

**CITY OF TALLAHASSEE  
2024 CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**Issue No. 1  
Size of the Governing Body  
(City Charter, s. 9)**

Current Charter Language

*Sec. 9. - Creation; composition; election and terms.*

*There is hereby created a city commission to consist of five (5) electors of the city elected at large. Commissioners who shall be elected beginning with the year 1976 and subsequently for a full term, shall hold office for four (4) years, beginning on the day after election specified in Section 17 of the City Charter.*

*(Laws of Fla. ch. 26249(1949), § 1; Laws of Fla. ch. 27921(1951), § 1; Ord. No. 75-O-1476, § 1, 8-26-1975; Ord. No. 86-O-2642, § 1, 9-10-1986; Ord. No. 97-O-0054AA, § 1, 10-8-1997; Ord. No. 99-O-0063, § 2, 11-23-1999; Ord. No. 01-O-86AA, § 2, 1-23-2002; Ord. No. 04-O-25, § 1, 4-28-2004; Ord. No. 16-O-03AA, § 1, 2-24-2016)*

History of the City Council; The first 100 years:

While Tallahassee, as a town and the meeting place of the legislature, will celebrate its bicentennial during 2024, the municipal government was not formed until December 1825, a full year later, with the first city elections being held on January 2, 1826.

The inaugural form of government was a strong-mayor system in which the mayor led a board of alderman or city councilmen. The mayor and alderman were popularly elected to 1-year terms. The mayor functioned as the chief executive, chair of the city council, and was also the city judge and presided over cases of persons charged with violating municipal ordinances. The city council was supported by other municipal officers, such as the city clerk-treasurer, city tax collector, city tax assessor, and city marshal. While initially filled by the city council via appointment, these other municipal positions eventually became elected positions after the Civil War.

In the 1826 inaugural year, the City Council was a 7-person body (mayor + 6 councilmen). The next year, the body was expanded to a 9-person board (mayor + 8 councilmen). In the 1870s, the term length for councilmen was increased from 1-year to 2-year terms and, in this era, the mayor ceased to have a seat on the city council. The City Council remained a 9-person body until the form of government changed in late 1919, effective with the municipal elections of February 1920. The February 1920 municipal election replaced the former strong mayor/aldermanic form of government with the Commission-Manager form of government, and the size of the legislative body was reduced to a 3-person City Commission to replace the former City Council. At this same time, other municipal positions that were once elected – such as city clerk and city tax collector – ceased to be popularly elected offices and became positions filled by appointment by majority vote of the City Commission.

The next 100 years: The modern City Commission

The 3-person City Commission became effective with the February 1920 municipal election and remained until February 1950. In late 1949 a charter amendment was ratified by voters increasing the size of the legislative body to a 5-person board. Since the February 1950 municipal elections, the Tallahassee City Commission has remained a 5-person board. From 1920 until 1976, the term of office for city commissioners was a 3-year term. However, the seats were converted to 4-year terms in 1976, which is the present length of a full term. In the 1990s, conversations began regarding moving city elections from February standalone elections to holding city elections concurrent with state & federal elections. Since 2004, city elections have been held concurrent with state & federal elections, which has greatly increased voter turnout. Prior to the change, it was not uncommon to see voter turnout below 25% for standalone municipal elections.

Fiscal Considerations for Increase in Size of Governing Body

Should the size of the governing body be increased, there will be associated fiscal impacts both known and unknown. The committee should consider the cost of the salaries of any new commissioners, plus the costs of one FTE aide position per commissioner. Additionally, the city commission offices within city hall would likely need renovation or modification to outfit additional office spaces for both the new commissioners plus their aides. As to the city commission meeting chambers, the dais is currently designed to accommodate five elected officials and three appointed officials (the city manager, city attorney, and city treasurer-clerk). Increasing the size of the governing body may necessitate renovations to the meeting chambers.

