

## Local Governance in New Hampshire

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### *Comparing Selected Cities and Towns*

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report provides a general overview of the structures of local governance in New Hampshire cities and in New Hampshire towns with populations in the 10,000 to 20,000 range, and compares them to the city of Lebanon’s system of local governance.

**1. OVERVIEW**

<b>City</b>	<b>Council Members</b>	<b>City Manager</b>	<b>Committees/Boards/Commissions</b>	<b>Population</b>
Berlin	9	yes	12	10,331
Claremont	9	yes	21	13,151
Concord	14	yes	14	40,687
Dover	9	yes	26	28,775
Franklin	9	yes	10	8,405
Keene	15	yes	22	22,834
Laconia	7	yes	18	16,411
Manchester	15	yes	9	108,580
Nashua	16	yes	44	86,605
Portsmouth	9	yes	23	20,495
Rochester	9	yes	18	28,461
Somersworth	10	yes	16	11,860
Lebanon	9	yes	26	12,568
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>19.8</b>	

*Source: Official city websites*

In all New Hampshire cities, as opposed to 48.5 percent of cities in the United States, the local government is organized in a council/ceremonial mayor/administrative city manager.

Few differences exist between the government structure of Lebanon and that of other cities and other towns with comparable populations. Lebanon’s system of governance has more in common with the other cities than with the other towns. Regarding commissions, committees and boards, Lebanon has slightly more (24) than other cities in New Hampshire (average of 19.8) and more than most of a random sample of similar sized towns (average of 16.7). It might be worthwhile for Lebanon to further explore, or commission further research to explore, what other cities perceive the efficiency of their committee system to be. For example, many of the issues that are covered by an individual elected committee in cities with more committees are lumped under one, broader committee in another town and the subject of an appointed, temporary commission in yet another.

As stated previously, Lebanon’s local governance structure resembles those of other cities more than it does other towns with similar populations (between 10,000 and 20,000). Additionally, Lebanon’s number of committees is closer to the city average (19.8) than the town average (16.7).

<b>Town</b>	<b>Council Members</b>	<b>Town Manager</b>	<b>Committees/Boards</b>	<b>Population</b>
Amherst	5	yes	16	10,769
Bedford	7	Yes	9	21,146
Durham	9	yes	16	12,664
Exeter	5	Yes	29	17,632
Goffstown	5	yes	20	18,040
Hampton	5	yes	24	14,936
Hanover	5	Yes	27	11,064
Hooksett	9	yes	8	11,721
Milford	5	Yes	12	13,575
Pelham	5	Yes ("town administrator")	14	10,914
Raymond	5	yes	11	9,674
Windham	5	Yes ("town administrator")	14	13,137
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>5.83</b>		<b>16.7</b>	

Source: Official town websites.

## **2. CITIES**

In the United States, forty-nine percent of cities (with 2500+ residents) use the Council-Manager, 43.5 percent use a Mayor-Council system, 2 percent use just Commissions, 4.7 percent use a Town Meeting, and 0.9 percent use a Representative Town Meeting system.

Almost all of the cities in New Hampshire are run by a city council (and these four all have nine members). The mayor in these City Council/Manager models is often a member of the Council itself, and presides over Council meetings and serves as the ceremonial leader of the city. The Council generates the policies that will be pursued by the city for that year, while the City Manager (usually appointed by the Council by a 2/3 vote) actually enacts the policy. The City Manager oversees all administrative work, and he is in charge of all of the city’s departments.

## *2.1 Concord*

The city of Concord has a city charter that prescribes a Council-Manager system and a ceremonial Mayor. The city has ten wards, a fifteen-member City Council (one Mayor, ten Ward Councilors, and four Councilors-at-large). Councilors-at-large serve four-year terms, while Ward Councilors serve two-year terms. The Mayor is elected by the city for a two-year term, with the City Council choosing one its members to serve as Mayor Pro Tem. The Mayor is the “official head of the City” for all “ceremonial purposes” such as presiding over meetings and speaking and voting at meetings.

