



## 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.



## **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 B – “Keep Oak Park Green”

**Mock Town:** Seaview Township

**Political Structure:** Township

**Example NJ Towns:** Neptune Township, Freehold Township

### **How the Town Functions: See town government structures**

- 5 Commissioners elected at-large; each oversees a department in Seaview.
  - Commissioner Blake – Manages Public Safety which includes Police, Fire and Emergency Management
  - Commissioner Williams – Manages Public Works which includes sanitation, infrastructure, utilities
  - Commissioner Jones – Administration which includes Township Clerk, Personnel
  - Commissioner Smith – Finance which includes Tax Collection, Assessor, Budgeting
  - Commissioner Dulles – Community Development which includes Planning, Zoning, Code Enforcement

The Mayor is Commissioner Jones; but this is more of a ceremonial position. Decisions are made collectively at Commission Meetings.

**Notes about Commission** – They like community issues that are well thought out, cohesive and focused. They also like issues that are supported by a majority of the community. They are less likely to enact change if it’s only one person who wants it. They also like data.

### **Process to enact change:**

- Citizens must speak to the Commissioner who controls the department that handles their issue



## Scenario:

In 1998, the citizens of Seaview Township wanted a place where their kids could play, and they could enjoy the outdoors. Jon Smith, a local businessman, donated land that he owned to the newly created Oak Park Development Council to build a garden, outdoor sports complex and picnic grounds. In 2000, when Oak Park opened, there were six acres of park and sports space which included a baseball diamond, a football/soccer field, a walking path and picnic area complete with stationary grills, benches and tables. For the last 30 years, the Oak Park Development Council has made Oak Park a destination for recreation for the citizens of Seaview. Little league baseball and football teams use the outdoor sports arena. The Oak Park Development Council created a Seaview Day, where the community comes to the park to play games, have a cookout and meet with neighbors. Oak Park has become a beloved part of Seaview and residents love the area.

However, after a close election, two new Commissioners were elected, Commissioner Dulles and Commissioner Williams. Commissioner Dulles feels that Seaview needs more income and developing Oak Park into high-rise, luxury apartment buildings is a better use of the park. She feels that the apartment complex would not only bring additional tax revenue, but create additional space for small businesses. With a vote of 3 to 2, the Commission agreed to explore the idea. They created a request for proposal (RFP) and sent it to various companies. The James Development and Construction Company LLC has been chosen to create the plans for the space and to submit a formal proposal, timeline and budget by the end of the year. Priya Marks, a young, local green activist, who grew up in Seaview, is concerned that if Oak Park is demolished, then there isn't another place to put a park, which she feels is essential to enjoying life in Seaview. Therefore Priya has asked you and you like-minded neighbors to work with her so she can stop the development.

Priya needs help to:

- Determine who to talk to in the town and find out the process of stopping the development
- Determine what documents are needed to make the case to stop the development or keep the park
- Create the argument for the park; what should be said to "move the needle."
- After you meet with the appropriate officials, what happens?

## **Workshop Task:**

Write out the process you would use to keep Oak Park and stop the construction.



- Who would you contact first?
- What argument would you make to keep Oak Park
- After that, how will you rally your neighbors to join the fight with you
- What would you present to the Seaview Commission to get them to see your point of view

Write the speech that Pryia and her fellow citizens will give at a rally or meeting. Include background information, the problem and why keeping Oak Park is a win-win for Seaview.