

*Legislative Commission's Staff Study of  
City Charters in Nevada*



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**Legislative Commission**

**STAFF STUDY OF CITY CHARTERS  
IN NEVADA**

**BULLETIN NO. 99-18**

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## POSSIBLE ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

Staff presented and summarized for the Legislative Commission the following issues for further consideration. These issues were addressed in response to concerns expressed by some members of the Nevada Legislature and local government officials.

1. *City Council Powers.* The question was raised as to whether the general powers given to city councils should be included: (a) in each separate charter; (b) solely in Chapter 268 of the *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS), and simply referenced in the individual charters; or (c) in a fixed portion of the individual charters and the remainder in Chapter 268 of NRS?
2. *City Council Salaries.* The Legislature may wish to entertain a request from cities to assume responsibility for setting mayoral and city council salaries as is currently done for county commissioners.
3. *Finances.* This appeared to be the area most in need of standardization. One local government official suggested that perhaps there could be a change in the organization of each of the charters to provide a separate article titled “finances,” which could be used to accumulate each of the financial provisions now found in separate articles.

In addition, it was proposed that each city charter reference the general statutes that address issues of local government budgeting and billing. Only when it comes to setting the debt limit was it advocated that city charters should retain specific local provisions.

4. *Local Improvements.* It was suggested that this article be renamed “capital improvements.”
5. *Election of Candidates for Municipal Office.* One legislator questioned the constitutionality of city charters with durational residency requirements for candidates that are longer than a year. While preliminary research by staff indicated that this is not necessarily an issue, it was suggested that the Legislative Commission may wish to obtain a legal opinion from the Legal Division of the Legislative Counsel Bureau on this question.
6. *Municipal Judges.* Certain legislators inquired as to whether the number of municipal judges should be linked to the city’s population. In practice, this already seems to be occurring so further action on this issue was not advised.
7. *State Involvement.* Several local officials commented that they do not like having the state involved in local affairs. In light of this attitude and the probability that the Nevada Legislature will not have as much time to address local government matters under the recently approved constitutional amendment that limits the biennial legislative session to 120 calendar days, it was suggested that this might be a good time to give cities more control over their own affairs.





**REPORT TO THE 70TH SESSION OF THE NEVADA LEGISLATURE  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION'S STAFF STUDY  
OF CITY CHARTERS IN NEVADA**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

At its meeting on September 4, 1997, the Legislative Commission directed staff of the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) to conduct a study to evaluate the 13 existing city charters in Nevada to determine which provisions would benefit from a standardization of language and whether certain provisions are already, or would more aptly be placed, within the general law. This directive was in response to a recommendation made by the Assembly Committee on Elections, Procedures, and Ethics during the 1997 Legislative Session. Specifically, the Assembly Committee proposed a staff study instead of acting on Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 38 of 1997, which would have directed the Commission to conduct a formal interim study.

In accordance with the charge from the Commission, staff of the Research Division of LCB has prepared this report of its study for consideration by the Commission and transmittal to the appropriate standing committees of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the Nevada Legislature. A copy of A.C.R. 38 is attached to this report as Appendix A.

In the preparation of this report, staff received guidance from Assemblyman Douglas A. Bache, Chairman of the 1997 Assembly Committee on Government Affairs, and assistance from acknowledged local government experts. These experts included: Marvin Leavitt, Director of Intergovernmental Relations and Policy Research for the City of Las Vegas; Barbara McKenzie, Legislative Coordinator for the City of Reno; and Thomas Grady, Executive Director of the Nevada League of Cities. In addition, staff relied on the *Model City Charter* published by the National Civic League (hereinafter the *Model*).<sup>1</sup>

**II. BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF ISSUES**

The *Law of Government Operations* by Charles S. Rhyne states, “[i]n Modern American law, the term ‘municipal charter’ signifies both the creative act, either general or special, establishing the municipal corporation and all other laws and constitutional provisions relating to the rights, duties, powers, liabilities, privileges and immunities of the municipal corporation.”<sup>2</sup>

Nevada state legislation currently provides that cities may be organized under general law or special charters. At present, six of Nevada’s smaller incorporated cities operate under the

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<sup>1</sup>National Civic League, *Model City Charter*, Seventh Edition (Denver, Colorado: National Civic League Press, 1996).

<sup>2</sup>Charles S. Rhyne, *Law of Government Operations* (Kingsport, Tennessee: Kingsport Press, 1980), § 3.2.

statutory general charter (Chapter 266, "Incorporation by General Law," of the *Nevada Revised Statutes* [NRS]). These general law cities are: Ely, Fallon, Lovelock, Mesquite, West Wendover, and Winnemucca. The remaining incorporated cities operate under special charters enacted by the Nevada Legislature. The charter cities currently include: Boulder City, Caliente, Carlin, Elko, Gabbs, Henderson, Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, Reno, Sparks, Wells, and Yerington. Carson City, formerly Ormsby County, is a special county-city hybrid created in 1968 by an amendment to the state constitution and subsequent legislative action.<sup>3</sup> Today, Carson City performs the functions of both city and county governments. In general, Carson City is not considered a city. However, for the purposes of this study, its charter will be analyzed as a city charter.

The threshold issue discussed in this study concerns what should be included in the city charters and what should be in the general law. In analyzing which provisions may benefit from a standardization, staff has kept in mind two somewhat competing points.

One point, stressed by every local government expert with whom staff consulted, was that the purpose of a charter is to address the individual needs of cities. For instance, Barbara McKenzie of the City of Reno explained that it defeats the purpose of giving cities the ability to adopt individual charters if there is the expectation that they all will be uniform.

The other point raised was that, in certain matters, the general statutes clearly and thoroughly articulate local government operations whereas special city charter provisions covering these same areas are often inconsistently worded and have led to confusion and misunderstanding. Speaking to this latter point, Marvin Leavitt of the City of Las Vegas commented, "[i]t is very clear that the general laws contained in NRS \* \* \* have essentially preempted the city charters in matters relating to budgeting, financial reporting, tax limitations, and the issuance of debt."