The “chief administrative officer” of the city is the City Manager. The City Manager is appointed by the City Council with an affirmative vote of at least eight members of the fifteen-member City Council. The City Manager is appointed for an indefinite term, with an annual evaluation of the City Manager’s performance conducted by the City Council each spring to determine, in public session, whether the Manager should be kept, replaced, and the appropriate compensation for the following year. Responsibilities of the City Manager include appointing a Board of “Assessors,” City Clerk, Treasurer, Tax Collector, and Police and Fire Chiefs, all of which must be confirmed by the City Council, submitting a budget with the help of a self-appointed Finance Director, and “preserving the public peace and health and safety of persons and property.” The City Manager oversees and appoints the following committees: Airport, Community Development, Conservation, Economic Development, Events Arena, Golf Course, Heritage, Housing Authority, Library Board, Parks & Recreation, Solid Waste Management, Transportation, and the Zoning Board.

The city has fourteen boards and committees, drawing their authority from one of several sources including the City Council, City Charter, Ordinance, or a specific City Department. Each board and committee is appointed by one of several offices including the Mayor, City Manager, and other commissions. The Police Chief, who oversees the City Police, reports to the City Manager.

## *2.2 Manchester*

The city of Manchester has a city charter that prescribes a Mayor-Council system, with the Mayor as the “Chief Executive Officer” of the City. The council for the city, the Board of Aldermen, consists of fourteen members (twelve Ward Aldermen and two At-large Aldermen), all serving two-year terms. The Board of Alderman functions of the legislative authority for Manchester, with full policy-making power, and is charged with appointing officers to fill the City Departments listed in the Charter (including the Police Department). Consequently, the Mayor is provided with a veto over the Board, the authority to submit a budget, the power to appoint the standing committees of the Board, and must submit a description to the Board that defines the functions and responsibilities of each existing City Department. Additionally, neither the Mayor nor the Board can implement ordinances that limit the powers of the other. Either the Board or Mayor may establish additional Board and Commissions “by ordinance” in order to “consult,

advise, and make policy recommendations” for both. Limitations for commission and board membership include party, ward, and geographical parity.

### *2.3 Berlin*

Berlin has a nine person city council, mayor, city manager. Committees they serve on include the Committee on Emergency Action, Hiring Freeze, Sewage appeals, Elections, Safety and Transportation, Accounts and Claims, Berlin Airport Authority.

### *2.4 Laconia*

In Laconia, the Mayor and City Council, with the assistance of the City Manager, are responsible for the administration of daily City business involving both the public and private sectors. The City Manager is responsible for the preparation and presentation of the annual City budget to the Council. The Manager’s office also receives and directs all correspondence for the Council and is responsible for the preparation of the agendas and related materials for all Council meetings. The City Manager, at the direction of the Mayor and City Council, oversees all City departments.

### *2.5 Dover*

The city of Dover has a city charter that prescribes a Mayor-Council system. The council consists of nine members, including a mayor and deputy mayor who are elected internally. All serve two year terms. They are responsible for appointing a City Manager, who takes care of daily town operation and selects townspeople to serve on committees and commissions. Dover has twenty-six such committees, including the: Energy Advisory Committee, Ethics Commission, Joint Building Committee, Joint Fiscal Committee, Labor Policy Committee, Library Board of Trustees, Master Plan Subcommittee, McConnell Center Advisory Board, McConnell Center Oversight Committee, North End Fire Station Building Committee, Open Lands Committee, Parking Facility Committee, Personnel Advisory Board, Planning Board, Planning Technical Review, Police Strategic Planning Committee, Recreation Advisory Board, School Board, Solid Waste Advisory Commission, Transportation Advisory Commission, Trustees of the Trust Fund, Waterfront Design Standards Subcommittee, Waterfront Development Advisory Committee, Waterfront Park Design Subcommittee, Willand Pond Ad Hoc Committee, Zoning Board of Adjustment.

