

"One Job Too Many - The Need for Professional Administration
at the Highest Level of City Government
By Alderman Richard E. Israel (1/8/09)

The mayor of Annapolis has four jobs. This is one job too many. The four jobs are: ceremonial head, official representative of the city government, leader in policy formulation, and day-to-day administrator. The job of administering a municipal government with a budget of \$81 million and 550 employees is itself a full-time job, It is a job that can best be performed by an appointed official who is trained and experienced in public administration.

In providing for professional administration, there are two distinct approaches, One is to provide professional assistance to the mayor as chief executive officer of the city government The person holding this appointed position would be the agent of the mayor. The other is to provide for a professional administrator, usually called the city manager, who carries out policies established by the city council, which consists of the mayor and eight aldermen, The city manager is the agent of the council

Serving as the ceremonial head and representative of the city government is most effectively performed by the mayor, the only official elected by the voters of the entire city, Moreover, the formulation of policy is a matter for elected officials, the mayor and eight aldermen, who are accountable to the voters.

While the making of policy is for elected officials, the carrying out of policy is best left to appointed personnel who are trained and experienced in public administration. The distinction between making policy and carrying out policy has been recognized for over one hundred years, However, in Annapolis the mayor is involved in the day-to-day administration of city government.

Prior to the administration of Roger "Pip" Moyer (1965-1973), the city government was run by the various committees of the city council. Mayor Roger Moyer was the city's first full-time mayor. AB such he became the chief executive officer, as is now explicitly recognized in the charter. The budget in FY1968 was \$3.4 million

As city government became larger and more complex, it was recognized that the mayor needed professional assistance. Thus, during the administration of Mayor Alfred "AI" Hopkins (1989-1997) the position of city administrator was established. The charter now refers to the city administrator as the chief administrative officer.

The city administrator is subject to the immediate supervision of the mayor and can be dismissed by the mayor. Moreover, the city administrator has the responsibility of supervising the department heads. However, the city administrator does not now have the matching authority to hire, fire and set the compensation of the department directors.

The adoption of the city manager form of government in Annapolis was first seriously considered in 1922. In the past fourteen years, there have been five studies on whether the form of city government should be altered. During the course of the past year and with the benefit of these studies, the Rules and City Government Committee has reviewed five proposed charter amendment which either strengthen the city administrator position or establish a city manager form of government. Two of these . proposals have been reported to the council without a recommendation. Neither would take effect until the next mayor and aldermen take office.

One proposed amendment is CA-4. It is sponsored by Alderman Ross Arnett. Aldermen Richard Israel, Samuel Shropshire and Julie Stankivic are cosponsors. As revised and amended, CA-4 provides for a city manager. who would be the city's chief executive officer and thus be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the city government. The city manager would be responsible for hiring and firing department heads. However, these actions would be subject to review and comment by the council.

The city manager would be hired and fired by the council. However, the mayor could veto the hiring or firing subject to the council being able to over-ride the veto by a two-third's majority. Essentially, the city manager would be expected to carry out policies established by the

elected council and would thus be considered an agent of the council. To avoid the confusion of nine elected officials directing the work of one appointed official, the mayor would communicate the decisions of the council to the city manager.

Each of the eight wards would continue to elect an alderman. In a diverse city like Annapolis, it is important that each ward speak in its own distinctive voice. Although the city manager would be expected to make policy recommendations, it would be the elected officials who would make the decision. The power of the council to hire and fire the city manager would also act as a restraint on any inclination of the city manager to exceed his/her proper role.

The mayor would continue to be a full-time official and a member of the city council. Relieved of the responsibility of day-to-day administration of the city government, the mayor would have more time to devote to bringing about a consensus among the aldermen on policy matters and in improving relations with the Housing Authority and the county and state governments. Although the city manager would supervise the preparation of the operating and capital budgets, the mayor would have the power to revise these budgets before they are presented to the council. The budget is the single most important instrument for setting policy and controlling government.

So that the council will have a choice, the committee has also reported without a recommendation CA-6. This proposed charter amendment is sponsored by Alderman David Cordle. The co-sponsors are Alderwomen Sheila Finlayson and Classie Hoyle. Although the term "city manager" is used, the mayor would still be the chief executive officer. Like the city administrator, the city manager would be appointed by the mayor, subject to confirmation by the council, and would be subject to removal by the mayor. Thus, the city manager would be the agent of the mayor. The city manager would have the authority to hire and fire department directors but hiring would be subject to approval by the mayor and confirmation by the council and firing would be subject to the approval of the mayor. The directors would be subject to the supervision of the city manager.

To give citizens the opportunity to express their views, CA-4 and CA-6 will be the subject of a public hearing before the council on Monday, January 26th, 2009 at 7PM in the City Council Room of City Hall. It has been requested that the two proposed amendments be scheduled for a vote by the council on Monday, February 9th.

An early vote is important so that voters will have time to petition any amendment approved by the council to referendum. The council does not have the authority to mandate a charter amendment to referendum. However, the voters can petition a charter amendment approved by the council. If either CA-4 or CA-6 is approved by the council, I will sign a petition requiring the approved amendment to be voted on at a referendum. If neither of the proposed amendments is approved by the council, I will sign a petition which would submit a citizen-drafted city manager amendment to referendum. A fundamental change in the city's form of government, whether initiated by the council or citizens, must be approved by a majority of the voters in a referendum.

* * * * *

Alderman Richard E. Israel represents Ward One and is chair of the Rules and City Government Committee.