



Adult Local Government Workshop

- I. Welcome – Introduction to the Workshops – facilitator (5 minutes)
- II. Introduction to Local Government (10 minutes)
 - a. Various local government structures – LWV 12 forms of municipal government
 - b. Key players in local government
 - i. Roles and responsibilities
 1. Mayor
 2. Council
 3. County Commissioners
 4. Administrator, etc.
 - c. How changes in local government happen
 - i. Process – steps from beginning to end
 - ii. Results
- III. Introduction to case studies (5 minutes)
 - a. Case studies are designed to help workshop participants understand how to navigate **different forms of municipal government in Monmouth County**. Each one includes:
 - i. An explanation of the town’s political structure
 - ii. Unique rules for advocacy within that structure
 - iii. A real-world-inspired scenario
 - b. Each group will determine how to resolve the issue. More specifically, they will:
 - i. Outline each step in the process
 - ii. Determine who to consult within the government to resolve the issue
 - iii. Determine relevant documents needed and how to make them work
 1. Letters
 2. Petitions



Local Government Structure Example - Borough

Freehold Borough: Governed under the Borough form of New Jersey Municipal Government. This form of government consists of a Mayor and six Council Members. Here are some key details about the Freehold Borough government structure:

Governing Body: Mayor and Council.

Mayor: Kevin A. Kane, elected for a four-year term. His current term ends December 31, 2027.

Council Members: Six members, each elected for a three-year term. The current Council members and their term end dates are:

- Adam Reich (Council President) – 12/31/25
- Sharon Shutzer - 12/31/27
- Michael DiBenedetto – 12/31/26
- Jeffrey Friedman – 12/31/26
- Annette Jordan – 12/31/27
- Margaret Rogers – 12/31/25

Responsibilities of the Governing Body: The Mayor and Council are empowered to adopt local ordinances and pass resolutions, and they conduct business during monthly public meetings.

Specific Roles:

- The Mayor presides over Council meetings and votes in case of a tie. He also appoints subordinate officers with the Council's consent.
- The Council is the legislative body responsible for all executive duties not given to the Mayor by law.
- The Borough Clerk serves as the Chief Administrative Officer of elections and manages licenses and permits. They also coordinate the Mayor's activities and are the "keeper" of public records, processing requests for information.

The Borough form is a popular type of local government in New Jersey. It is sometimes described as a "weak mayor-strong council" form, with the Mayor holding some executive responsibilities while the Council holds most legislative and administrative power. Boroughs can also choose to hire an administrator to take on some executive duties.



Local Government Structure Example - Borough

The structure of the **Atlantic Highlands Borough Council** is based on the Borough form of government used in New Jersey. This form is often described as a "weak mayor-strong council" government.

Here's a breakdown of the structure:

Mayor:

- Elected for a four-year term.
- Presides over Council meetings and votes in case of a tie.
- Can veto ordinances, which can be overridden by a two-thirds Council vote.
- Assigns committees and liaisons and makes most appointments with Council consent.
- As of 2025, the Mayor is Lori Hohenleitner.

Borough Council:

- Consists of six members elected at-large for staggered three-year terms.
- Two seats are up for election annually in a three-year cycle.
- Serves as the legislative body.
- Holds executive responsibilities not assigned to the Mayor by law.
- Can appoint an administrator to delegate executive duties.
- Current members (as of 2025) include Council President Brian Dougherty, Vito Colasurdo, Jon Crowley, Eileen Cusack, Alyson Forbes, and Jose Pujols.

Borough Administrator:

- An appointed official who acts as the Chief Executive Officer.
- Responsible for executing Governing Body policies and managing daily operations.
- The current Administrator is Robert Ferragina.

This structure provides a balance of power between the elected Mayor and the Council, with the Council primarily holding legislative power. The option to appoint a Borough Administrator allows for the delegation of executive responsibilities.



Local Government Structure Example – Township A

Freehold Township is governed by a five-member Township Committee, which is the legislative body. The committee members are elected to staggered three-year terms. They are responsible for enacting ordinances, resolutions, and proclamations. The committee also appoints a Township Administrator, who oversees the day-to-day operations of the township and is responsible to the committee.

Here's a more detailed breakdown:

Township Committee:

The Township Committee is the governing body and holds all legislative powers.

Elections:

Committee members are elected to three-year terms, with elections staggered so that not all seats are up for election at the same time.

Meetings:

The Township Committee holds regular public meetings, typically two or three times per month.

Township Administrator:

The Township Administrator is appointed by the Committee and is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the township. They also serve as the Township Personnel Officer and coordinate the preparation and implementation of the municipal budget.

Departments:

Freehold Township has various departments, including Administration, Clerk's Office, Construction, Zoning & Housing Enforcement, Engineering, Finance, and more.



Local Government Structure Example – Township B

Neptune Township, New Jersey operates under a Township Committee form of government. Here's a breakdown of the governing structure:

Township Committee: This is the governing body of Neptune Township. It is constituted and elected according to law. The Committee has the power to legislate, including making, amending, repealing, and enforcing ordinances.

Mayor: The Mayor serves as the chairman of the Township Committee and the head of the municipal government. The Mayor presides over Committee meetings and has the right to debate and vote on all questions. The Mayor's powers include signing documents, making proclamations, and exercising ceremonial duties.

Township Administrator: The Business Administrator (also referred to as the Township Administrator) is the Chief Administrative Officer of the Township. They are responsible to the Township Committee and oversee administrative duties, including recommending the annual operating budget. An Assistant Business Administrator serves as the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer.

