

- [How are Council seats filled?](#)
- [Who are the City Council members?](#)
- [What is the role and purpose of City Council in the Home Rule form of government?](#)
- [How can I contact/communicate with my council person?](#)
- [What are the districts?](#)
- [How do I find out which district I live in?](#)
- [Who is the City Clerk and what is her function?](#)
- [What are the various council meetings? Where and when are they held?](#)
- [How do I obtain Council agendas and minutes](#)
- [How can I obtain a copy of an Ordinance or Resolution?](#)
- [Can I address Council at their meetings?](#)
- [Besides attending a City Council meeting, are there other ways for citizens to watch the meetings?](#)
- [Where can I find information about the City's Boards, Authorities and Commissions?](#)
- [How can I apply to be on the City's Boards, Authorities and Commissions?](#)
- [What is the Code of Ethics? How can I obtain a copy of the Code of Ethics?](#)
- [How can I make a complaint to the Board of Ethics?](#)
- [What is the Home Rule Charter? How can I obtain a copy of the Charter?](#)
- [What is the Charter Board? How can I make a complaint to the Charter Board?](#)
- [What is the difference between Commission Government and Home Rule Government?](#)
- [What records are stored in the City Clerk's Office?](#)
- [What records are considered "public" by Pennsylvania's Right to Know Act?](#)
- [How do I file a Right to Know Request?](#)
- [What is Citizen Initiative and Referendum?](#)
- [Can the Council Office help me with a complaint about City Services?](#)
- [Campaign Finance Reporting Regulations](#)
- [Where do I vote?](#)

How are Council seats filled?

The Home Rule Charter divides the City into six Council districts with a representative elected from each district. Council members are elected by voters and serve four year terms. The Council President is elected City-wide.

Three members of Council are elected every two years. The Council President is elected during the local election alternate from the Mayoral election.

Who are the City Council members?

The 2012-2014 Council is composed of the following:

- President of Council Jeffrey S. Waltman
- City Council District 1 Christopher Daubert
- City Council District 2 Marcia Goodman-Hinnershitz
- City Council District 3 Brian Twyman

- City Council District 4 Stratton P. Marmarou
- City Council District 5 Donna Reed
- City Council District 6 John Slifko

What is the role and purpose of City Council in the Home Rule form of government?

All powers not specifically given to others by the Home Rule Charter are exercised by City Council. City Council acts as the legislative branch of City government.

How can I contact/communicate with my council person?

You can contact any member of Council through the Council Office via:

- Phone 610 655 6204 or E-mail council@readingpa.gov[1]
- Post Office Mail 815 Washington Street, Reading PA 19601
- Voicing concern to the Council staff office, located on the second floor in City Hall

You can also speak with City Council by calling in to the In Your District program, airing at 8 p.m. every Thursday on the BCTV MAC Channel 99.

What are the districts?

Under the Home Rule Charter, the City of Reading is divided into six districts, with each district electing one Council member. District-elected Council members are to represent the voice of their constituents and are to act as a body to make decisions in the best interest of the entire City. Boundaries mapping out the six districts of the City can be found on the [City website](#) [2]. The President of Council is elected at-large. The President of Council is the presiding officer of Council and has the same voting powers as the other six Council members. The President interacts with the Mayor and other governmental entities and represents the voice of Council.

How do I find out which district I live in?

You can determine which Council district you live in by clicking on the [Council Districts Map link](#) [2] on the Council page of the City's website or by calling Council staff at 610-655-6204.

Who is the City Clerk and what is her function?

Linda A. Kelleher is the City Clerk for the City of Reading and has been serving City Council since she was first appointed in January 1996. The City Clerk acts as the Secretary to the Council, or Secretary to the Board of Directors. The City Clerk is the Director of the Legislative Branch, responsible for managing the operations of City Council by providing leadership and administrative support, implementing Council policies and providing quality services to the people of Reading. The City Clerk maintains accurate legislative records and performs other services to the body of Council such as public relations, drafting and reviewing ordinances, legal research and acting as a liaison with the City Administration and other entities. The City Clerk assists Council in areas such as setting agendas, developing a Council Action Plan and coordinating appointments for the City's Boards, Authorities and Commissions.

What are the various council meetings? Where and when are they held?

Council meetings are held on Monday evenings. The meeting schedule is listed at the bottom of each regular meeting agenda.

