

Proposal No. 2 – County Manager: Changing Administration of the County to a County Manager, Changing Mayor to Ceremonial Head, Non-Voting Chair of Council

Rationale. County Manager allows a professional administrator to run the county and ensures that a professional, well-qualified individual, that is politically impartial, carries out the management of the county; the Mayor would become the ceremonial head of the county and preside over the Council as its non-voting chair.

This proposal was considered by the First Charter Commission in 1964, however, it was decided that, although the trend at that time was a manager-council type of government for smaller county governments across the country and was widely popular with voters, having an elected mayor as chief executive officer was preferable to commissioners. Advocates for a city manager type government included the Women Voters of Maui (Minutes of August 1, 1963), Chairman and Executive Officer Eddie Tam (Minutes of October 3, 1963) and the Maui Citizen's Association for Good Government (Minutes of November 14, 1963). After voters rejected the proposed charter from the First Charter Commission, Chairman and Executive Officer Eddie Tam, during the Second Charter Commission changed his position regarding the manager form of government because “we are not ready for a city manager form of government.” (Minutes of April 14, 1966). Commissioner Keith Tester summarized the popular opinion of the city manager form of government: “We discussed the city manager type of government at former charter meetings. One big objection to the city manager type for the community with small population as Maui has, is that there is no large pool of people to draw from. In all probability will import one. In general it was felt that the administration should be left in the hands of this county; qualified people for city manager were hard to get from Maui where the population is relatively small.”

In 1975, the Third Charter Commission reviewed the idea of a “city manager” type executive

again. Mayor Elmer Cravalho, mayor in 1976, supported the concept because he believed that the efficient administration of the county government was best done one removed from the political process stating “the adoption of the City Manager form of government would ensure high quality talent for the chief executive position within the County as well as removing the position from undue political influence.” (Minutes of May 12, 1975) However, Hannibal Tavares, successor to Mayor Cravalho opposed the city manager position and supported maintaining the elected chief executive feature of county government. (Minutes of May 5, 1975).

In 1991, the Fifth Charter Commission again reviewed the idea of the city manager form of government and Mayor Linda Lingle, mayor in 1991, opposed the idea feeling “that to go to a City Manager form of government would be a step backwards for Maui.” She felt “the public needs to have a person to hold responsible and accountable and that this is possible with an elected mayor.” (Minutes of November 21, 1991)