

City of Eau Claire Handbook for Public Officials

SECTION 1 – Introduction and Background

A) COUNCIL-MANAGER FORM OF GOVERNMENT

The voters of the City of Eau Claire adopted a Council-City Manager form of Government in 1949, and Eau Claire has been operating under that system since. It combines the political leadership of elected officials with the professional managerial experience of a City Manager. Approximately 60 percent of the cities in the United States with a population of 25,000 or more have an appointed local government manager.

Wisconsin Statutes Chapter 64, Subchapter 1, describes the powers of the City Council and the City Manager under the Council-Manager form of government. It provides that the City Council is the legislative body and exercises legislative and general ordinance powers for the City. The City Manager is the chief executive officer and exercises executive and general administrative powers for the City. The organization of the City government is further defined under Chapters 2.04 and 2.08 of the City of Eau Claire Code of Ordinances.

In November of 1992, the voters of Eau Claire passed a referendum specifying the election of a City Council president at-large, with five Council members elected from five aldermanic districts and five Council members elected at-large. Eau Claire is the only city in the state of Wisconsin to have a City Council president elected directly by the voters.

B) STRATEGIC PLAN

The Eau Claire City Council and City Administration are currently operating under the 2018 Strategic Plan. Conditions can change rapidly in local government. This strategic plan clearly outlines what does not change – our vision, values, and mission – while giving staff flexibility to modify and update operational plans based on conditions.

VISION STATEMENT

Eau Claire is a vibrant city with exceptional quality of life and services.

STRATEGIC VALUES

- We believe in making Eau Claire a great city – a place where all people feel “at home”, experience a high quality of life, and can reach their potential.
- We believe that local government is a stewardship – We help citizens meet their needs and help the community solve problems. We cannot always do this on our own; we need and value partners who can help.

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- We believe in sustainability – We must balance the needs of current and future generations in our decisions and investments. This affects our financial, environmental, and development decisions. Today’s decisions should not come at the expense of future generations’ opportunities.

OPERATIONAL VALUES

- The City delivers services in an ethical, professional, fair and transparent manner.
- The Eau Claire City Council values each other and City staff by fostering a collegial, inclusive, respectful and engaging policy-making environment.
- Eau Claire’s City staff values innovative and responsive approaches to service delivery, and embraces a culture of continuous improvement.
- The City values its employees and strives to recruit, retain and support the best workforce possible.

MISSION STATEMENT

It is our mission to assure the common good through services essential for a safe, sustainable, engaged and healthy community.

STRATEGIC GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- Foster diverse, creative economic development.
- Provide safe and functional infrastructure that is environmentally sensitive and sustainable.
- Optimize the city’s organizational potential.
- Develop and nurture safe, healthy, and connected neighborhoods, emphasizing revitalization and redevelopment.
- Facilitate an engaged community. This includes residents being engaged with local government and includes opportunities to engage with each other.
- Create engaging opportunities for fun. How can Eau Claire be a city that’s livable and lovable?
- Nurture community-wide opportunities for personal learning, growth, and development. For example, how can public libraries, Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC), and UW-Eau Claire create community-wide opportunities?

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C) DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following is a brief list of terms that you as a public official or a member of the public might hear during the course of a public meeting:

A

Ad hoc Committee

A committee formed for a particular purpose, for a limited time.

Agenda

An outlined plan of an entire meeting.

Amendment

A change or addition that changes the meaning or scope of an original formal document, usually laws or regulations, but may include plans, specifications, contracts, etc.

Annexation

The process by which a municipality, upon meeting certain requirements, expands its incorporated limits.

Appropriation

A sum of money authorized by a legislative body to be spent for a specific purpose.

B

Bond

An interest-bearing certificate issued by a government or business, redeemable on a specific date; used as a means of raising funds for capital improvements.

Budget, Capital Improvement

A plan for improvements and acquisitions of significant value and a useful life of more than one year such as buildings, roads, equipment, etc.

Budget, Operating

A comprehensive financial plan to sustain municipal operations during a given year, with related explanation.

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C

Chair

The presiding officer of a board, commission, or committee.

Collective bargaining

Negotiations by a union to procure an employment agreement for such items as wages, benefits and working conditions.

Comprehensive plan

The basic foundation for local planning; this document explains a community's vision and priorities, and describes where, how, and in some cases, when, development will occur.

Conflict of interest

Matters of private interest or personal gain appearing on an agenda on which the official must abstain from voting.

Consensus

Mutual agreement of the governing body.

Consent agenda

A list of routine and/or non-controversial items on an agenda, as determined prior to the meeting, that may be approved by a single vote.

Contingency

An appropriation of funds to handle unexpected events and emergencies that occur during the course of the fiscal year.

Custodian of records

The staff member charged with custody, maintenance and control of public records.

D

Debt service

Payments to creditors, primarily the holders of municipal bonds; debt service includes principal, interest, and minor incidentals such as paying agents' fees.

Development agreement

A contract between the City and a person or business detailing the obligations of both parties and specifying the standards and conditions that will govern development of a specific piece of property in the City.

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Development plan

Specific guidelines, requirements or policies for planned growth.

E

Easement

An interest in land owned by another that entitles its holder to a specific limited use of that land.

Eminent domain

The legal power of a government to expropriate private property for the sake of public necessity.

G

General fund

The operating fund of the City used to account for all financial resources except those required to be accounted for in a special fund.

General obligation bond

A financial instrument giving borrowing power to a municipality, based upon the pledge of the municipality to retire the debt and pay interest.

M

Minutes

A written summary of actions taken at a meeting.

O

Ordinance

A municipal law that applies to all persons within that municipality.

P

Plat

A map representing a tract of land, showing the boundaries and location of individual properties and streets.

Public hearing

An opportunity during a public meeting for persons to express their position on a specific issue, both pro and con, as required either by statute or order of a governmental body after due notice.

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Public meeting

Any meeting of a governmental body at which public business is discussed or decided or policy formulated.

Public official

An individual who serves on a governmental body by virtue of election by the public or appointment by another governmental body.

Q

Quorum

The prescribed number of members of any governmental body that must be present to legally transact business; the quorum is a majority of all members of the governmental body unless the bylaws state otherwise.

R

Resolution

A decision, opinion, policy or directive expressed in a formally drafted document and voted upon by a governmental body.

Revenues

Monies received or anticipated to be received by a local government.

Right-of-way

Property owned by a government over which the public has right of passage such as streets, parkways, medians, sidewalks, easements and driveways constructed thereon.

S

Site plan

A document showing uses and structures proposed for a parcel of land.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CAFR – Comprehensive Annual Financial Report

CDBG – Community Development Block Grant

CIP – Capital Improvement Program

RFP – Request for Proposal

TID – Tax Incremental District

TIF – Tax Incremental Financing