can be political and public facing. The City manager is generally a-political and more behind the scenes.

TIPS:

- If you have a problem with a current policy or want a new policy, contact your Council Member.
- If you have a problem with how a city policy is being implemented, contact the City Manager or Mayor.