

Statement on Council-City Manager Proposals
by
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I am here tonight to support the intent of the proposals for a Council-City Manger form of government. I believe two things are essential:

1. The City Charter needs to provide for a stronger role for the professional management of the City by ensuring that the City's chief operating manager, whether called a City Manager or City Administrator, has clear authority to manage the City staff and be responsible for all of the daily operations of the City. The City Manager needs to have the clear and exclusive authority to hire, fire and compensate the staff and direct the work of the staff. The City Manager needs to have clear authority and clear accountability and be held to the highest professional standards.
2. There needs to be a better balance of powers between the Aldermen and the Mayor. Council members need to share responsibility for the hiring, firing and compensating the City Manager and equally be a part of the setting of policy and the overall direction of the City. The City Manager needs to be fully responsive to the needs and direction of all of the Council, Mayor and aldermen. With our current system it is clear that the City Administrator serves exclusively the Mayor who hires and fires that person. The Mayor also exclusively determines the scope of the responsibilities that the City Administrator will be given.

There are many reasons why different speakers tonight will say they believe these and other changes should be made. I have given extensive and careful thought to the pros and cons of moving away from our current strong Mayor-City Administrator system of government. I have not found it an easy decision because I think there are real trade-offs in either approach. However, for me, the compelling reason is to have a City Manager who, if he (or she) is doing a good job, has reasonable expectations of transitioning between the terms of different Mayors. A good long term City Manager serving beyond the term of a Mayor would be of huge benefit to the operations of the City. The City Manager would also have a clearly defined set of duties and responsibilities, not subject to the preferences of an individual Mayor. For this reason more than any other I come down in favor of the Council- City Manager form of government

However, I have one very major concern about the proposals. I believe the approach I am about to describe can to a considerable degree bridge the differences between the strong Mayor vs. the Council-Manager approaches. The Mayor must continue to have a clear leadership role within the Council. The Mayor, as the only official elected Citywide by all of the voters, needs to be the first among equals and have the clear role as the Chair or President of the Council. This means that the Mayor has the responsibility of overseeing the work of the Manager and ensuring that the wishes of the Council are carried out. A group of people such as a Council without a leader cannot collectively

provide direction, especially when they disagree or do not reach a definitive position. Without such a leader, namely the Mayor, clearly charged to give direction on behalf of the Council, a City Manager will have far too much unchecked and discretionary power. Most cities with the Council- Manager form of government do not have partisan elections as we do in Annapolis, further adding to our difficulties in reaching decisions and consensus in the Council. We need a Mayor who leads, but shares power, and is held accountable for accomplishing the policy and legislative goals of City. Voters still need an official elected Citywide who is responsible and expected to lead.

It is not difficult to bring these two approaches together. I have provided modest edits to each of the Council-City Manager bills that have come forth to accomplish what I have described. I think it is extremely important that we approach changing our governmental structure very thoughtfully and realistically given the unique circumstances and history we have in Annapolis.

Lastly as to process, I am concerned. We are having a very strange public hearing on four different bills, only two actually introduced and two just posted on the City's website. Yet I hear references to moving from this hearing to a Council vote on this topic. I cannot imagine how this could be legally or politically possible. We, the public, deserve to see a final draft of what is proposed, properly introduced with adequate time to review it, and have another formal hearing on the bill or bills to be voted on. This is way too important to the City to have the Council act in haste or confusion.