

Information regarding the roles and responsibilities of a City Councilman.

What is the structure of the City Council?

- The City Council is comprised of the Mayor; elected by the city as a whole, and 8 Councilmen, elected by and representing the 8 wards of the city. Councilmen serve 4-year terms, the Mayor 2-year term.
- All powers of the city shall be vested in the City Council, except as otherwise provided by law or the Charter.

Responsibilities of a Councilperson include:

- To attend monthly and special meetings of the City Council,
- To serve on committees as appointed by the Mayor, as confirmed by the City Council,
- To make, establish, modify, amend or repeal ordinances, rules, regulations, local laws and resolutions not in conflict with any general or special law of the State of New York.
- To oversee financial activities of the City, including the approval of the budget; ordering an independent annual audit of the city's financial affairs; accepting or rejecting grants, and contracts with other governmental entities, businesses, contractors and employee unions; and adjusting tax assessments when necessary.
- To approve or reject requests for various uses of City properties including roads, parks, and squares; to permit or reject requests for encroachments onto City properties including streets, alleys, sidewalks, crosswalks, highways or public grounds.
- To provide guidance and direction in City policies to the City Manager; and to hire or remove the City Manager.

How much time does the Councilperson job take every month?

- **Monthly City Council Meetings.** Councilmen are required to attend the regularly scheduled council meetings on the first Monday of each month (6:30pm). These meetings typically run from a half an hour up to two hours in length. In preparation for these meetings, the Councilman is expected to study the meeting agenda, and when needed to seek clarification on issues from the City Manager, various department staff, state agencies, etc.
- **Special meetings of the City Council.** In addition, a City Councilman is required to attend special meetings which are scheduled as needed, and which address one matter only.
- **Workshops of the City Council.** workshops are schedule from time to time and provide the Council opportunities to receive and debate information on an issue in a less structured and formal way. Workshops are distinguished from regular or special meetings in that no matter will be voted on during a workshop.
- **City Council committee meetings.** Each Councilman will be appointed to a number of Council committees. The frequency of these meetings varies depending on the nature of the committee and the specific charge to that committee.
- **Constituent Engagement.** As the elected official in the Ward, the Councilman is available to ward constituents to field needs for service and to discuss issues. This is typically not time consuming but should be thought of as a 2-hour commitment a month.

In sum, a good general guide is to anticipate 2 meetings each month (regular, special, workshop and/or committee(s)), averaging 3 hours per meeting (including travel and preparation.) Adding in 2 hours each month for constituent work, the total estimated time is 8 hours a month.