### *2.6 Nashua*

Nashua’s city government is headed by a mayor and fifteen aldermen. The Board of Aldermen is the governing body of the City of Nashua and as such is the policy-making entity of the City, except where otherwise expressed in the City Charter. The Board of Aldermen consists of nine ward aldermen elected for a term of two years at every municipal election and six at-large aldermen elected for a term of four years, three of

which are elected at each municipal election. The city has forty-four committees and commissions.

### *2.7 Somersworth*

Nashua's city government is headed by a mayor and fifteen aldermen. The Board of Aldermen is the governing body of the City of Nashua and as such is the policy-making entity of the City, except where otherwise expressed in the City Charter. The Board of Aldermen consists of nine ward aldermen elected for a term of two years at every municipal election and six at-large aldermen elected for a term of four years, three of which are elected at each municipal election. The city has over thirty committees and commissions.

### *2.8 Claremont*

Claremont is governed by a City Council and City Manager (nine-member council, responsible for establishing City policies, procedures, and the budget). City manager appointed by the City Council, responsible for supervising and conducting the day to day operations and affairs of the City and carrying out the policies established by the City Council. Claremont's Boards, Committees, and Commissions include: Airport Advisory board, Board of Appeals/Code Review, Cable Advisory Board, Claremont Community Television, Inc., Claremont Housing Authority, Claremont Development Authority, Claremont Local Emergency Planning Commission, Claremont Planning Board, Claremont Police Commission, Claremont Representatives to the NH/VT Solid Waste District, Conservation Commission, Fiske Free Library Board of Trustees, Frances J. Tolles Home Trustees, Goodwin Community Center Commission, Historic District Commission, Parks and Recreation Committee, Personnel Advisory Board, Tax Increment Finance District Advisory board, Trustees of Trust Funds, Upper Valley – Lake Sunapee Council, Zoning Board of Adjustment. The city budget is \$15.7 million (2009), the city administration costs are just under \$500,000 for salary with a total of just under \$870,000. The police commission is composed of three members, with three-year terms, appointed by City Manager.

### *2.9 Lebanon*

Lebanon has a city council with nine members, the mayor and assistant mayor included, each serving two year terms with staggered elections. The Mayor is elected by the city council, presides at council meetings, and is head of the city for all ceremonial purposes. Make appointments of members of the Lebanon Housing Authority and the Zoning Board of Adjustment. city manager: all other administrative duties other than ones above; appointed for an indefinite term by the votes of two-thirds of the members of the council; chief executive and administrative officer of the city government; carries out the policies laid down by the city council; administers all affairs except the school department. City Departments: Airport, Assessors, City Manager, Clerks, Codes, Information Services, Finance, Fire Administration, Human Services, Human Resources, Library Lebanon,

West Lebanon Public Library, Planning, Police Administration, Police Dispatch, Public Works, Administration PW, Landfill (recycling) PW, Operations & Maintenance PW, Water Plant, Waste Water Plant, Water and Sewer Billing, Recreation, Tax Collector. Committees: Airport Advisory Committee, Library Board of Trustees, ADA Compliance Committee, Advance Transit Board of Directors, Board of Assessors, Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission, Lebanon Housing Authority, Public Safety, Recreation Commission, Energy Advisory Committee, Conservation Commission, Fountain Committee, Heritage Commission, Trustee of Trust Funds, Licensing Board, U.V. Sub-Committee of the Connecticut River Joint Commissions, Soldiers Memorial Building Advisory Board, Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee, Planning Board, Master Plan Steering Committee, Class VI Roads Advisory Committee, Zoning Board of Adjustment, Upper Valley Transportation Management Association, Westboro Yard Committee.

### *2.10 Franklin*

Franklin is governed by a City Council. The city is divided into three wards, each ward votes for three councilors for three-year terms, staggered elections. The Mayor's salary doesn't exceed 2,000, he or she serves two year terms, has veto power, and presides in the Council meetings but doesn't vote unless it's an even split. The day to day business of the town is handled by the city manager who is appointed by city council, who also deals with administrative affairs of city, carries out policies of the Council, and can appoint or remove all employees in the administrative service of the City. The manager's appointment has to be approved by majority of the Council.