- First Monday 5 p.m. - Nominations and Appointments Committee and Strategic Planning Committee? Council Office
- Second Monday 5 p.m. ? Committee of the Whole ? Council Office
- Second Monday 7 p.m. ? Regular Council Meeting ? Council Chambers
- Third Monday 5 p.m. - Nominations and Appointments Committee (if needed), Finance, Audit, and Budget Committee, and Standards of Living Committee ? Council Office
- Fourth Monday 5 p.m. - Committee of the Whole ? Council Office
- Fourth Monday 7 p.m. - Regular Council Meeting - Council Chambers

Additional meetings are added and advertised as needed through newsprint or City website announcement (readingpa.gov).

How do I obtain Council agendas and minutes?

Council agendas are posted on the City's website ? www.readingpa.gov [3] ? by the Thursday preceding the meeting on the Council page. Meeting minutes are posted on the website several days after the meeting. You can also request them by calling 610-655-6204 or emailing council@readingpa.org [4].

How can I obtain a copy of an Ordinance or Resolution?

Our City laws are located at the [Code of Ordinances link](#) [5] on our web site. If you cannot print the law you are interested in, please call the Council Office at 610 655 6204 to request a copy or for assistance. The online Code of Ordinances is updated electronically with the passage of legislation.

Legislation from 2009 - present, both ordinances and resolutions, is available on the City's website by clicking ?[New Ordinances and Resolutions](#) [6]? in the ?Open Government? box along the left side of the home page..

Can I address Council at their meetings?

You can address the body of Council at their Regular Business Meetings held on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month and at Public Hearings held to address specific topics. Council does not allow public comment at Committee Meetings, Committee of the Whole Sessions.

Citizens wishing to address the Council at its regular meetings may do so by giving notice verbally or in writing by providing their name, address and the subject matter to be discussed to the City Clerk before 5 PM the day of the meeting. Citizens can register by calling 610-655-6204 or by entering their information in this [form](#) [7]. Citizens may also register by printing their information on the form provided on the speaker podium in Council Chambers after 5 pm and before the start of the meeting.

Citizens speaking on agenda issues may speak for up to five minutes at the beginning of the meeting. Those speaking on general matters may speak for up to three minutes after the Council action on the legislative matter is complete. When the City Clerk signals that your time is complete, we ask that you quickly conclude your remarks and be seated.

Besides attending a City Council meeting, are there other ways for citizens to watch the meetings?

Citizens who are interested in matters before Council but who cannot attend meetings in person have two other options. Meetings are televised live on the MAC Channel (Comcast channel 99) and through the City's website. Simply scroll to the bottom of the home page and click [?Live and Archive Meeting Videos \[8\]?](#).

Where can I find information about the City's Boards, Authorities and Commissions?

For information on the City's Boards, Authorities and Commissions click on the [?Authorities \[9\]](#) or [Boards & Commissions \[10\]?](#) menu item on the website main menu or by contacting the Council Office at 610 655 6204 or via e-mail, council@readingpa.gov [1].

How can I apply to be on the City's Boards, Authorities and Commissions?

If you would like to serve on one of the City's Boards, Authorities and Commissions [click here \[11\]](#), print an application, fill it out and mail it to the Council Office ? 815 Washington Street, Reading PA 19601. If you cannot print a copy, call the Council Office at 610 655 6204 to request one and the Council staff will be happy to assist you.

What is the Code of Ethics? How can I obtain a copy of the Code of Ethics?

The proper operation of democratic government requires that public officials and employees be independent, impartial and responsible to the people; that government decisions and policy be made in the proper channels of governmental structure; that public office is not to be used for personal gain; and that the public have confidence in the integrity of its government.

In recognition of these goals, there is an established Code of Ethics to be administered by the [Board of Ethics \[12\]](#). The purpose of this Code is to establish ethical standards of conduct for all officials and employees of the City of Reading, its agencies and authorities, whether elected or appointed, paid or unpaid, by providing guidelines to clarify actions or inactions which are incompatible with the best interests of the City and by directing disclosure of private, financial or other interests in matters affecting the City.

The provisions and purpose of this Code and such rules, regulations, opinions and disciplinary decisions as may be promulgated by the Board Pursuant hereto, and under provisions of Article XII of the Charter, are hereby declared to be in the best interest of the City.

