

Citizens for a Full-Time Mayor

Fact Check

Claim: A majority of Brooklyn Center residents don't know the form of government that we actually have.

The Facts:

- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Brooklyn Center had a population of 33,782 in 2020.
- If we accept the common definition of a majority being the greater number, more than 16,891 Brooklyn Center residents would have to know that we have a Council-Manager form of government.

Rating: Likely True

Claim: The Mayor is nothing more than a figurehead.

The Facts:

- Per the City Charter, the Mayor is the presiding officer of the City Council.
- The Mayor has an equal vote with the four duly-elected at-large Councilmembers.
- While the Mayor is recognized as the head of the City for all ceremonial purposes, the Charter prescribes the unique duty of the Mayor to “report to the Council any neglect, dereliction of duty, or waste on the part of any officer or department of the City.”
- Another duty unique to the office of Mayor is to sign all contracts, bonds, and instruments to which the City is a party.
- As set forth in multiple ordinances, the Mayor also has the responsibility to recommend to Council appointments to City Advisory Commissions.

Rating: False

Claim: We have a democratic government.

The Facts:

- The United States of America is not a democracy.
- We have a representative or democratic republic which has three defining characteristics:
 - The people elect representatives to make laws on their behalf.
 - There are three branches of government with separation of powers which means no one branch can have absolute control.
 - The foundational document, The Constitution, is designed to constrain the government and protect the rights of the people.
- Democracy, or rule directly by the people is subject to power grabs by whoever claims to be the majority at any given time. A republic however, is intended to protect and support equity for everyone, including the minority.

- At the local level, our Council-Manager form of government mirrors these principles in that:
 - The Mayor and Council are elected as representatives and serve as the City's legislative body. The City Manager is entrusted to run the day-to-day operations of the city without being subject to political power-grabs. The City Manager serves at the collective will of the entire Council meaning that although each of them may represent different interests, they must have consensus in order to direct the City Manager.
 - The Mayor and Councilmembers each have an equal vote.
 - The foundational document, the City Charter, restrains the powers of the government and protects the rights of people.

Rating: False

Claim: We have an unelected City Manager who serves as the City's executive head.

The Facts:

- Since our City is a municipal corporation, it logically follows that there should be an executive head. The City Charter designates the City Manager as ours. However, being unelected does not mean free reign.
- The City Manager is appointed by the City Council solely on the basis of training, experience, and administrative qualifications, serves at their will and is charged with the specific duties of enforcing the City's charter, laws, and resolutions.
- Because the City Manager is not elected, he does not have the right to cast a vote at City Council Meetings.

Rating: True but lacks context

Claim: The City Manager is not accountable.

The Facts:

- The City Manager is appointed by and is accountable to the Council.
- The City Manager's powers are limited by the City Charter and the City Council.
- If the City Manager fails to perform his or her duties to the satisfaction of the Council he or she may be removed. Accordingly, the City Council may ordain a merit system in part or all of City administration.
- The City Council has the power to provide for an examination or audit of the City government.

Rating: False

Claim: The City Manager does not have a term limit.

The Facts:

- The City Manager is an employee hired solely on the basis of training, experience, and administrative qualifications. Employees typically do not have or need term-limits whereas elected officials do.
- Our current City Manager, Reggie Edwards, holds a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism (Public Relations), a Master of Public Administration (M.P.A.), and a Doctorate of Education (Ed.D.).
- Edwards started as a market analyst with the Minnesota Department of Transportation in the early 1990s. He then was a senior policy analyst in the Ramsey County manager's office from 1993 to 1997, before serving as Chisago City administrator from 1998 to 2000. He was executive director of Region Nine Development Commission in Mankato from 2001 to 2011. From 2012 until 2016, he was a professor in the Masters of Public Administration program at Minnesota State University. In 2016 he started as Brooklyn Center's Deputy City Manager and served in that role for 5 years until he was finally appointed as Acting City Manager and City Manager.
- He is highly qualified to run the day-to-day operations of our city.

Rating: True but lacks context

Claim: The City Manager is paid a six-figure salary ten times more than the Mayor or Councilmembers.

The Facts:

- As with any job, salary ranges can vary widely depending on education, certifications, skills, and years of experience.
- According to salary.com, the average salary for a City Manager in Minnesota is \$108,655 as of June 28, 2022 with the typical range being from \$99,800 to \$123,008.
- Conversely, the only requirement for the part-time role of Mayor or Councilmember is that they be a registered voter. Although education, certifications, skills, and prior experience might better equip an individual for these roles, these are not requirements to represent their constituents.

