



To: President and Members of the Munster Town Council

From: Jim Marino
Town Manager

Date: July 21, 2025

Re: Chain of Command & Communications

As I have become more familiar with the Town's operations and organizational culture during the three months since I began in my position, I discovered an issue with the chain of command and communication between the council and staff. It's apparent that the roles and responsibilities of Councilors, the Town Manager, and staff are not well defined. A clear understanding of and mutual agreement on these roles is essential for fostering an effective organization that delivers exceptional services to our community.

Over the course of my 34-year career across four municipalities, I have adhered to the council-manager form of government as defined by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). The attached summary from ICMA highlights the distinction between the governing body responsible for enacting legislation and determining policy for the community, and the administrative role of the manager who implements those policies and manages daily operations. This governance model promotes a professional and apolitical approach to the management of public services.

The attached resolution amends Resolution 2133 adopted in 2024 by adding a chain of command and communications policy that establishes principles and protocols designed to facilitate effective collaboration among the Councilors, Town Manager, and staff in our service to the community.

Recommendation:

By motion and roll call vote, approve Resolution as presented.

RESOLUTION NO. 2155

TOWN OF MUNSTER, INDIANA

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING AN AMENDMENT TO RESOLUTION NO. 2133, DEFINING THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL, TOWN MANAGER, AND TOWN STAFF

WHEREAS, the Town Council of the Town of Munster, Indiana, is the duly elected legislative body of the Town of Munster, Lake County, Indiana (hereinafter the “Town”), a unit of local government; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council of the Town of Munster adopted Resolution No. 2133 on June 3, 2024, establishing a chain of command and flow of work regarding third party vendors and department heads; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council of the Town of Munster believes it to be in the best interests of the Town to amend Resolution No. 2133 to establish a clear communication process between the Town Council, Town Manager, and Town Staff;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Town Council of the Town of Munster that Resolution No. 2133 adopted June 3, 2024, is hereby amended to include the following Chain of Command and Communication Policy:

1. The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities of the Town Council, Town Manager, and Town Staff; establish a clear communication process between them; and outline how Councilor requests should be handled.
2. The role of the Town Council is to set the vision and goals for the Town and provide staff with the policies, rules and resources necessary to achieve these.
3. The role of staff is to implement the tasks and projects that will achieve the Council's vision and goals.
4. The role of the Town Manager is to serve as the chief operating officer of the Town, implement tasks and projects, oversee the staff, tasks and projects to ensure each are performed in a timely, accurate, financially responsible and professional manner.
5. Communications from Councilors should be directed through the Town Manager. Councilors may request information from staff but may not issue

directives or instructions to them. All operational directions must come from the Town Manager.

6. When approached by residents, business owners, or third parties with concerns, complaints, or requests, Councilors should refer them to the appropriate department or to the Town Manager for follow-up.
7. The Town Manager will relay any requests for information or project pursuits made by individual Councilors to the entire Council, thereby promoting transparency and minimizing the risk of duplication or misunderstandings.
8. A Councilor's initiative for the Town Manager or staff to pursue a project requires approval from a majority of the Council prior to implementation. To have the project discussed at a Council meeting, the Councilor must obtain the endorsement of the Town Council President or the agreement of at least two additional councilors.
9. Councilors commit to fairly and impartially enforcing all ordinances, orders, and resolutions adopted by the Town of Munster.
10. Councilors agree to abide by the Town's Code of Ethics as it applies to this policy.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Town Council of the Town of Munster, Indiana, this _____ day of _____, 2025, by a vote of _____ in favor and _____ opposed.

**TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF
MUNSTER, LAKE COUNTY, INDIANA**

George Shinkan, President

ATTEST:

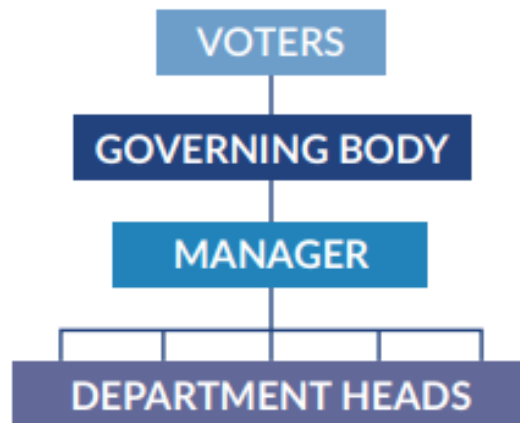
Wendy Mis, Clerk-Treasurer

What is the council-manager form of government?

The council-manager form is the most popular structure of government in the United States among municipalities with populations of 2,500 or more. It is one of several ways in which U.S. municipalities and counties can organize.

Under this form, residents elect a governing body—including a chief elected official, such as a mayor or board chairperson—to adopt legislation and set policy. The governing body then hires a manager or administrator with broad executive authority to carry out those policies and oversee the local government's day-to-day operations.

The Council-Manager Form



What's so special about the council-manager form of government?

Born out of the U.S. progressive reform movement at the turn of the 20th century, the council-manager form was created to combat corruption and unethical activity within local government by promoting nonpolitical management that is effective, transparent, responsive, and accountable.

The council-manager form of government recognizes the critical role of elected officials as policy makers, who focus on mapping out a collective vision for the community and establishing the policies that govern it. The form also recognizes the need for a highly-qualified individual who is devoted exclusively to the delivery of services to residents.

Think about the structure used by many corporations, in which the board of directors hires an experienced CEO, who is granted broad, executive authority to run the organization. While these boards establish the company's overall policy direction, the CEO oversees implementation of that policy.

How can council-manager government benefit my community?

- **Flexibility**—The council-manager form can adapt to local needs and demands. While governing bodies in some council-manager communities are elected at large, for example, others are elected by district or by a combination of an at-large-and-by-district system to respond to local needs.
- **Clearly Defined Roles**—Under the council-manager form, there is a clear distinction between the administrative role of the manager and the political and policy roles of the governing body, lead by the mayor. The day-to-day operations of the local government organization reside with the appointed manager, allowing elected officials to devote their time and energy to policy development and the assessment of the effectiveness of those policies within the community.
- **A Roadmap for Success**—The council-manager form is the system of local government under which professional management is most likely to succeed. Under this system, professional managers can focus on service delivery, policy implementation, and performance management and can align the local government's services with the values, mission, and policy goals defined by the community and elected officials.

THE ROLE OF THE MAYOR OR CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIAL

Typically, the mayor or board chairperson in a council-manager community is a voting member of the governing body who may be either directly elected, as in 69 percent of council-manager communities, or who is selected by and from among their colleagues on the governing body. The mayor or chairperson is the public face of the community who presides at meetings, assigns agenda items to committees, facilitates communication and understanding between elected and appointed officials, and assists the governing body in setting goals and advocating policy decisions.

THE ROLE OF ELECTED OFFICIALS

Under the council-manager form, the elected officials (e.g. the council or board) are the legislative body and the community's policy makers. Power is centralized in this body, which approves the budget and adopts local laws and regulations, for example. The elected officials also focus on the community's big-picture goals, such as community growth and sustainability.

The elected officials hire a professional city, town, or county manager based on that person's education, experience, skills, and abilities and NOT on their political allegiances. The elected officials supervise the manager's performance, and if that person is not responsive and effective in their role, the elected officials have the authority to remove her or him at any time.