In part, it appears that this overlap between local charter provisions and general state law has resulted because, on one hand, Nevada cities have the authority under the *Nevada Constitution* to adopt their own charters. Yet, on the other, NRS 266.010 states that the power of cities to adopt charters is "subject to the right of the legislature to create or alter the form of municipal organization by special act or charter." This arrangement differs from many states that have granted their cities broad authority known as "home rule." According to the authors of *Nevada Politics and Government: Conservatism in An Open Society*, because of the apparently contradictory provisions of Nevada's constitution and laws, the charter cities in Nevada could not really be described as home rule cities.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Assembly Joint Resolution No. 28 of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Session, which was approved by the Legislature in 1965 and 1967 and the voters in 1968, permitted the Legislature to consolidate the city designated as the seat of government of Nevada and the county containing it. The Nevada Legislature, in 1969, adopted Senate Bill 75 (Chapter 213, *Statutes of Nevada 1969*) which amended the Carson City Charter to provide for a consolidated form of government.

<sup>4</sup>Don W. Driggs and Leonard E. Goodall, *Nevada Politics and Government: Conservatism in An Open Society* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), p. 176.

While this staff study focuses on the charters of the charter cities, for comparison, it references the NRS provisions that apply to the general law cities and the *Model* published by the National Civic League. The format of the study is loosely based on the organization of the articles in the charters. The basic design of the city charters, by article, is as follows:

CITY CHARTER ARTICLES	
Article I:	Incorporation; General Powers; Boundaries; Annexations; City Offices
Article II:	Legislative Department
Article III:	Executive Department
Article IV:	Judicial Department
Article V:	Elections
Article VI:	Local Improvements
Article VII:	Local Bonds and Franchises
Article VIII:	Revenue
Article IX:	Miscellaneous Provisions

Note: Throughout this study, “charter city” refers to a city operating under Special Acts of the State Legislature, and “general law city” to a city governed by Chapter 266 of the NRS.

### III. LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT

The *Model* states that the “city council, elected by, representative of, and responsible to the citizens of the city, is the fundamental democratic element of the council-manager plan.”<sup>5</sup> It then points out that all of the powers that can be exercised by the city rest in the popularly elected city council, and consequently recommends that a charter provide for a council which is truly representative of the community. Each city’s population patterns — affected by economics, race, geography, and other factors — have implications for the method of electing the council and determining its size to ensure equitable representation. In short, the *Model* indicates that each city must assess the needs of its own population and act accordingly.

#### A. Composition

Nevada charter cities have city councils that range in size from four to six members, with the majority having four councilmen and a mayor. There are three cities that vary from this council size. Gabbs, the state’s smallest chartered city, has three councilmen and a mayor, Sparks has

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<sup>5</sup>National Civic League, p. 16.

five councilmen and a mayor, and Reno has six councilmen and a mayor. Carson City has four governing body members (referred to as “supervisors”) and a mayor.

In general, the size of the city council does not seem to correlate to the population nor any other characteristic of the city. For instance, Yerington, a farming community with a population of 2,870 (as of July 1, 1997), and Las Vegas, a rapidly growing urban center with a population of 425,270 (as of July 1, 1997), both have four councilmen and a mayor.

Appendix B provides information on the legislative bodies in Nevada’s 13 charter cities, including the size of the local legislative body, how its members are elected, the length of their terms, and residency requirements for candidates for office. Appendix C provides this information for Nevada’s six general law cities.

Like Nevada charter cities, Nevada general law cities have councils that range in size from four to six members. *Nevada Revised Statutes* 266.220 provides that, pursuant to ordinance, a city of the second class (having a population between 5,000 and 20,000) or the third class (having a population of under 5,000) may elect either three or five councilmen in addition to the mayor (pursuant to NRS 266.175). According to NRS 266.220, general law cities of the first class (having a population of more than 20,000) must be composed of ten councilmen. At present, however, there are no first class general law cities in Nevada.

The *Model* favors a small council — ranging from five to nine members. It describes small councils as being more effective instruments for the development of programs and conduct of municipal business.

## B. Election

### 1. *Methods*

There are three basic methods to elect a city council: at large, by district (or ward), or by a combination of the two.

Most charter cities in Nevada elect their city councils at large. The exceptions are Las Vegas and Sparks which elect their council members by ward, and Gabbs and Reno which use a mixed elections system (electing one councilman at large and the rest by district or ward). In addition, while Carson City and Henderson elect their councilmen at large, each councilman represents the ward in which he lives.

Pursuant to NRS 266.220, general law cities of the first class must elect nine councilmen by ward and one at large, while general law cities of the second and third classes have the option of electing their councilmen by ward or at large. As stated earlier, however, there are none in the first class at the present time. Ely, Lovelock, Mesquite, West Wendover, and Winnemucca elect their councilmen at large, and Fallon by ward. Mesquite and West Wendover switched from a district system relatively recently. Carol Woods, City Clerk for Mesquite, explained that this

change came about, in 1997, because of the growth in the city's population and the concurrent decision to increase the number of members on the city council (from three to five members). Similarly, Karen Shepherd, City Clerk for West Wendover, said that West Wendover increased the size of its city council from three to five members in 1993, and two years later decided to switch from district to at-large elections. She reported that at-large elections have proven to be much more cost-effective and practical.

The mayor is elected at large in all the general law cities in accordance with NRS 266.175.

ELECTION OF CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS IN NEVADA			
At large	By ward	At large and by ward	Represent wards but elected at large
Boulder City Caliente Carlin Elko Ely* Lovelock* Mesquite* North Las Vegas Wells West Wendover* Yerington	Fallon* Las Vegas Sparks Winnemucca*	Gabbs Reno	Carson City Henderson

\*General law cities.

The *Model* stresses the value of the at-large principle in designing the composition of a city council, while recognizing the necessity of providing for representation of geographical areas under certain circumstances. It states that the at-large system generally is viewed as allowing citizens to choose council members best qualified to represent the interests of the city as a whole. But, cities with significant differences among ethnic, racial, or economic groups may wish to consider whether one of the alternative systems may achieve more equitable representation of the city's population.

According to the *Model*, single-member districts can open the way for greater diversity among candidates because the costs of running a district campaign are significantly less than those of running citywide. Citizens also may feel closer to district-elected members, whom they can hold responsible for addressing their community concerns. However, an inherent problem with the single-member district is the danger that parochial problems of district-elected members will mean that inadequate attention is given to citywide concerns.

