

RCW 35.18.020 Number of councilmembers—Wards, districts—Terms—Vacancies. (1) The number of councilmembers in a city or town operating with a council-manager plan of government shall be based upon the latest population of the city or town that is determined by the office of financial management as follows:

(a) A city or town having not more than two thousand inhabitants, five councilmembers; and

(b) A city or town having more than two thousand, seven councilmembers.

(2) Except for the initial staggering of terms, councilmembers shall serve for four-year terms of office. All councilmembers shall serve until their successors are elected and qualified and assume office in accordance with RCW 29A.60.280. Councilmembers may be elected on a citywide or townwide basis, or from wards or districts, or any combination of these alternatives. Candidates shall run for specific positions. Wards or districts shall be redrawn as provided in chapter 29A.76 RCW. Wards or districts shall be used as follows: (a) Only a resident of the ward or district may be a candidate for, or hold office as, a councilmember of the ward or district; and (b) only voters of the ward or district may vote at a primary to nominate candidates for a councilmember of the ward or district. Voters of the entire city or town may vote at the general election to elect a councilmember of a ward or district, unless the city or town had prior to January 1, 1994, limited the voting in the general election for any or all council positions to only voters residing within the ward or district associated with the council positions. If a city or town had so limited the voting in the general election to only voters residing within the ward or district, then the city or town shall be authorized to continue to do so.

(3) When a city or town has qualified for an increase in the number of councilmembers from five to seven by virtue of the next succeeding population determination made by the office of financial management, two additional council positions shall be filled at the next municipal general election with the person elected to one of the new council positions receiving the greatest number of votes being elected for a four-year term of office and the person elected to the other additional council position being elected for a two-year term of office. The two additional councilmembers shall assume office immediately when qualified in accordance with RCW 29A.04.133, but the term of office shall be computed from the first day of January after the year in which they are elected. Their successors shall be elected to four-year terms of office.

Prior to the election of the two new councilmembers, the city or town council shall fill the additional positions by appointment not later than forty-five days following the release of the population determination, and each appointee shall hold office only until the new position is filled by election.

(4) When a city or town has qualified for a decrease in the number of councilmembers from seven to five by virtue of the next succeeding population determination made by the office of financial management, two council positions shall be eliminated at the next municipal general election if four council positions normally would be filled at that election, or one council position shall be eliminated at each of the next two succeeding municipal general elections if three council positions normally would be filled at the first municipal general election after the population determination. The

council shall by ordinance indicate which, if any, of the remaining positions shall be elected at large or from wards or districts.

(5) Vacancies on a council shall occur and shall be filled as provided in chapter 42.12 RCW. [2015 c 53 § 32; 1994 c 223 § 12; 1981 c 260 § 7. Prior: 1979 ex.s. c 126 § 19; 1979 c 151 § 26; 1956 c 7 § 35.18.020; prior: 1959 c 76 § 1; 1955 c 337 § 3; prior: (i) 1943 c 271 § 6; Rem. Supp. 1943 § 9198-15. (ii) 1943 c 271 § 4, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 § 9198-13, part.]

Purpose—1979 ex.s. c 126: See RCW 29A.60.280(1).

Population determinations, office of financial management: Chapter 43.62 RCW.

Times for holding elections: RCW 29A.04.311 through 29A.04.330.