Rating: True but lacks context

Claim: The budget is solely made by the city manager.

The Facts:

- Our City Charter charges the City Manager with the responsibility of preparing and submitting an annual budget to the City Council. The City Manager employs a number of financial experts in the Department of Fiscal & Support Services to assist with this process.
- However, the Council alone has authority over its approval and adoption.
- Prior to adoption of the annual budget, there are a number of public hearings which are required by state law.
- The budget is then certified to the County Auditor in a resolution.

- The City Charter prescribes that the Council provide for an audit of the City's accounts annually.
- Budget issues are often referred to the Financial Commission.

Rating: False

Claim: Shifting the Mayor to a full-time executive makes him or her more accountable to the people.

The Facts:

- It actually does the opposite of this; once elected, the Mayor cannot be replaced for four years.
- Under the proposed Charter amendment, important checks and balances necessary for accountability are removed:
 - The Mayor will have additional powers to establish and appoint advisory committees or task forces regarding administrative matters without the Council's consent. Under the current system, the Council holds the power to create or abolish departments, divisions, and bureaus for the administration of the City's affairs.
 - The Mayor is granted veto power over the City Council. Under the current system, the City Manager does not have this power and must follow the instruction and direction of Council.
 - The Council cannot pass legislation over the Mayor's veto without a supermajority (4 out of 5 members vs. 3 out of 5 which constitutes a majority) which delays the decision-making process. Under the current system, no one person has veto power.
 - The Mayor has the power to appoint a proxy to serve in his or her place on any board, commission, committee, or other public body of which he or she is a member, effectively stacking the deck in his or her favor without actually having to be present to influence decisions.

Rating: False

Claim: Shifting the Mayor to a full-time executive makes the police more accountable to the people.

The Facts:

- There is absolutely no provision in the proposed Charter amendment which makes police more accountable than they are in the current system. It merely changes the chain of command. There is no means of ensuring that the Mayor actually listens to the people that elected him or her in regard to administration of the Police Department.

Rating: False

Claim: The Mayor has no power to make any change within our current city structure.

The Facts:

- Under our current city structure the Mayor can effect change in the following ways:
 - As presiding officer of the City Council, he or she has the power to:
 - decide in what order speakers shall be recognized
 - refuse to recognize members offering dilatory, absurd, or frivolous motions or motions intended, in his or her judgment, to obstruct business
 - may restrain speakers within the limits of the rules
 - may enforce good decorum
 - may decide points of order
 - As a member of the Council he or she has an equal vote with the four duly-elected at-large Councilmembers.
 - As Mayor, he or she has the power to “report to the Council any neglect, dereliction of duty, or waste on the part of any officer or department of the City.”
 - As Mayor, he or she signs all contracts, bonds, and instruments to which the City is a party.
 - As set forth in multiple ordinances, the Mayor also has the responsibility to recommend to Council appointments to City Advisory Commissions.

Rating: False

Claim: 40% of Brooklyn Center’s budget goes to the Police Department. 12% of Minneapolis’ budget goes to the Police Department.

The Facts:

- 37.4% of the General Fund goes to the Police Department in Brooklyn Center.
Source: <https://www.ci.brooklyn-center.mn.us/home/showpublisheddocument/2494/637914835629430000>
- 32.1% of the General Fund goes to the Police Department in Minneapolis. The 12% cited in the video is out of Minneapolis’ total budget.
Source: https://lms.minneapolismn.gov/Download/FileV2/26236/2022-Council-Adopted-Budget_Reduced.pdf

Rating: False

Claim: The police are not accountable to an elected official.

The Facts:

- The police are accountable to multiple elected officials at the Federal, State, County, and Municipal levels of government.
 - Legislative branches of government create laws which define the conduct, powers, and limitations of policing.
 - Law enforcement agencies (an extension of executive branches of government) can investigate reports of police misconduct and make arrests.
 - Judicial branches of government can prosecute civil and criminal actions of police.

Rating: False

Claim: The people cannot replace the City Manager.

The Facts:

- The people can make their wishes known to their elected representatives (City Council) who have the authority to replace the City Manager. City Council can and has replaced the City Manager in recent history.
- In the proposed Charter amendment, there is no means to replace the Mayor outside of an election.

Rating: True but lacks context