Finally, the *Model* points out that the mixed system (one in which one councilman is elected at large to represent the entire city and the rest are elected by district to represent their respective districts) combines the citywide perspective of the at-large council members with the local

concerns and accountability of district council members. A problem can arise, however, when at-large council members consider their position to be superior in importance to district members and are perceived as rivals to the mayor. It is essential that at-large and district council members have equal status with respect to offices and services, and that there be no difference in length of terms.

## 2. Residency Requirements

In Nevada, the 13 charter cities all have residency requirements for mayoral and council candidates. These requirements range from 30 days to 2 years. The residency requirement for councilmen and the mayor in general law cities (set forth by NRS 266.215 and 266.170, respectively) is one year.

RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS FOR CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATES			
2 years*	1 year**	6 months*	30 days**
Boulder City Caliente Carlin Elko Wells	Ely*** Fallon*** Henderson Lovelock*** Mesquite*** West Wendover*** Winnemucca***	Carson City Gabbs North Las Vegas Reno Yerington	Las Vegas Sparks

\*Preceding their election.

\*\*Preceding the last day for filing a declaration of candidacy.

\*\*\*General law cities.

On this subject, Osborne M. Reynolds, Jr., in the *Handbook of Local Government Law* writes, “[a]ll residency requirements must at least meet the general test of being reasonable, not arbitrary, or else they will be struck down as violating *due process*” (emphasis in the original).<sup>6</sup> Here, in Nevada, a federal district court upheld a challenge to a one-year residency requirement for city council members in Henderson in *MacDonald v. City of Henderson*, 818 F.Supp. 303 (D.Nev. 1993). The Court found that the requirement did not violate the *Nevada Constitution* or the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the *United States Constitution*.

In general, according to Mr. Reynolds, “\* \* \* if not ruled unduly long, most [durational residency] requirements have been upheld — but only if they are supported by a compelling public interest.”<sup>7</sup> Such an interest may include ensuring that the potential public officers understand the local issues and problems facing the community they wish to represent.

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<sup>6</sup>Osborne M. Reynolds, Jr., *Handbook of Local Government Law* (St. Paul, Minnesota: West Publishing Company, 1982), § 80.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

In spite of the trend by the courts to uphold durational residency requirements, the *Model* recommends that there be no special requirements on length of residence for candidates for councilman or mayor. The reason given is that in this era of highly mobile populations and frequent disparity between place of work and place of residence, length of residence requirements lose what validity they may once have had. The simple recommended eligibility requirement is being a registered voter of the city.

### 3. Powers

It appears that there are two schools of thought on how to define city council powers. Most Nevada cities have provisions detailing specific powers, whereas the *Model* recommends that council powers should be broadly written.

Most of Nevada's charter and general law cities list the council's specific powers. The Charter of the City of Caliente, for instance, states that the city council has the power to regulate explosives; license, regulate, and prohibit businesses; control traffic; abate noxious insects, rats, and disease-bearing organisms; and address other matters. Appendix D provides a chart that compares legislative powers contained in the city charters. These are then compared with the powers that are listed in Chapter 268 of NRS ("Powers and Duties of Cities").

Marvin Leavitt, who compiled the chart provided in Appendix D, notes that "it is interesting that most of the powers enumerated in the city charters are also listed in Chapter 268." The exceptions, he points out, are Boulder City, Reno, and Sparks, which have charters that list very few specific powers, instead relying on the provisions contained in Chapter 268 of NRS.

The Boulder City Charter, which most closely follows the *Model*, grants broad authority to its city council. Section 8 of Article II states that "[a]ll powers of the city and the determination of all matters of policy shall be vested in the City Council. By way of illustration, and not by way of limitation, the Council shall have the power to: \* \* \*." A list of general powers is then provided.

The city council powers set forth in Chapter 266 of NRS for the general law cities largely correspond to the powers found in the individual city charters. In addition to these powers, Chapter 268 of NRS provides a list of powers that are common to cities and towns incorporated under general or special laws. As Mr. Leavitt notes, some of these powers overlap with the other defined powers. He therefore suggests that the provisions regarding city council powers need to be examined for possible reorganization to resolve some questions. Specifically, he asks whether the general powers should be included: (a) in each separate charter; (b) solely in Chapter 268 of NRS and simply referenced in the individual charters; or (c) in the individual charters and the remainder in Chapter 268? In asking this question, he also poses the question of whether the differences between the cities justify substantially different city council power provisions. The alternative, proposed by the *Model*, is to grant broad authority to the council to pass local laws (ordinances) to meet the particular needs of the cities as they arise.

At present, in addition to the core of powers that are common to most of the cities (such as controlling public property and buildings, enacting and enforcing police ordinances, and regulating traffic), there are some that appear to be specific to the needs of the city. For instance, Carlin and North Las Vegas (cities with very disparate populations, 2,680 and 93,010, respectively, as of July 1, 1997) empower their city councils to provide and maintain golf courses. Other cities with unique provisions include Las Vegas, which empowers its city council to provide for the treatment of alcohol and narcotic addiction; North Las Vegas, which grants its city council the power to create a library district; and Carson City and Elko, which authorize their local legislative bodies to require payment for utility installation.

In contrast to the detailed powers granted to Nevada cities, the *Model* does not enumerate the powers of the city council. Instead, the *Model* sets forth the procedural rules that should govern the official actions of the council and specifies the types of actions that require an ordinance. By simply providing broad enabling powers, the city council is granted the necessary authority to effectively run a local government. For example, the *Model* suggests that the city council pass an ordinance to adopt or amend an administrative code or establish, alter, or abolish any city department, office, or agency; levy taxes; authorize the borrowing of money; regulate land use and development; and address other matters.

Limitations on the actions of the council are provided by the procedural protections in the *Model*. These protections include requiring a summary of all proposed ordinances to be published in local newspapers, with copies available for public inspection, and notice of public hearings in which all interested persons may be heard. Sufficient leeway for emergency situations (those affecting the life, health, property or the public peace) is provided for by allowing the introduction and adoption of ordinances at the same meeting by an “extraordinary” majority (defined by the city) and an immediate effective date.