Departments and Boards: The Township government also includes various departments and boards responsible for specific areas. For example:

- **Planning Board:** Reviews land development plans, guides zoning amendments, and is responsible for the Master Plan.
- **Housing Authority:** Established to manage housing matters, it consists of seven commissioners.
- **Municipal Court:** Handles judicial matters within the township.
- **Police Committee:** Consists of two Township Committee members, the Township Administrator, and other members, possibly including professionals like the Township Attorney or CFO, to assist with its functions.

Federal and State Representation: Neptune Township is part of the 11th legislative district of the New Jersey Legislature, represented by a State Senator and members of the General Assembly.

County Government: Monmouth County, where Neptune Township is located, is governed by a Board of County Commissioners. These five members are elected at-large for staggered three-year terms.

This structure outlines the general framework of the Neptune Township government, with specific roles and responsibilities assigned to different elected officials, administrators, and appointed boards.



Local Government Structure Example – City/Council-Manager

Asbury Park operates under a **Council-Manager** form of government. This means the **city** is governed by an elected City Council, and the day-to-day operations are managed by an appointed City Manager. Here's a more detailed breakdown:

1. City Council:

The City Council is the governing body, comprised of elected officials. They are responsible for enacting ordinances, setting policy, and overseeing the overall direction of the city. The Council appoints the City Manager and other key personnel.

2. City Manager:

The City Manager is an appointed professional administrator who is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the city. They oversee the various city departments and ensure that the policies and directives of the City Council are carried out.

3. Mayor:

The Mayor is elected by the voters and serves as the head of the City Council. The Mayor presides over Council meetings and may have specific duties as defined by ordinance.

In Asbury Park, the Mayor is also a member of the City Council.

4. City Clerk:

The City Clerk is another key appointed official. They serve as the Secretary to the City Council, manage public records, and administer elections. They also act as a liaison between the governing officials and the public.

5. Other Boards and Commissions:

The City Council may establish various boards and commissions to advise them on specific areas of city business (e.g., Planning Board, Zoning Board).

6. Departments:

The City of Asbury Park has numerous departments that provide essential services to residents and businesses, including:

- Police and Fire Departments
- Public Works
- Community Development
- Finance

Case Study C – “Bloom at Belmont Lot”

Mock Town: City of Riverstone

Political Structure: Council-Manager Form

Example NJ Towns: City of Asbury Park

 How the Town Functions: (see town government structures)

- Elected Council makes policy decisions
- Town Manager is appointed and handles all administrative functions
- Mayor (elected or chosen from council) is mostly ceremonial
- Department heads report to the Town Manager, not the Council
- Citizens must go through the Town Manager for land use, permits, etc.

 **Scenario:**

The City of Riverstone is a sleepy town founded in the early 1800's. In the 1970's, Riverstone had a renaissance when a coffee factory came to the town. The downtown area became vibrant and the city had a housing boom as people moved into Riverstone for jobs. When the recession of 2008 hit, however, the coffee factor closed leaving a hole in the community for jobs and businesses. During this time, a well-known family owned grocery store had a fire and was destroyed. After the remaining parts of the building were removed, only a vacant lot remained. For almost 20 years, this lot has been left empty, although the community had planned on numerous occasions to build another store on the lot, nothing has materialized.

Recently, John Dixon moved into Riverstone with his wife Zelda and their two young children, Hanna and John Jr. John and Zelda, who met in college, both have undergraduate degrees in Biology. John finished his master's in Ecology and Evolution writing his thesis on the importance of community gardens as a method of reviving communities. On a walk with their children down Belmont Avenue, John and Zelda noticed the open lot and thought it would be a great location for a community garden. They both knew that a community garden promotes good health, provides fresh food, physical activity and reduced stress. They built a community garden in another location and were able to not only provide good food and health, they started gardening program with the local Junior High School, teaching them about planting, harvesting and maintaining a garden. Seeing the lot, they know that a community garden would fit perfectly. But since they are new to community, John and Zelda need your help. They, and their like-minded neighbors need your help to navigate through the local government process to get the garden created. John and Zelda need to create the argument for the garden and create a proposal for the local Council.

Workshop Task:

1. Write out the process you would use to get permission to create the garden.
2. Sketch out the speech you would make to the Council in support the garden



Riverstone Community Garden Process Form

As you determine your best plan of action, consider the answers to these questions:

1. What specific steps you will take to appear on the Riverstone City Council Meeting agenda to discuss the community garden?
2. Which elected officials will you contact and why?
3. What information would be helpful and where will you get it?
4. Who should you include when you have the opportunity to speak with your local Council?
5. What else would you need to do to persuade the Council to create the garden?

Tip: Remember to consider any counter arguments that could be made against the garden and answers for those arguments.



✓ Sample Effective Solution:

1. Jamal drafts a formal proposal with a community org and submits it to the Town Manager
2. He includes design mockups, costs, potential partners (local schools, co-ops), and volunteer pledges
3. He attends a Council meeting and speaks during public comment, with five other supporters
4. A Councilmember sponsors a resolution to support the initiative, which passes
5. The Town Manager allocates staff to review zoning, secure insurance, and support a pilot program
6. Jamal works with public works and a nonprofit partner to launch the garden

Outcome: Belmont Lot becomes "Belmont Bloom," a thriving garden run by local families and youth groups with support from the town.