



Agenda Item: 15.E
Date of Meeting: August 24, 2026
Department: Legal

STAFF REPORT

To: City Council
From: Dean Pucci
Subject: **Discussion and Direction Regarding changing to City Manager Form of Government**
Prepared On: August 17, 2026

Background/History:

The City of Bishop is a general-law city with five councilmembers who directly appoint several city employees and officers, including a City Administrator. [Government Code Section 36505; City Council Standards and Procedures Manual.] This form of government is called Council-Administrator.

Typically the municipal code of a Council-Administrator city will create and establish powers and duties of City department heads such as the City Administrator, Director of Finance, Chief of Police, and Fire Chief. Title 2 of the Bishop Code of Ordinances, Administration and Personnel, does not create the position of City Administrator, although it establishes some authority and duties for the position. [See, for example, Bishop Code of Ordinances Section 2.48.010.]

This Council-Administrator governmental structure is becoming unusual in California. [Biggs, "Creating Effective Government: A High Wire Act," 2002 League of California Cities Annual Conference.] Most cities have now adopted a Council-Manager form of government. [Id.] Under a Council-Manager structure, the Council would appoint a City Manager in place of a City Administrator, within sixty days after the effective date of an ordinance adopting this form of government. The City Manager would be authorized to appoint and dismiss the police chief, the City Clerk, and most other subordinate officers and employees other than the City Attorney. [Government Code §34856.] The City Treasurer would remain an elective position.

In 2019 the Council considered an ordinance to transition to a Council-Manager form of government, but did not adopt the ordinance.

Analysis/Discussion:

1. Advantages of Council-Manager Form of Government. City Councils provide political leadership and set policies for cities. They set priorities for cities based on community needs and values. Councilmembers are also the human connection between the community and City staff. As cities grow and become more complicated, Councilmembers need a single point of contact at their city to make this connection.

City Managers serve as this single point of contact. They are directly responsible for carrying out Council policies. They channel communications between the Council and other City departments. City Managers can also meet with individual Councilmembers to provide and receive information. In doing so, they efficiently coordinate delivery of consistent information from all City departments. They assure that Councilmembers can communicate clearly with constituents, respond to questions with accurate information, and maintain transparency about City operations.

As appointed employees, City Managers are responsible to the Council instead of an electorate. They are also professionals with formal training in public administration, budgeting, planning, and organizational leadership. Consequently, their focus is on bringing nonpartisan expertise to the City. Managers can assure that cities are run professionally, effectively and transparently on a day-to-day basis. They bring these standards to City budget preparation, service delivery, and the process of appointing, supervising, disciplining, and dismissing subordinate officers.

Unlike the Council-Administrator form of government, the Council-Manager form has clearly defined, separate roles for Manager and Council. This allows elected leaders and the Manager to form a strong partnership to run the City. The result is a healthier, more effective local government with consistent communication, aligned priorities, better service delivery, and greater public trust.

2. Process to Transition to Council-Manager Form of Government.

The following steps are needed to transition to a Council-Manager form of government in Bishop:

1. Adopt an ordinance establishing the Council-Manager form of government. The ordinance must define the powers and duties of the City Manager and may fix the Manager's compensation or a minimum amount to be received. [Government Code §34852.]
2. Within sixty days after the effective date of the ordinance, appoint the City Manager. [Government Code §34855.]
3. Review the Bishop Code of Ordinances and City Council policies; adopt appropriate amendments.
4. Other steps as revealed by meeting with City Administrator and Personnel Director.

Impacts to Council Goals and Strategic Planning Priorities:

Budget Impacts:

This item is not included in the 2026-2027 budget. If the Council directs that this item move forward, the City would incur costs to prepare appropriate legal documents. The City would also incur costs to appoint and pay a City Manager. If needed, a budget amendment would be brought to the Council to address these costs.

Legal Review:

Attorney Pucci drafted and is presenting this matter.

Recommended Action:

Consider and provide direction to the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance and initiate the transition to a Council-Manager form of government for Bishop.

Approved By: Pam Foster 8/17/2026

Approved By:

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