The *Model* also includes a separate provision requiring that the city council provide for an independent audit of all city accounts and may provide for more frequent audits as it deems necessary. Boulder City is the only charter city in Nevada that provides for an independent annual audit which must be submitted to the council and the city manager (Article II, Section 25 of the Boulder City Charter). However, NRS 354.624 requires that all local governments provide for an annual audit of all their funds and account groups.

Finally, each charter city grants its council the authority to fix the salaries of its mayor and councilmen (or supervisors in the case of Carson City). (It should be noted that votes to increase mayoral or council salaries do not go into effect during the current occupants’ terms.) Pursuant to NRS 266.390, city councils in general law cities are given this same salary setting power. In contrast, county commissioner salaries in Nevada are set by the Legislature (in accordance with Article 4, Section 32 of the *Nevada Constitution*). The political difficulties of having members of a local government body set their own salaries could perhaps be abated by transferring this authority to the state. Cities, especially the ones that have experienced a great deal of controversy when their council members established their own salaries, may wish to follow the lead of



counties and request that the Legislature, by law, assume responsibility for setting the salaries of their mayors and city councilmen.

In order to determine the most effective method of enumerating city council powers, further study appears to be necessary. At this point, staff can only reiterate what several of the local government experts with whom they consulted said: it is essential that local governments retain control over defining the specific powers granted to their legislative bodies.

#### IV. EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

In most Nevada cities, the executive department is comprised of a mayor and a city manager. The larger charter cities all operate under a council-manager form of government, which means that they have a city manager who acts as the chief executive officer and a mayor who provides leadership for the city. In some of the smaller charter cities in Nevada — those that have a mayor-council form of government — there is no city manager and the mayor serves as the chief executive officer. The roles and means of electing or appointing each of these city officials are discussed below.

##### A. Mayor

###### *1. Role*

The office of mayor in cities having the council-manager form assumes a different character from city to city depending upon local political, economic, and social conditions. While the mayor of a council-manager city is not an executive as in the mayor-council form, he or she is uniquely positioned to be the political and policy leader of the city. As presiding officer of the council and ceremonial head of the city, the mayor is the most conspicuous official of the city. Not being the executive responsible for the day-to-day municipal operations allows the mayor to focus attention on major policy issues and facilitate important business for the city.

In only three of Nevada's 13 charter cities (Carlin, Gabbs, and Wells) is the mayor also the chief executive officer. The remaining ten charter cities (including Carson City) have a city manager who acts as the chief executive officer. In three of Nevada's general law cities, there is a city manager (Mesquite, West Wendover, and Winnemucca). Additionally, the general law city of Ely has a city administrator who, in effect, acts as a city manager. (Note: The city charter of Carlin gives the council the option of appointing a city manager. At present, Carlin has a city manager. However, when it does not, the mayor acts as the chief executive officer.)

In all but two of Nevada's charter cities (Sparks and Yerington), the mayor is considered a member of the council and may vote. In Sparks and Yerington, the mayor presides over meetings of the council, but may only vote in the case of a tie. This latter arrangement is true for Nevada general law cities. That is, the mayor presides over council meetings but may not vote except in the case of a tie (NRS 266.200).

In the case of cities with no city manager, the mayor may facilitate enormous leadership opportunities.

- The mayor can coordinate the activities of other officials by serving as a liaison between the manager and the council, fostering a sense of cohesion among council members, and educating the public about the needs, direction, and prospects of the city.
- The mayor can provide policy guidance by setting goals for the council and advocating the adoption of policies that address the city's problems.
- The mayor can act as an ambassador, promoting the city and representing it in dealing with other governments as well as the public.

## 2. *Election*

There are various methods of electing the mayor. In all but one of Nevada's charter and general law cities, the mayor is elected at large by the voters. The exception is Boulder City which currently selects its mayor by council vote. However, beginning in 1999 (in accordance with a 1997 charter amendment), Boulder City will elect its mayor at large.

At-large mayoral elections are the more common method throughout the country. However, according to the *Model*, a disadvantage of this method is the possibility that it leads to the mayor being at variance with the council majority on some important issues. Some cities in other states operate under the precept that local policy leadership can best function through a cohesive team of council members which appoints the mayor from its membership. Whatever the method of election or the strength of the mayor's leadership role, the mayor is preeminently a leader of the council.

## B. City Manager

In the council-manager plan, the city manager is continuously responsible to the city council, the elected representatives of the people. As a professional administrator, the manager must be trained and experienced in the processes of the effective management of public service delivery, and must use this expertise to execute efficiently the policies adopted by the elected city council.

Eleven of Nevada's 19 cities have a city manager. In these cities, the city manager is appointed by the council and performs such administrative duties as directed by the council. The two smaller cities (Gabbs and Wells) that do not have a provision for the appointment of a city manager have departments which operate somewhat independently, but answer to the city council. (This also is true for Caliente when it has no city manager.) Because of the small size of these cities' total governments, the members of the council are able to have direct knowledge of the day-to-day operations of the various departments. As stated earlier, three of the general law cities (Mesquite, West Wendover, and Winnemucca) have a city manager, and Ely has a city administrator who serves as the manager of the city.

In Nevada, only one city charter (Sparks) discusses how the city manager is appointed by the city council. The other charters, and the NRS provisions applying to the general law cities, simply state that the city council may appoint a city manager, without specifying whether a majority vote is required. The charter for the City of Sparks authorizes the mayor of the city to appoint the city manager, subject to confirmation by the city council. Removal provisions are included in most of Nevada's city charters.

For cities in which a city manager is appointed, the *Model* recommends that the appointment of the manager be by a majority vote of the entire membership of the council, not simply a majority of a quorum (to ensure undisputed support for the appointee). The provision that a manager need not reside within the city when appointed and may, with approval of the council, live outside the city while in office, is desirable today because of the frequent problem of housing availability and cost. Increasingly, appointment of the manager involves an employment agreement between the municipality and the manager. These agreements can cover all aspects of the manager's job, from salary to duties to severance procedures. An employment agreement provides mutual protection for the manager and the local government.