### *2.11 Portsmouth*

Portsmouth is governed by a City Council with nine members, all of whom are elected at large for terms of two years. The candidate for City Council who receives the largest number of votes at any election becomes mayor. The City Manager is appointed by a 2/3 majority of the City Council to function as the Chief Executive and Administrative Officer of the City, responsible for the proper administration of all the departments of City government. Departments include Assessor's Office, City Clerk, City Council, City Manager, Community Development, Economic Development, Finance Department, Fire Department, Health Department, Human Resources, Inspection Department, Legal Department, Library, Mayor, Parking and Transportation, Planning Department, Police Department, Public Works, Purchasing, Recreation Department, School Department, Tax Collector, Zoning Enforcement. Portsmouth's budget is \$82.4 million for 2010.

### **3. TOWNS**

#### *3.1 Milford*

The town of Milford has a five-person Board of Selectman, including a Chairman and Vice-Chairman. The town also has a Town Administrator which is appointed by the Board of Selectman and oversees the executive administration of the Town Departments including the Police Department and Chief of Police. Other boards and commissions include the Planning Commission, Zoning Board, and the Conservation Commission.

#### *3.2 Bedford*

The town of Bedford has a Town Charter that prescribes a seven-member Town Council (each elected from the town at-large for a term of three years) and Town Manager, who is appointed by an affirmative vote from at least five members of the Town Council. The Town Council will select a Chairman and Vice-Chairman, and has all legislative policy-making authority except the adoption of the town budget, which is vested in the budgetary town meeting. The Town Manager acts as the Chief Administrative Officer, appointing town officers and assisting with town finances. The Town Council, however, with a five-member affirmative vote, can override the decision of the Town Manager.

#### *3.3 Goffstown*

Goffstown is governed by a five-member Board of Selectmen who are elected at large for three-year terms. The Selectmen set policy for the Town of Goffstown and designate oversight of daily town operations to the Town Administrator and Department Heads. During September/October of each year the Department Heads present their annual budgets to the Selectmen. During November the Selectmen finalize their budget and submit their budget to the Budget Committee. The Budget Committee reviews the budget, finalizes and presents their budget at public hearings during the month of January. There are two sessions for the Town Meeting -- the Ballot Determination Meeting also called the Deliberative Session is held in February and the Official Ballot Session is held in March. During the first session the legislative body, the registered voters of the town, meet to debate and determine the content of the Official Ballot. During the second session the voters elect candidates for offices, and vote on proposed zoning changes, budget, and special articles. Local elected positions include the Board of Selectmen, Town Moderator, Town Treasurer, Town Clerk, Budget Committee, Cemetery Trustees, Library Trustees, Planning Board, Sewer Commission, Supervisors of the Checklist, and Trustees of the Trust Funds. ZBA changed from appointed to elected by passage of a petitioned article at the 2005 Town Meeting. Following the second session, the Board of Selectmen reviews vacancies in appointed positions, solicits candidates to fill those vacancies, and appoints new members. Appointed positions include ADA Compliance Committee, Building Board of Appeals, Cable Television Community Access Committee, Computer Committee, Conservation Commission, Economic Development Council, Goffstown Common Oversight Committee, Highway

Safety Committee, Historic District Commission, Paper Roads Committee, Parks and Recreation Commission, and Solid Waste Commission.

