

August 7, 2008

Honorable Ronnie Martin, Mayor
City of Centerville
102 East Swan Street, P.O.B. 238
Centerville, Tennessee 37033

Dear Mayor Martin

At our meeting on Wednesday we discussed the board's desire to become more actively involved in the appointment of department directors and the use of board committees.

The city's charter provides that legislative powers are vested in the board of mayor and aldermen and the executive function is vested in a chief executive similar to the state and federal systems of government and the private corporate structure. Such a system provides for maximum efficiency of city government.

The charter outlines the powers and duties of the board of mayor and aldermen, the legislative board, and the duties of the mayor and/or the city administrator. It is clearly the intent of the charter to separate the legislative function from the executive function.

Article IV, Section 4 of the charter, provides that the city administrator shall be under the control and direction of the board of mayor and aldermen. While it outlines the duties of the city administrator, now being performed by the mayor, it states "the board of mayor and aldermen may by ordinance require the city administrator to perform any or all of the following duties." The city may by ordinance outline the duties that the administrator, or mayor when he is performing the duties, shall perform. The board may by ordinance outline a procedure for board appointment of department directors. Most cities allow the mayor or administrator to appoint department directors with the concurrence of the board. Although MTAS does not recommend the board's appointment of department heads, we will prepare such an ordinance at the board's request.

The city charter does not authorize or provide for the use of administrative or executive committees to perform the executive function. An ordinance cannot be used to amend or override the charter provisions. An amendment to the present charter would be required. MTAS can provide such an amendment at the request of the board.

While the board under the present charter cannot operate under a committee system, it can serve as a committee of the whole board. Many cities in Tennessee have consolidated existing standing committees into a committee of the whole board. It works well where the board meets as a committee two weeks or ten days prior to the formal meeting of the board. The board committee reviews finance, public works, public safety, utility, recreation and other issues prior to the formal meeting. Its function is much more than a meeting to review what is to transpire at the next meeting. MTAS recommends that the board use this procedure on a six months trial basis and can provide an ordinance incorporating the procedure at your request.

While the charter can be amended to provide for standing executive or administrative committees, or advisory committees, MTAS does not recommend the use of such committees for the following reasons:

- a. Most department director positions require training and certification to a high level of technical competency. From an operating standpoint, it is counterproductive for a committee without such technical training to directly supervise the administration of an operating department.
- b. The use of administrative committees often delays routine administrative decisions until the next committee meeting. Department directors are often hesitant to make routing decisions without approval of the committee. Much efficiency is lost.
- c. The use of a chief executive is the most efficient system for the city. The board's reluctance to evaluate the chief executive and take appropriate action should not be the justification for establishing a committee system.
- d. Responsibility for administrative actions or inaction is not easily determined using a committee system. Department directors should be empowered to perform their duties and the executive and board should monitor their performance and hold them accountable.
- e. When using a committee system, board members often focus on issues at the department level instead of at the community level. Strategic planning, availability of city wide resources, economic and commercial development issues, the community vision and goals and objectives are often lacking.

The board should be commended for reviewing the Comprehensive Management Review and implementing those recommendations that are in the best interest of the city. Please let me know if I may be of assistance in preparing ordinances or a charter amendment as outlined above. I will be happy to meet with the board to discuss the use of the committee system in more detail.

Respectfully Yours

Ron Darden
Municipal Management Consultant

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