## V. JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT

The judiciary is not an area that is addressed by the *Model*. In Nevada, judges of the municipal court are appointed by the council in the smaller cities. In the larger cities (Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, Reno, and Sparks), the municipal judges are elected. Carson City also elects its municipal judges. Las Vegas and Sparks provide for at least two judicial departments, whereas Carson City, North Las Vegas, and Reno provide for one. All of these cities allow for more judicial departments to be created if the city council (or board of supervisors in Carson City) determines there is a need.

Pursuant to NRS 266.405, the general law cities must have a municipal judge. In first and second class general law cities, the judge may be elected or appointed, as provided by city ordinance. In third class cities, the judge may be appointed by the mayor, by and with the advice and consent of the city council.

Certain legislators have posed the question of whether the number of municipal judges should be linked to the city's population. In practice, it appears that this already is occurring. In most of Nevada's cities, the city council is authorized to create more judges or judicial departments depending on its perceived need. However, a more definite plan is provided by state law which requires that the number of justices of the peace be increased in accordance with the population of the town (NRS 4.020). This is a model that the Legislature or Legislative Commission may wish to consider applying to municipal judges.

## VI. FINANCES AND LOCAL IMPROVEMENTS

The *Model* recommends providing for the development of a comprehensive financial program, allowing maximum flexibility within the boundaries of sound fiscal practices. The complete financial plan involves two major elements: (1) the current annual budget; and (2) the multiyear capital program which is coordinated with the annual budget. This organization is not followed by any of Nevada's charter or general law cities.

### A. Finances

In Nevada, most of the charters have separate articles for various financial practices (for example, "local bonds and franchises," "revenue," and "local improvements"). According to Mr. Leavitt, it appears that perhaps there could be a change in the organization of each of the charters to provide a separate article entitled "finances" which could be used to accumulate each of the financial provisions now found in separate articles.

Presently, each charter has a provision called "local bonds and franchises." This provision usually has a statement about a particular debt limit expressed in terms of the assessed value of the city property, although two cities (Boulder City and Elko) do not have a debt limit expressly stated. In these cities, there is a general statement about the borrowing of money. The charters also have a provision in this article about the granting of franchises to utilities, which, according to Mr. Leavitt, seems to be unrelated to the borrowing of money by the municipality.

The article that generally follows "local bonds and franchises" comes under the heading of "revenue." This article typically addresses the levy of property taxes and the enactment of revenue ordinances by the governing boards.

In addition to these two sections, there is usually some discussion of finance related items in the "executive" section of the charter. These provisions generally relate to the collection and disposition of monies or the operation of the finance function of the city. The charter of the city of Boulder City is the only charter that has a separate article entitled, "budgeting." This article simply refers to the general state law governing budgeting by local governments (NRS 354.470 to 354.626, inclusive). The approach taken by Boulder City is recommended by Mr. Leavitt.

Specifically, Mr. Leavitt points out that the limits now found in some of the charters relating to the levy of property taxes have very little effect because of the limit found in Chapter 354 of NRS ("Local Financial Administration") which is generally more restrictive. At present, the charter city tax limitations range from 1¾ percent to 3 percent of the assessed value of all taxable real estate and personal property within the city. The tax limitations for general law cities is set at 3 percent (NRS 266.605).

In contrast to the restrictions placed on the level of taxation by local governments, the limitations placed on the amount of debt that a city can accrue (or the "debt limit") varies much more dramatically in the city charters (from a low of 15 percent to a high of 40 percent of the total

assessed value of the taxable property within the city). The debt limit for general law cities is 30 percent (NRS 266.600). Mr. Leavitt recommends that these debt limits should probably be retained in the city charters because this is the only place where the limits are found. Appendix E is a chart that lists the debt limits and tax limitations for each of the 13 charter cities and the general law cities.

Finally, Mr. Leavitt points out that the general laws contained in NRS have largely preempted city charter provisions governing various finance functions (such as budgeting and financial reporting). Moreover, he explains, there have been so many significant changes to the state statutes in recent years that it has become impractical for each of the charters to be amended each time there is a change made. Consequently, he suggests that the city charters simply reference the relevant NRS provisions.

The municipal finance provisions contained in Chapter 268 of NRS do not address city budgeting. Rather this chapter covers miscellaneous financial issues (such as empowering the city council to collect delinquent sewer taxes or requiring the city to publish a quarterly financial statement).

#### B. Local Improvements

With the exception of Boulder City and Sparks, each of the other cities with a special legislation charter provides a list of the type of public improvements that may be undertaken by the city. These improvements are not only those the city may undertake with its available funds, but also those which would be financed by following the procedures for the establishment of a special improvement district as authorized by Chapter 271 of NRS ("Local Improvements"). Mr. Leavitt suggests that this section of the charters could probably be more effective if it contained provisions as to what type of improvements are specifically authorized for cities, rather than a reiteration of Chapter 271 of NRS dealing with improvement districts. In addition, he states that this would be logical because the financing procedures already are detailed in Chapter 271 of NRS, along with details on how to establish a special improvement district. Finally, he recommends that this article be renamed "capital improvements."

*Nevada Revised Statutes* 268.045 authorizes all incorporated cities to establish a capital improvement fund not to exceed ten years.

When discussing local, or capital, improvements, the *Model* simply suggests that provisions for five- or six-year capital programs should be included. The purpose of these programs is to compel long-range planning and a meaningful relationship between capital and current operating expenditures, and to provide adequate time for systematic consideration of capital projects by the council.

## VII. UTILITIES AND FRANCHISES

The regulation of utilities and franchises currently is in a state of flux throughout the nation. For instance, federal law in the area of telecommunications has recently preempted state and local laws on this subject. Because of these changes and expected ones in the future, Mr. Leavitt suggests that “utilities and franchises” be created as a new article that could best be handled by a reference to general law, rather than separately in each of the charters. Except, he notes, in the case of cities which have a government utility operation. At present, Boulder City is the only special charter city that fits this category.

Another option, presented by the *Model*, is to state that actions requiring an ordinance include the granting, renewing, or extending of a franchise, and also the regulation of the rate charges for services by a public utility.

## VIII. MISCELLANEOUS AND ORGANIZATIONAL PROVISIONS

In addition to the standard articles listed in the beginning of this study, several cities have miscellaneous provisions that are unique to the needs of their communities. All the cities also have provisions that set forth the organization of their cities, a need that is not met by state law.

