



# PRESENTATION

**DATE:** 20 JANUARY 2011  
**TO:** CITY OF YAKIMA FORUM  
**RE:** COMPARISON OF GOVERNMENT FORMS

**It is important to me that two matters are perfectly clear to the citizens participating in this forum:**

- 1) *My conclusions and opinions are based entirely upon my education, background, and first-hand experience.*
- 2) *How my conclusions and opinions are applicable and/or relate to any other community is entirely within the judgment of the citizens of Yakima.*

	<b><u>COUNCIL-MANAGER</u></b>	<b><u>STRONG-MAYOR</u></b>
<b>FOUNDATION</b>	Corporate Model	U.S. Constitution
<b>GENERAL PRINCIPLES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminate Politics</li> <li>• Provide Professional Leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Separation of Powers</li> <li>• Strong Executive</li> </ul>
<b>POPULARITY IN STATE</b>	54 of 281 / 19% ±44% of citizens	226 of 281 / 81% ±56% of citizens
<b>COMMON ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire professional leadership rather than relying on voters and candidates</li> <li>• Clear lines of authority</li> <li>• Council leads community without interference</li> <li>• Ideally more stable and consistent leadership</li> <li>• Understandable as corporate/business leadership model</li> <li>• Manager may be removed immediately</li> <li>• Slight trend in State towards newer form of government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understandable; Clear Legislative/Executive branches</li> <li>• Conservative government form</li> <li>• Mayor &amp; Council independent- forces cooperation and consensus</li> <li>• Generally fosters healthy debate</li> <li>• Clear leadership and oversight</li> <li>• More voter control</li> <li>• Mayor represents the voters</li> <li>• Checks and balances built in</li> <li>• Hire professional administrator under Mayor's direct authority</li> </ul>
<b>COMMON ARGUMENTS AGAINST</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potentially high turnover of Managers</li> <li>• Unelected chief executive</li> <li>• Difficult for Council to oversee manager</li> <li>• Difficult to evaluate manager</li> <li>• Separates voters from the executive and creates backlash</li> <li>• Subject to politics of Council</li> <li>• Removal and contracts for manager generally costly</li> <li>• Corporate model may not fit government well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject to the opinion and politics of voters</li> <li>• Change executive at four-years intervals; maximum <i>and</i> minimum</li> <li>• Recall elections are divisive</li> <li>• Veto authority can lead to gridlock</li> <li>• Potential for voters to elect a poor or unqualified Mayor</li> <li>• Can lead to unclear leadership if Mayor absent or uncommitted</li> <li>• Sometimes difficult to find candidates</li> </ul>
<b>COSTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under legislative control. Generally equal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under legislative control. Generally equal.</li> </ul>
<b>NEEDS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best people available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best people available in the community</li> </ul>

## **CONCLUSIONS BASED ON EXPERIENCE IN EPHRATA**

Ephrata is a small (7,100 population) community in rural Grant County; our primary employers are all government-related (Public Utility, County Seat, Public Schools). We are tax-poor and isolated. This forces

us to be efficient and creative in order to maximize our revenues.

Ephrata was a Strong-Mayor government from 1909-1996. The City Council successfully led a movement to

change to Council-Manager form, with myself as the spokesman, in 1996.

Later Ephrata went through a very turbulent time from 1998-2003. Due to work & debate taking place in open committees, rather than at Council meetings, there were lingering suspicions and mistrust of the government. Unpopular decisions were made, revenues dropped, voter turnout fell, and Councilmen were elected with personal agendas. We also experienced several dramatic crises, some as a result of the new Council's private schemes.

For many reasons a citizens group started a movement to return Ephrata to a Strong-Mayor government in 2002. I personally was opposed to this change. However, I have since worked as a Councilman under both forms, and as a City Administrator under the Strong-Mayor system. This has changed my beliefs regarding

the Strong-Mayor form of government for Ephrata. I have concluded that the Strong-Mayor government is best for our community for six reasons:

I believe very strongly in the clearly defined, and Constitutionally based, system of checks and balances that only are found in a Strong-Mayor government.

The Council-Manager form is very appealing on paper; it is easy to explain and understand, and clearly functions well in many cities. However, voters in Ephrata like electing their Chief Executive. Under the Council-Manager form, there was a separation between the government and the voters (more if the community would have had to hire a manager from outside). This led, in part, to the distrust and resentment that crippled our government and prevented us from leading the community.

Just as iron sharpens iron, I have seen the positive and healthy teamwork, debate, and challenge that the separation of powers creates. In Ephrata, our Council and Mayor challenge each other, the Mayor and I question one another, and the citizens directly confront the Mayor. It is hard and enjoyable work, but effective.

Ephrata both wanted, and needed, a leader. One person to represent the community, from the community.

Because of the close relationship between the Mayor and myself, he is able to effectively evaluate my performance. Because the Mayor is of the community, he is more effectively confronted and accessible. This leads to the accountability of the Mayor, of the Administrator, the Council, and ultimately- of our community.

Ephrata needs the very best individuals in the community to serve. Our Mayor, exerting all his leadership skills, has corralled an amazing collection of Councilmembers and staff. We all live in the community; we are tax-paying participants with the community, our kids play and study in our schools, etc. We are members of the community first, government officials second. We created, and work hard to maintain, a culture of service in our organization. It may be cliché, but our City's motto is: "We exist to serve".

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

[www.mrsc.org/Subjects/Management/forms/overview.aspx](http://www.mrsc.org/Subjects/Management/forms/overview.aspx)

[www.mrsc.org/Subjects/Management/forms/compare.aspx](http://www.mrsc.org/Subjects/Management/forms/compare.aspx)

[www.mrsc.org/Subjects/Management/forms/trends.aspx](http://www.mrsc.org/Subjects/Management/forms/trends.aspx)

RCW 35A.11

RCW 35A.12