

PIA Committee

From: Mark Hyde <hydem001@hawaii.rr.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 23, 2016 9:16 AM
To: PIA Committee
Subject: Maui News: Put County Manager on the Ballot
Attachments: EDITORIALS - Maui News June-2015 + 2016.pdf

TODAY'S EDITORIAL

Let citizens have a say

Just about one year ago we suggested in an editorial that it might well be time to change from the current strong mayor-council form of government to a professional manager-council format.

We reasoned that with the population of the county roaring past the 160,000 mark and budgets zooming inexorably upward, a professional, nonpartisan manager might be the best bet for day-to-day administration of county services.

We cited the International City/County Management Association in defining the structure:

"(It) combines the strong political leadership of elected officials with the strong managerial experience of an appointed manager or administrator. All power and authority to set policy rests with an elected governing body, which includes a mayor or chairperson and members of the council, commission, or board.

"The governing body in turn hires a nonpartisan manager who has very broad authority to run the organization."

A committee was set up by the County Council to study the issue of governance. A majority of that committee has recommended that an amendment to the County Charter to change to a manager-council form be put on the ballot this November.

While we are not completely happy with the form of council-manager government the committee is recommending, we would strongly urge the council to let the people vote on the issue.

There are over four months left before the general election. Let the two sides of the issue debate the pros and cons of a change. We will all emerge from a vigorous debate wiser.

Put the amendment on the ballot.

■ Editorials reflect the opinion of the publisher.

and a year ago

B8 — Sunday, June 28, 2015 — THE MAUI NEWS

opinion

TODAY'S EDITORIAL

Is county's structure right?

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Maui County's population in 2014 was an estimated 163,019.

That was up some 8,184 (or 5.3 percent) from 2010's official census total of 154,835. If our current rate of growth continues, our population will reach 175,295 by the end of the decade — a rise of 13.2 percent.

Maui is evolving from a small town, rural community into the equivalent of a fairly good-sized city. Our county government's annual budget will reach \$621 million in 2016, which begs a fundamental question:

Is Maui County's governmental structure set up to manage the demands of a quickly growing community?

We realize a strong mayor/county council is the form of government throughout Hawaii. Frankly, though, Hawaii is the only place we know of in the United States where a mayor heads up a county government. Generally, mayors oversee municipalities and, even there, the concept of a strong mayor or being the chief administrator seems to be waning.

Instead, there is more prevalence today of the council-manager structure where a political body (council, board, etc.) oversees a professional administrator.

The International City/County Management Association is quoted in about jobs.com defining the council/manager structure:

"(It) combines the strong political leadership of elected officials with the strong managerial experience of an appointed manager or administrator. All power and authority to set policy rests with an elected governing body, which includes a mayor or chairperson and members of the council, commission, or board.

"The governing body in turn hires a nonpartisan manager who has very broad authority to run the organization."

As the county grows and its budget approaches two-thirds of a billion dollars, we should consider if hiring a professional manager is in Maui's best interest. It can easily be argued that the skill set needed to be a successful politician is not necessarily the same set needed to be a good administrator.

It can also be argued that going to the council-manager model will take the politics out of administering county business. It is not a criticism of either council members or the mayor to suggest studying another governmental structure.

Such a move would require a change in the County Charter. The earliest that could happen would be the 2016 election. The earliest a change in structure could be implemented would be the end of our incumbent mayor's term in 2018.

As we march inexorably toward billion-dollar county budgets, we should study carefully to see if the time is coming for a professional administrator.

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Shouldn't Maui residents have the opportunity to decide on an improved structure to manage Maui County's increasingly complex county government?