### A. Miscellaneous Provisions

- The larger cities (*Las Vegas*, *North Las Vegas*, and *Reno*) have charter provisions addressing revitalization and redevelopment.
- *Boulder City* has unique charter provisions which may be attributed, in part, to the origin of the city and federal control during and after the building of the Hoover Dam. One of the city’s most distinctive provisions is a separate article dedicated to the regulation of intoxicating liquors, gambling, prostitution, and pawn shops.
- Articles relating to civil service are found in each of the larger cities (*Henderson*, *Las Vegas*, *North Las Vegas*, *Reno*, and *Sparks*) and also *Boulder City*.
- *Henderson* has an article called “The Trust for Furtherance of Public Functions,” which is unique among all the charters. This article enables the city to accept applications for particular projects to be financed by designated trust monies.

### B. Organizational Provisions

The *Nevada Revised Statutes* are silent with respect to city structure. The general laws of Nevada do not address who appoints various city employees, which city officials are elected, how they are elected and for how long, whether there is a city manager, and other such organizational

questions. For a brief overview of the structure of each charter city, Appendix F is a chart that lists the elected and appointed officers in each of Nevada's 13 charter cities.

Out of necessity, each special charter details its city organization, particularly the process for electing and appointing city employees. Largely, these procedures depend upon the size of the entity. For example, the City of Gabbs (the smallest special charter city with a population of 400, as of July 1, 1997) has a provision whereby the mayor can appoint members of the city council to serve as the superintendent of police; the superintendent of streets and public property; and the superintendent of fire, water, sewerage, and light. It additionally provides that the mayor is the superintendent of finance and revenue. The charter of the City of Wells (with a population of 1,450, as of July 1, 1997) has a provision that is similar to Gabbs. On the other end of the spectrum are the provisions in the larger special charter cities (Henderson, Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, and Reno, with populations ranging from a low of 93,010 [North Las Vegas] to a high of 425,270 [Las Vegas], as of July 1, 1997) which prohibit members of the council to direct staff or to direct the manager to appoint certain individuals to positions.

## IX. SUMMARY

Staff findings indicate that the state may not wish to standardize the governmental structure of the charter cities at this time. Such cities have the power to define their own structure (including the composition of their city council, city boards, city employees, and whether and how these public officials are elected or appointed). However, staff research does suggest that perhaps the charters of Nevada's charter cities could benefit from some standardization in certain areas. Specifically, the areas of finance, local improvements, and utilities and franchises could be looked at for possible restructuring.

A separate issue raised by this study is whether the current arrangement of state and municipal powers should be revisited.

In summary, the Legislative Commission may wish to keep in mind the following words of the National Civic League:

The objective of [a local government charter] is to present in the form of a legal document a general plan of municipal government which is (a) democratic — that is to say responsive to the electorate and the community — and at the same time (b) capable of doing the work of the city effectively and translating the voters' intentions into efficient administrative action as promptly and economically as possible \* \* \* and, following the precedent established by the founding fathers when they wrote the Constitution of the United States, it [should be done] with the fewest possible words \* \* \*.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>National Civic League, p. xx.





## X. SELECTED REFERENCES

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## APPENDIX A

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 38 of the 1997 Session



Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 38—Committee on Government Affairs

June 4, 1997

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Referred to Committee on Elections, Procedures, and Ethics

**SUMMARY**—Directs Legislative Commission to conduct interim study to consider standardization of city charters. (BDR R-1752)

**EXPLANATION**—Matter in *italics* is new; matter in brackets [ ] is material to be omitted.

**ASSEMBLY CONCURRENT RESOLUTION**—Directing the Legislative Commission to conduct an interim study to consider the standardization of city charters.

WHEREAS, The many city charters of the State of Nevada vary considerably in form and substance; and

WHEREAS, Because there is a lack of consistency in the organization of the city charters, it is often difficult to locate specific provisions; and

WHEREAS, Often city charters contain provisions which are already covered by general law but which are not consistently worded therefore causing confusion as to the meaning of the provision of the charter; and

WHEREAS, Although cities vary in population, the organizational structure of their governments, including, without limitation, their powers and duties, are similar in content; and

WHEREAS, The inconsistent language used in city charters often creates confusion and misunderstandings when a reader attempts to interpret the meaning of comparable provisions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF NEVADA, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That the Legislative Commission is hereby directed to conduct an interim study to consider the standardization of the provisions of city charters within the State of Nevada; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the study must include a detailed analysis of the 13 existing city charters to determine which provisions would benefit from a standardization of language and whether certain provisions are already, or would more aptly be placed, within the general law; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Legislative Commission report the results of its study and any recommended legislation to the 70th session of the Nevada Legislature.





## APPENDIX B

“Legislative Body Characteristics in Nevada’s Charter Cities,”  
chart compiled by the Research Division of the  
Legislative Counsel Bureau  
(July 1998)



# LEGISLATIVE BODY CHARACTERISTICS IN NEVADA'S CHARTER CITIES

City (1997 population)	Size of Legislative Body	Elected At large or by District?	Term Length	Residency Requirements
<b>Boulder City</b> (14,493 population)	4 councilmen and a mayor	At large	4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be residents of the City for at least <i>two years</i> preceding their election.</li> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be qualified electors within the City.</li> </ul>
<b>Caliente</b> (1,070 population)	4 councilmen and a mayor	At large	4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be bona fide residents of the City for at least <i>two years</i> preceding their election.</li> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be qualified electors within the City.</li> </ul>
<b>Carlin</b> (2,680 population)	4 councilmen and a mayor	At large	4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be bona fide residents of the City for at least <i>two years</i> preceding their election.</li> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be registered voters within the City.</li> </ul>
<b>Carson City</b> (50,140 population)	4 supervisors and a mayor	At large, but each supervisor represents the ward in which he lives	4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each supervisor and the mayor must be actual and bona fide residents of the City for at least <i>six months</i> preceding their election.</li> <li>Each supervisor must be a qualified elector within the ward he represents, and a resident of the ward he represents.</li> <li>The mayor must be a qualified elector within the City.</li> </ul>
<b>Elko</b> (19,670 population)	4 supervisors and a mayor	At large	4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each supervisor and the mayor must be bona fide residents of the City for at least <i>two years</i> preceding their election, and qualified electors within the City.</li> </ul>

