

City of Forsyth

Dennis Kopitzke, Mayor

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Mayor - News Article

May 30, 2019

This may be the first of a series of articles associated with Forsyth city government including the city's Charter and the city's code.

The city's **Charter** (similar to Federal and State constitutions) was written with the help of Dr. Ken Weaver of Montana State University's Local Government Center. Official signers of the Charter as representatives of the city were Bob Kalt, Les Seward and Mathew Bauer. Voters of the city approved the Charter and it was officially approved on July 16, 1996. The Charter outlines the basic responsibilities and organizational structure of the city council, mayor, city judge, and city departments. The Charter also provides for capital improvement program funding, creates a special projects fund and allows for the establishment of appropriate reserve accounts.

Legislative Branch (City Council)

The Charter outlines the basic responsibilities of the **city council**, qualifications for office, composition (4 members, 2 from two districts), term of office (4 year term), method of election, election of council members, removal from office, filling vacancies and powers and duties.

"The council shall be the legislative and policy determining body of the city. The powers of the city shall be vested in the City council except as otherwise provided in this Charter."

Executive Branch (Mayor)

The mayor is elected for a 4 year term. The Charter requires that the mayor shall have certain powers and duties. The Charter provides for 11 specific powers and duties of the mayor. Among those duties: enforce laws, Charter, ordinances and resolutions; administer affairs of city government; carry out policies established by the council; report to the council as the council may require; prepare council agenda, preside at council meetings and may take part in discussion; execute the budget adopted by the council.

The mayor also has administrative duties which may include: preparation of the budget, appoint remove, with the affirmative vote of three (3) members of the council, all department heads and may appoint and remove all other department employees; exercise control and supervision of all departments and boards.

The mayor may only vote to break a tie but shall have no other vote. The mayor may participate in all discussions.

Judicial Branch (City Court/City Attorneys)

The Charter only states: "There shall be a city court as provided by law."

Three other key provisions of the Charter include:

Capital Improvement Program Fund: The council shall create and maintain a capital improvement program (CIP) for the purpose of replacement and acquisition of general fund property, plant or equipment.

Special Projects Fund: The council shall establish and maintain a fund for the purpose of funding long range city projects which would otherwise impose an excessive burden on the taxpayers. Appropriation of the principle of the fund shall require the affirmative vote of four (4) council members and the mayor.

Designated Reserve Accounts: There shall be reserve accounts established and appropriately maintained for the general fund and other funds as may be needed and required.

Community members can view the Charter at any time during normal business hours at City Hall, there is a copy at the Rosebud County Library, the Charter is also on the Chamber website (forsythmt.com), or copy can be obtained at City Hall for nominal fee.