

Thinking About Filing for a Council Position?

Facts You Should Know

Prepared by the Decorah City Clerk's Office

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I. FORM OF GOVERNMENT

Decorah is a Chartered City, operating under a Mayor/Council form of government. The City Manager and City Clerk, Treasurer are appointed by the City Council. There are seven members serving on the Council elected for four-year terms. There are five ward positions and two at-large positions.

II. COUNCIL LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

The City Council acts as the official legislative and policy making body of the City adopting all laws, ordinances, and resolutions, and approving contracts required by the City. The Council analyzes proposals to meet community needs, initiates action for new programs and determines the ability of the City to provide financing for City operations. The Council also reviews, modifies, and approves the annual municipal budget presented by the City Manager and City Clerk, Tr. Additionally, the City Council performs other miscellaneous duties, including appointments to various boards and commissions, acts as liaison with other governmental bodies, and responds to community groups and individual constituents. As the governing elected body the Council is also responsible for oversight and response of any natural or man-made emergency within city limits. Further, Council is expected to be on-call and available during times of disaster. The Council has established a series of committees and shares assignments on other special or ad hoc committees generally as determined by the Mayor.

How Much Time Does It Take To Be A Council member?

The City Council meetings are held the first and third Mondays of the month at 5:45 p.m., except when official holidays occur on these particular Mondays. Duration of meetings vary from one-half hour to three hours, usually averaging one hour. Typically, committee meetings are held immediately following regular Council meetings. All Council and committee meetings must comply with State Open Meeting Law requirements. Therefore, most meetings are open to the public. Closed meetings must comply with strict requirements set forth in the State Code. Committee meetings are also open to the public but generally are less formal and afford the members an opportunity to review details and brainstorm ideas that might not otherwise occur in the more structured setting of a Council meeting. On Thursday prior to the Council meetings, an electronic Council packet containing the agenda for the upcoming meeting, staff reports and other general information is sent to each Councilmember. Periodic updates on other matters of concern are also sent out as needed.

In addition to these meetings, you should allow time for other duties; (i.e. out-of-town meetings, speaking engagements, conversing with citizens, and ceremonial events). A budget work session is

held in January or February, during which time the proposed budget is presented.

III. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND THE APPEARANCE OF FAIRNESS DOCTRINE

Members of the City Council are required by law to comply with certain standards of conduct involving potential conflicts of interest. Details about this and related questions can be obtained by contacting the City Clerk's Office.

IV. QUALIFICATIONS

The elective officers of the City shall reside in the Ward for which they are running. Members of the Council shall be qualified electors of the City.

V. SALARY AND FRINGE BENEFITS

The salary for Council members is established by ordinance passed by the Council. No Councilmember may vote himself/herself an increase in salary. Action on a salary increase normally is considered prior to the regular general election with the increase being effective the first of the following year. Effective 1-1-18 pay for Council positions is \$50.00 for each official Council meeting and \$400/mo. for Mayor

The fringe benefits include:

- Reimbursement for eligible expenses.
- Workmen's Compensation insurance coverage.
- Professional liability indemnification covering Council members in their official capacity.
- Payment by the City of its portion of Social Security payroll tax or membership in the Iowa Public Employers Retirement System.

VII. ELECTION PROCESS

All elections, whether special or general, shall be conducted by the County.

Filing For Candidacy:

Candidate nomination papers may be obtained from Wanda Hemesath, City Clerk, Tr., City Municipal Building or Ben Steines, Winneshiek Co. Auditor, Court House.

All candidate declarations of candidacy must be filed with Ben Steines, Winneshiek County Auditor, no later than 5:00 p.m., Thursday, Sept 19. All general elections for the City shall be held on the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November in the odd-numbered years.

VIII. HOW A VACANCY ON THE COUNCIL IS FILLED

If any Councilmember elected or appointed to an at-large position moves outside the City boundary, or in the event a Councilmember elected or appointed to a "ward position" moves outside his/her ward, then that Councilmember shall thereby forfeit the office of Councilmember and that position shall be deemed vacant.

In the event a vacancy occurs, for any reason, the vacancy shall be filled pursuant to Section 372.13 of the Code of Iowa.

IX. ELECTION INFORMATION

Positions Up for Election in 2019:

The following Council positions are up for election in 2019: 2nd Ward, 4th Ward, one At-Large position, and 3 Park and Recreation Board positions.

Election Dates

Filing for Candidacy: Filing Begins: Monday, August 26, Deadline is 5:00 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 19

General Election: November 5, 2019

X. Political Advertising

The City, in Chapter 17 (Zoning Code) regulates political yard signs. Political signs are permitted which during a campaign, advertise a candidate or candidates for public elective office, a political party, or promote a position on a public issue, provided such signs are on private property and are removed within seven days following the election.