City (1997 population)	Size of Legislative Body	Elected At large or by District?	Term Length	Residency Requirements
<b>Gabbs</b> (400 population)	3 councilmen and a mayor	1 councilman and the mayor elected at large, 2 councilmen elected by district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 years (Mayor and council elected at large)</li> <li>• 4 years (District councilmen)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each councilman and the mayor must be actual and bona fide residents of the City for at least <i>six months</i> preceding their election.</li> <li>• The councilmen who represent a district must be qualified electors, and residents, within the wards each represents.</li> <li>• The councilman-at-large and the mayor must be qualified electors within the City.</li> </ul>
<b>Henderson</b> (147,870 population)	4 councilmen and a mayor	At large, but each councilman represents the ward in which he lives	4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each councilman and the mayor must be a bona fide resident of the City for <i>one year</i> preceding the last day for filing for a declaration of candidacy for office.</li> <li>• Each councilman and the mayor must be a qualified elector within the City.</li> <li>• Each councilman must be a resident of the ward he represents for at least <i>30 days</i> preceding the last day for filing a declaration of candidacy for the office.</li> </ul>
<b>Las Vegas</b> (425,270 population)	4 councilmen and a mayor	The mayor is elected at large, the councilmen are elected by ward	4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each councilman and the mayor must be a qualified elector who has resided within the City for a period of not less than <i>30 days</i> before filing a declaration of candidacy for office.</li> <li>• Each councilman must have resided within the ward he represents for the same <i>30-day</i> period.</li> </ul>
<b>North Las Vegas</b> (93,010 population)	4 councilmen and a mayor	At large	4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each councilman and the mayor must be bona fide residents of the City for at least <i>six months</i> immediately preceding their election.</li> <li>• Each councilman and the mayor must be qualified electors within the City.</li> </ul>

City (1997 population)	Size of Legislative Body	Elected At large or by District?	Term Length	Residency Requirements
<b>Reno</b> (164,600 population)	6 councilmen and a mayor	The mayor and 1 councilman are elected at large, the remaining 5 councilmen are elected by ward	4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be actual and bona fide residents of the City for at least <i>six months</i> preceding their election.</li> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be qualified electors within the City.</li> <li>Each councilman who represents a district also must be a resident of the ward he represents.</li> </ul>
<b>Sparks</b> (61,370 population)	5 councilmen and a mayor	The mayor is elected at large, the 5 councilmen are elected by ward	4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be bona fide residents of the City for at least <i>30 days</i> immediately preceding the last day for filing a declaration of candidacy for such office.</li> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be qualified electors within the City.</li> <li>Each councilman must be a resident of the ward he represents.</li> </ul>
<b>Wells</b> (1,540 population)	4 councilmen and a mayor	At large	4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be bona fide residents of the City for at least <i>two years</i> preceding their election.</li> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be qualified electors within the City.</li> </ul>
<b>Yerington</b> (2,870 population)	4 councilmen and a mayor	At large	4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be bona fide residents of the City for at least <i>six months</i> preceding their election.</li> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be qualified electors within the City.</li> </ul>

Compiled by the Research Division of the Legislative Counsel Bureau  
July 1998



## APPENDIX C

“Legislative Body Characteristics in Nevada’s General Law Cities,”  
chart compiled by the Research Division of the  
Legislative Counsel Bureau  
(July 1998)





# LEGISLATIVE BODY CHARACTERISTICS IN NEVADA'S GENERAL LAW CITIES

City (1997 population)	Size of Legislative Body	Elected At large or by District?	Term Length	Residency Requirements
<b>Ely</b> (5,190 population)	5 councilmen and a mayor	At large	4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be bona fide residents of the City for at least <i>one year</i> preceding their election.</li> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be qualified electors within the City.</li> </ul>
<b>Fallon</b> (8,200 population)	3 councilmen and a mayor	The mayor is elected at large and the councilmen are elected by ward	4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be bona fide residents of the City for at least <i>one year</i> preceding their election.</li> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be qualified electors within the City.</li> </ul>
<b>Lovelock</b> (2,880 population)	3 councilmen and a mayor	At large	4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be bona fide residents of the City for at least <i>one year</i> preceding their election.</li> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be qualified electors within the City.</li> </ul>
<b>Mesquite</b> (9,270 population)	5 councilmen and a mayor	At large	4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be bona fide residents of the City for at least <i>one year</i> preceding their election.</li> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be qualified electors within the City.</li> </ul>
<b>West Wendover</b> (3,430 population)	5 councilmen and a mayor	At large	4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be bona fide residents of the City for at least <i>one year</i> preceding their election.</li> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be qualified electors within the City.</li> </ul>
<b>Winnemucca</b> (8,140 population)	5 councilmen and a mayor	At large	4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be bona fide residents of the City for at least <i>one year</i> preceding their election.</li> <li>Each councilman and the mayor must be qualified electors within the City.</li> </ul>

Compiled by the Research Division of the Legislative Counsel Bureau  
July 1998



## APPENDIX D

“Comparison of Nevada’s City Council Powers by Charter,” chart compiled  
by Marvin Leavitt of the City of Las Vegas, Nevada  
(May 1998)



# COMPARISON OF NEVADA'S CITY COUNCIL POWERS BY CHARTER

	Provided by NRS 268*	Boulder City	Callente	Carlin	Carson City	Elko	Gabbs	Henderson	Las Vegas	North Las Vegas	Reno	Sparks	Wells	Yerington
Enact & enforce ordinances, resolutions, & orders	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
General powers	x	x									x	x		
Eminent domain	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x			x	
Control public property/buildings	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x
Deny/suspend/revoke work permits									x					
Regulate business licenses	x		x	x	x	x	x		x				x	x
Establish & maintain recreational facilities	x					x								
Flood control	x					x							x	x
Enact & enforce police ordinances	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Provide & regulate fire protection	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	
Safeguard public health	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x
Regulate building & safety	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	x
Regulate zoning & planning	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	x
Require payment for utility installation					x	x								
Regulate & maintain public right-of-way			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x