### *3.5 Hanover*

Hanover is governed by a five-person Board of Selectmen. Members serve terms of three years, have the power to appoint Town Manager, and can sign orders on the Town treasurer in payment of the obligations of the Town. Hanover's boards and committees include advance transit board (appointed), advisory board of assessors (three-year term, nominated at town meeting by majority vote), affordable housing commission (appointed by the Board of Selectmen), Bike/Pedestrian Committee (appointed by Board of Selectmen), Board of Selectmen (three-year term, Ballot vote), Building Code Advisory Board (three-year term, appointed by BoS), Chamber of Commerce, Conservation Commission (three-year term, appointed by BoS), Etna library Board of Trustees (three-year term, ballot vote), Fence Viewers (one-year term, nominated at town meeting by majority vote), Hanover Finance Committee (three-year term, appointed by the Town Moderator and Hanover School District Moderator), Hanover Improvement Society, Hanover Water Works Company, Howe Library Corporation Board of Trustees (three-year term, elected by the Howe Library Corporation), Joigny, France- Sister city advisory committee, Nihonmatsu, Japan – friendship city advisory committee, Parking and Transportation Board (three-year, appointed by BoS), Parks and Recreation Board (three-year term, appointed by BoS), Planning Board (three-year term, appointed by BoS), Sustainable Hanover Committee (three-year term, appointed by BoS), Senior Citizen Advisory Committee (three-year term, appointed by BoS), Supervisors of Checklist (six year term, ballot vote), Surveyors of Wood and Timber (one-year term, nominated at town meeting by majority vote), Trustees of Trust Funds (three-year term, ballot vote), Upper Valley- Lake Sunapee Council Representatives, Upper Valley Transportation Advisory Committee, Zoning Board of Adjustment (three-year term, appointed by Board of Selectmen)

The Town Manager serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the Town, overseeing its day-to-day operations, managing all departments; reports directly to the Board of Selectmen; prepares all agenda items and policy recommendations for consideration by the Selectboard; insures that all Town operations respond to the needs of local citizens as effectively as possible. Citizens should contact this office with questions or comments for Selectboard members, or for information regarding Town Ordinances (laws), Outdoor Activities Permits, Raffle Permits, and copies of the Town Calendar and the Town Report. The Town Manager works closely with Human Resources (Town Employment) and Administrative Services (Town Finance, Accounting, Information Services, and Revenue Collection).

### *3.6 Windham*

Windham is governed by a five-member Board of Selectmen who appoints a town administrator responsible for the day to day operations of the Town, as well as preparation of budgetary matters and oversight of personnel issues. Windham's Boards

and Committees include the Board of Selectmen, Board of Adjustment, Cable Advisory, Cemetery Trustees, Conservation, Depot Advisory, Highway Safety, Historical, HDC/Heritage, Museum Trustees, Planning Board, Recreation, Strategic Planning, and Technical Advisory.

### *3.7 Exeter*

Exeter is governed by a five-member Board of Selectmen. Each member is elected for three-year terms on a staggered basis. Their boards include: Budget Recommendations Committee (includes Selectmen, Town Manager, Town Finance Director, and 12 citizens elected at Town meeting, one year term), Cable TV Advisory Committee (appointed), Conservation Commission (appointed, three-year terms), Council on Aging (appointed, three-year term), Exeter Arts Committee (appointed), Exeter Development Commission (appointed), Exeter Housing Authority (appointed, five year terms), Exeter River Study (half elected, some other department/board members), Heritage Commission (appointed), Historic District Commission (some appointed, some elected), Planning Board (appointed, three-year terms, some elected), Recreation Advisory Board (appointed, three-year terms), Rockingham Planning Commission (appointed, staggered three-year terms), Technology Advisory Committee (new this year), Zoning Board of Adjustment (appointed, three-year terms). They also have appointed boards without terms, with members serving as appointed: Affordable Housing Committee, Capital Improvement Committee, Christmas Parade Committee, Emergency Management Committee, Energy Efficiency Committee, Exeter Transportation Committee, Harbormaster, Health and Safety Committee, NH Dept of Environmental Service – Exeter River Local Advisory Committee, NH Estuaries Project Management Plan Study Commission, Open Space Committee, Town Building Advisory Committee, Train Committee. The Board of Selectmen appoints and oversees a Town Manager, who's responsible for the day to day administration of all town departments with the exception of the Public Library and Town Clerk. The manager also serves as the Tax Collector.

### *3.8 Pelham*

Pehlam is governed by a five-person Board of Selectmen who appoints a town administrator. Its departments include the Assessing Department, Board of Adjustment, Board of Selectmen, Budget Committee, Public Access TV, Cemetery Department, Conservation Commission, Fire Department, Health Department, Parks & Recreation, Planning Department, Planning Board, Police Department, Public Library, Senior Center, Town Clerk / Tax Clerk, Transfer Station, Trustees of the Trust Funds.