

Forms of City Government in New Hampshire

Forms (both require charter under RSA 49-C)	Legislative body	Governing body	Comments	Examples
Mayor-alderman	Mayor and board of aldermen	Mayor and board of aldermen	Mayor is elected by voters and is chief administrative officer. There is no city manager.	Manchester, Nashua
Council-manager	Council	Council	Mayor is either elected by the voters or selected by the council from among its own members, as provided in the charter. Chief administrative officer is a city manager appointed by the council.	Berlin, Claremont, Concord, Dover, Franklin, Keene, Laconia, Lebanon, Portsmouth, Rochester, Somersworth

Forms of Town Government in New Hampshire

Form	Legislative body	Governing body	Comments	Examples
Non-charter forms				
Traditional/open town meeting	Town meeting	Board of selectmen		At last count, 146 towns have this form.
Town meeting with official ballot (SB 2)	Town meeting (by official ballot)	Board of selectmen		At last count, 67 towns have this form
Charter forms (see RSA 49-D)				
Town council	Town council	Town council	Charter may reserve authority to the voters to approve bond issues and amend zoning ordinance.	Derry, Durham
Official ballot town council	Town council <u>and</u> official ballot town meeting (shared)	Town council	Charter provides for voting on some or all legislative matters at town meeting by official ballot. All other matters are left to the council.	Hooksett, Londonderry, Merrimack, Newmarket
Budgetary town meeting	Town council; open town meeting for budget only	Town council	Town meeting's only authority is to vote on operating budget. All other authority is vested in the council.	Bedford
Official ballot town meeting	Town meeting	Board of selectmen*	Charter provides for voting on some or all warrant articles by official ballot. Open town meeting votes on all other legislative matters.	Peterborough
Representative town meeting	Representative town meeting	Board of selectmen**	Same as open town meeting, except that individuals are elected to participate in town meeting.	None

* Confusingly, RSA 49-D:2 suggests that every charter form of town government must have a town council. However, context suggests otherwise. The official ballot town meeting form, which was added to the statute subsequent to the enactment of 49-D:2, gives all legislative authority to the town meeting, leaving the governing body with no more authority than a traditional board of selectmen. In addition, RSA 49-B:3, VI, provides that a charter commission may be established “for the sole purpose of establishing official ballot voting *under the current form of government.*” If a traditional town meeting town goes this route, its “current form of government” would include a board of selectmen. Finally, two towns (Salem and Peterborough) have adopted an official ballot town meeting charter with a board of selectmen, although Salem subsequently rescinded its charter.

** Again, RSA 49-D:2 seems to require a council, but the section on representative town meeting expressly mentions a board of selectmen.