	Provided by NRS 268*	Boulder City	Callente	Carlin	Carson City	Elko	Gabbs	Henderson	Las Vegas	North Las Vegas	Reno	Sparks	Wells	Yerington
Regulate traffic	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x
Regulate public parking			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Regulate railroads, airports & mass transportation	x		x	x		x		x	x	x		x	x	x
Regulate & provide for abatement of nuisances	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x
Regulate & provide for animal control	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x
Provide sanitary sewer	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x
Provide for utilities	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Provide & maintain cemeteries	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x
Authorize television franchises			x	x	x	x	x		x	x			x	x
Provide & maintain golf courses				x						x			x	
Provide for treatment of alcohol & narcotic addiction						x			x					
Create library district										x				
Regulate liquor and gaming	x											x		

\*Chapter 268 of Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS)

Compiled by Marvin Leavitt, Director of Intergovernmental Relations and Policy Research for the City of Las Vegas  
May 1998

## APPENDIX E

“Debt and Property Tax Limits Set by Nevada’s Charter and General Law Cities,”  
chart compiled by the Research Division of the  
Legislative Counsel Bureau  
(July 1998)





**DEBT AND PROPERTY TAX LIMITS SET BY NEVADA'S  
CHARTER AND GENERAL LAW CITIES**

<b>City</b>	<b>Debt Limit (Percent of total assessed value of city's taxable property above which the city will <u>not</u> incur indebtedness)</b>	<b>Tax Limitations (Percent of total assessed value of city's taxable property that the city taxes)</b>
Boulder City	Not set. The City refers to <i>Nevada Revised Statutes</i> (NRS) provisions.	Not set. As with the debt limit, the City relies on NRS limitations.
Caliente	20 percent	Not exceeding 2 percent
Carlin	20 percent	Not exceeding 3 percent
Carson	15 percent	Not exceeding an "appropriate rate"
Elko	Not set. The city charter refers to NRS provisions.	Not exceeding 3 percent
Gabbs	10 percent	Not exceeding 3 percent
Henderson	15 percent	Not exceeding 3 percent
Las Vegas	20 percent	Not set
North Las Vegas	20 percent	Not exceeding 3 percent
Reno	15 percent	Not exceeding 2 percent
Sparks	20 percent	Not exceeding 1¾ percent
Wells	40 percent	Not exceeding 3 percent
Yerington	20 percent	Not exceeding an "appropriate rate"
General Law Cities	30 percent (NRS 266.600)	Not exceeding 3 percent (NRS 266.605)

Compiled by the Research Division of the Legislative Counsel Bureau  
July 1998



## APPENDIX F

“Elected and Appointed Officers in Nevada’s Charter Cities,”  
chart compiled by the Research Division of the  
Legislative Counsel Bureau  
(July 1998)



# ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICERS IN NEVADA'S CHARTER CITIES

City	Elected Officers	Appointed Officers*
Boulder City	4 councilmen and a mayor elected at large for 4-year terms.	City manager, city attorney, city clerk, and/or municipal judge.
Caliente	4 councilmen and a mayor elected at large for 4-year terms.	City manager, city clerk, city marshal, police judge, city treasurer, city attorney, and city physician.
Carlin	4 councilmen and a mayor elected at large for 4-year terms.	City clerk, city treasurer, chief of police, city engineer, city attorney, city auditor, and municipal judge.
Carson City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 supervisors and a mayor elected at large for 4-year terms.</li> <li>Municipal judge elected at large for a 6-year term.</li> </ul>	City manager, city clerk, city treasurer, city assessor, sheriff, district attorney, controller, and internal auditor. The city manager shall appoint a director of purchasing and contracts.
Elko	4 supervisors and a mayor elected at large for 4-year terms.	City manager, city clerk, city attorney, chief of police, municipal judge, fire chief, and city engineer (who also may be the city manager).
Gabbs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 councilman and a mayor elected at large for 2-year terms.</li> <li>2 councilmen elected at large for 4-year terms.</li> </ul>	City clerk, municipal judge, city treasurer, city attorney, city auditor, city marshal, and clerk of the municipal court.
Henderson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 councilmen and a mayor elected at large for 4-year terms.</li> <li>At least 1 municipal judge elected every 2 years for a term of 2 or 4 years, as determined by the city council, in order that, one-half the number of municipal judges be elected every 2 years.</li> </ul>	City manager, city attorney, city clerk, chief of police, director of public works, fire chief, and director of finance.
Las Vegas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 councilmen elected by ward for 4-year terms.</li> <li>Mayor elected at large for 4-year term.</li> <li>At least 1 municipal judge elected every 2 years for a term of 2 or 4 years, as determined by the city council, in order that, one-half the number of municipal judges be elected every 2 years.</li> </ul>	City manager. City manager shall appoint a director of financial management, director of public services, fire chief, city clerk, and a director of each department that is established pursuant to the city charter.
North Las Vegas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 councilmen and a mayor elected at large for 4-year terms.</li> <li>A municipal judge elected at large for a 4-year term.</li> </ul>	All officers, not elected or covered under the civil service system, appointed by the city manager subject to the ratification of the city council.
Reno	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 councilmen elected by ward to serve 4-year terms.</li> <li>1 councilman and a mayor elected at large for 4-year terms.</li> <li>A city attorney and at least 1 municipal judge elected at large for 4-year terms.</li> </ul>	City manager, city clerk, and other appointive officers (as the council may deem necessary for the operation of the city).
Sparks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 councilmen elected by ward for 4-year terms.</li> <li>Mayor elected at large for a 4-year term.</li> <li>A city attorney and at least 1 municipal judge elected at large for 4-year terms.</li> </ul>	Mayor appoints a city manager (subject to confirmation by the city council). The city manager appoints the heads of the fire and police departments and one technical assistant in each of these departments (subject to confirmation by the city council).
Wells	4 councilmen and a mayor elected at large for 4-year terms.	City clerk, municipal judge, chief of police, city engineer, city attorney, and city auditor.
Yerington	4 councilmen and a mayor elected at large for 4-year terms.	City manager, city attorney, police chief, fire chief, city clerk, and municipal judge.

\*All officers are appointed by the city council unless otherwise noted.

Compiled by the Research Division of the Legislative Counsel Bureau  
July 1998