

South Burlington Charter Committee

Evaluation of Possible Governance Structures

April 12, 2023

Key Questions	Options	Pros/Advantages	Cons/Disadvantages
<p>Chief Executive?</p>	<p>Strong/ Administrative Mayor (no City Manager)</p> <p><i>Elected</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear leader with recognized authority who sets the City’s policy vision and moves policy forward • Clear point of contact for constituent concerns • City resident elected by the City’s voters • Spokesperson for the City, including representing its interests in Montpelier and with the VT Federal delegation • Ceremonial head of the City • Hires own staff, which encourages innovation • Mayoral system easy for citizens to understand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidates would be limited to City residents and may not have professional qualifications • City Manager position would be eliminated • Governance could be seen as partisan or overly political • Veto power could cause conflicts with council or override council’s decisions • Full-time job could be a barrier to entry for potential candidates • Citywide campaign could be expensive, another barrier for candidates • Campaign donations may raise suspicion of favoritism in later policy decisions • Campaign could encourage or allow endorsement by City employees or employee groups, which could conflict with City policy • Hires own staff, which could be done for reasons other than professional ability • Could become entrenched as an incumbent, difficult to vote out
	<p>City Manager (no Mayor)</p> <p><i>Appointed</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected based on professional qualifications, such as expertise, professional experience • Neutral, non-political decisionmaker • Provides continuity to City operations • Runs day-to-day operation of City so elected officials can focus on policy matters • Stays current on managerial and financial issues through continual education and professional development • Hires and fires professional staff and protects them from political influence • Available for citizen concerns • Council can remove manager for poor performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially not connected to community • Has unelected authority and may not respect Council’s role as policymaker or implement the Council’s policies • May use the position to try to manipulate and control the Council and may form ‘favorites’ with Councilors • City Manager system difficult for citizens to understand • Council’s ability to remove manager could incur expense due to employment contract

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<p>Political Leader?</p>	<p>“Weak”/Policy Mayor (with City Manager)</p> <p><i>Elected</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear, recognizable leader of the City • Clear point of contact for constituent concerns • City resident elected by the City’s voters • Spokesperson and ceremonial head for the City • Can help bring consensus to Council as active chair • Supported by a professional City Manager and can provide support and guidance to Manager • Can be a part-time position so more potential candidates may be able and willing to run • Mayoral system easy for citizens to understand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for conflicts between Policy Mayor and Council; Council may not support Policy Mayor • Position has little statutory power • Mayor may not accept limited role and may try to act as an Administrative Mayor • Citywide campaign could be expensive, a barrier for many candidates • City Manager may have less authority to act for the City • May not always be available for citizen concerns if part-time position • Nature of position may be confusing to citizens
	<p>Council Chair (with City Manager)</p> <p><i>Elected as Councilor; chosen by fellow Councilors to be chair</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works to build consensus, encourages collaboration, and listens to all councilors • May be more of a “team spirit” than a system with a separate mayor • City resident elected by the City’s voters • Can be replaced every year by other Councilors • Provides many of the same services as a Policy Mayor • Supported by a professional City Manager and can provide support and guidance to Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not elected as Chair by City residents • Unclear who is the spokesperson for the City • Less of a clear point of contact for residents than with a Mayor • Nature of the role may be confusing to voters • Chair may lack sufficient political influence in lobbying, obtaining grants, etc. • Potential for Chair conflict with Manager

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<p>Council Composition?</p>	<p>5 Councilors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier to find candidates to serve • Easier to hold more efficient meetings, have cooperation and team building • Easier to arrange meetings that all Councilors can attend • Easier communication with the City Manager and the residents • If legislative district (ward) based, voting logistics are simpler if just one Councilor per district (ward) • Less expensive for City to pay fewer stipends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May represent fewer perspectives • Too much work for each Councilor • More difficult to get a quorum • Only takes three Councilors to dismiss the city Manager
	<p>More than 5 Councilors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More perspectives will be represented • May mean greater expertise, different skill sets in council • Spreads out the work of the council to more people and may allow for extra activities such as subcommittees • Councilors will be able to miss meetings or recuse themselves when necessary and there will still be a quorum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More difficult to reach consensus; more voices could lead to more conflict or factions • Deliberations could get bogged down with more Councilors, possibly leading to less efficient meetings • Difficult to find more candidates to run • Adding subcommittees could take up more of Councilors' time and create additional staff work • More expensive for City to pay more stipends and increase staff support and time commitment

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<p>Geographic Representation?</p> <p><i>For School Board and City Council</i></p>	<p>Elected at large</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All councilors have a city-wide perspective • More people will be eligible to run for a council seat • Residents from any legislative district (ward) can reach out to any councilor for assistance • Voting logistics for at-large (city-wide) election are simpler for residents and the Clerk’s office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be unrepresentative of the entire City due to inequitable geographic representation • Difficult for councilors to represent all residents of the City rather than just those in their legislative district (ward) • Running for city-wide office may be expensive and time-consuming
	<p>Elected by legislative district (ward)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents more engaged with their Councilor at a neighborhood level • Legislative districts (wards) could correspond to existing legislative districts with simpler voting logistics, if only 5 Councilors • Familiarity with localized issues • More affordable and less time consuming for candidates to campaign in their legislative district (ward) • Smaller candidate pool may encourage more candidates • Assuming the 5 legislative boundaries determine the districts (wards), it’s easier to have 5 or 10 Councilors (one or two from each district). It may be less confusing for voters than a mixture of geographic representation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to lose city-wide perspective and, to be reelected, Councilors may have to prioritize their own legislative district (ward) • May be difficult to find a candidate to run in each legislative district (ward) • Smaller candidate pool may lead to more candidates running unopposed, so possibly less voter choice • Some potential candidates (including current councilors) may not be able to serve • Confusing to voters to have one Councilor per legislative district (ward) plus more at-large, if over 5 Councilors • If legislative boundaries determine wards, the Legislature (not the City) determines the districts (wards); redistricting every 10 years could cause confusion • If the number of Councilors is between 5 and 10 it may confuse voters to have one per legislative district (ward) plus one or more at large.

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<p>South Burlington Board of School Directors Composition?</p>	<p>5 Directors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier to find candidates to serve • Easier to hold more efficient meetings, have cooperation and team building • Easier to arrange meetings that all Directors can attend • Easier communication with the Superintendent and the residents • If legislative district (ward) based, voting logistics are simpler if just one Director per district (ward) • Less expensive for City to pay fewer stipends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May represent fewer perspectives • Members often work on multiple committees and bargaining groups which creates a high workload • More difficult to get a quorum • Only takes three Directors to dismiss the Superintendent
	<p>More than 5 Directors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More perspectives will be represented • May mean greater expertise, different skill sets in School Board • Spreads out the work of the Directors to more people and may allow for extra activities such as more subcommittees • Directors will be able to miss meetings or recuse themselves when necessary and there will still be a quorum • More contacts for the public and more outreach to the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More difficult to reach consensus; more voices could lead to more conflict or factions • Deliberations could get bogged down with more Directors, possibly leading to less efficient meetings • Difficult to find more candidates to run • More subcommittees could take up more of Directors' time and create additional staff work • More expensive for School to pay more stipends and increase staff support and time commitment