Tallahassee population & town size history

Strong-Mayor Form of Government City Council era (1826-1919)				
Year	Square Miles	Population	% Increase (Population)	City Council Seats
Strong-Mayor Form of Government				
1826	0.25	200	-	8
1830	1	926	363%	9
1840	1	1,616	74.5%	9
1850	-	1,391	-13.9%	9
1860	-	1,932	38.9%	9
1870	-	2,023	4.7%	9
1880	-	2,494	23.3%	9
1890	-	2,934	17.6%	9
1900	-	2,981	1.6%	9
1910	-	5,018	68.3%	9

Table 1

Commission-Manager Form of Government (1920-present)				
Year	Square Miles	Population	% Increase (Population)	City Commission Seats
1920	-	5,637	12.3%	3
1930	4.72	10,700	89.8%	3
1940	-	16,240	51.8%	3
1950	6.30	27,237	67.7%	5
1960	14.48	48,174	76.9%	5
1970	18.90	71,897	50.8%	5
1980	28.18	81,548	12.3%	5
1990	62.22	124,773	53.0%	5
2000	98.18	150,624	20.7%	5
2010	103.06	181,376	20.4%	5
2020	104.48	196,171	8.2%	5
2021	104.50			5
2022	105.06	200,289		5
2023		201,731		5

Table 2

Other Large Florida Cities (cities w/ populations 120K – 460K)

City	County	Form of Gov't	Population (2022 est.)	No. Council Seats
Miami	Miami-Dade	Strong Mayor	459,224	5
Tampa	Hillsborough	Strong Mayor	401,512	7
Orlando	Orange	Strong Mayor	321,904	7*
St. Petersburg	Pinellas	Strong Mayor	264,220	8
Hialeah	Miami-Dade	Strong Mayor	228,206	7
Port St. Lucie	St. Lucie	Council-Manager	224,916	5
Cape Coral	Lee	Council-Manager	208,053	8
<b>Tallahassee</b>	<b>Leon</b>	<b>Council-Manager</b>	<b>200,289</b>	<b>5</b>
Fort Lauderdale	Broward	Council-Manager	189,019	5
Pembroke Pines	Broward	Council-Manager	171,309	5
Hollywood	Broward	Council-Manager	154,909	7
Gainesville	Alachua	Council-Manager	145,879	7
Miramar	Broward	Council-Manager	138,237	5
Coral Springs	Broward	Council-Manager	134,816	5
Palm Bay	Brevard	Council-Manager	126,748	5
Lakeland	Polk	Council-Manager	120,279	7

Table 3

Leon County population history: County Commission & School Board configurations

Year	County Population	No. County Commission Seats	No. School Board Seats	No. City Commission Seats
1900	19,887	5	3	9
1910	19,427	5	3	9
1920	18,059	5	3	3
1930	23,476	5	3	3
1940	31,646	5	3	3
1950	51,590	5	5	5
1960	74,225	5	5	5
1970	103,047	5	5	5
1980	148,655	5	5	5
1990	192,493	7	5	5
2000	239,452	7	5	5
2010	275,487	7	5	5
2020	292,198	7	5	5

Table 4

Table Footnotes:

Tables 1 & 2 – Modern population figures per <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/tallahassee-city-florida>. Ancient figures extracted from past federal census tables. Square milage extracted from certified city limits boundaries, other city records, or from newspaper clippings.

Table 3 – Population figures per the UF Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEER) 2022 population estimates - <https://bebr.ufl.edu/population/> & [https://www.bebr.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/estimates\\_2022.pdf](https://www.bebr.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/estimates_2022.pdf)

\*Orlando, while being a strong-mayor system, the mayor is also member of the city council whereas most strong mayors do not have a seat on the legislative body.

Table 4 – The Leon Co. School Board increased from 3 to 5 members effective with the 1948 elections. Two years later, in 1950, the City Commission increased from 3 to 5 members.

The county commission expanded in size from 5 to 7 members, effective with the 1986 elections, as a result of a 1983 federal lawsuit filed by the NAACP alleging violations of the federal Voting Rights Act.