[The Code of Ethics is located on the City website \[13\]](#). If you would like a bound copy, please contact the Council Office by calling 610 655 6204 or via e-mail, council@readingpa.org [4].

How can I make a complaint to the Board of Ethics?

Any person may file a complaint about alleged ethics violations of the Reading Code of Ethics or the City Charter. A complaint form may be requested through the Board of Ethics liaison, Michelle Katzenmoyer, by calling 610 655 6205, upon request from the Council staff office, or by [clicking here \[14\]](#). In addition, the Board may initiate proceedings by its own action.

A person signing a complaint shall:

- Reasonably believe in the existence of facts upon which the claim is based.
- Reasonably believe that the complaint may be valid under the ethics provisions of the Code of Ethics and the City Charter.No official or employee may be penalized for a good faith filing of a complaint

with the Ethics Board, or providing information or testifying in any Board proceeding. An employee may not be discharged, suffer change in his/her official rank, grade or compensation, be denied a promotion or be threatened as a result of any of the above.

All Board proceedings and records relating to an investigation are confidential until a final determination is made by the Board, except as may be required by due process. The final order is a public record. All other file material must remain confidential. The Board, however, may release the identity of a complainant if it has determined that there has been a wrongful use of the Code of Ethics.

What is the Home Rule Charter? How can I obtain a copy of the Charter?

The Home Rule Charter acts as the "Constitution" for the City of Reading. It sets the operational rules for our government. The City Administrative Code, found in the Codified Ordinances, is used to further define Charter provisions. Copies of the Home Rule Charter may be acquired through publication provision of the City Council staff office and it is also [available on our website](#) [15].

What is the Charter Board? How can I make a complaint to the Charter Board?

[The Charter Board](#) [16], created under the 1st Amendment to the Home Rule Charter, hears and decides all complaints alleging violations of the Charter and Administrative Code. This Board is also responsible for providing orientation for all elected officials.

Charter complaint forms can be obtained on [the City's web site](#) [17], by phone or e-mailing the Council Office at 610 655 6204 or council@readingpa.org [4].

A person signing a complaint shall:

- Reasonably believe in the existence of facts upon which the claim is based.
- Reasonably believe that the complaint may be valid under the City Charter and/or Administrative Code. No official or employee may be penalized for a good faith filing of a complaint with the Charter Board, or providing information or testifying in any Board proceeding. An employee may not be discharged, suffer change in his/her official rank, grade or compensation, be denied a promotion or be threatened as a result of any of the above.

All Board proceedings and records relating to an investigation are confidential until a final determination is made by the Board, except as may be required by due process. The final order is a public record. All other file material must remain confidential. The Board, however, may release the identity of a complainant if it has determined that there has been a violation of the Charter and/or Administrative Code.

What is the difference between Commission Government and Home Rule Government?

The State provides for three forms of government in Pennsylvania:

- Commission ? established under the Third Class City Code
- Optional Third Class Charter Law ? established under the Third Class City Code in 1957
- Home Rule Charter Optional ? established by the State General Assembly in 1972, apart from the Third Class City Code

The Commission Form of government has a Mayor and City Councilors all elected at-large. The Mayor presides over Council meetings but has no additional power. All these elected officials perform executive duties and direct the city departments. Under the Commission form there is no single or administrative

officer to oversee the operations of the City.

Home Rule Charter Optional provided for 2 structures:

- Strong Mayor / Part-time Council
- Council / Manager

Reading voters approved the Home Rule Charter Optional form of government with a Strong Mayor / Part-time Council in the November 1993 General Election. The executive, administrative and law enforcement powers of the City are vested in the Mayor. The Mayor shall control and be accountable for the executive branch of City government.

City Council is the legislative body having all powers of the City not otherwise provided for in this Charter, exercised in a manner to be determined by Council. Council shall provide for the exercise and performance of any such other powers and duties in a manner consistent with the terms of the Charter. All powers of the City shall be exercised as provided by the Charter, or if the Charter makes no provision, as provided by ordinances or resolutions of the City Council.

The Charter defines the City's Departments and sets out requirements for professional department directors, who report to the City's Managing Director, appointed by the Mayor and approved by Council.

What records are stored in the City Clerk's Office?

The City Clerk's Office houses a variety of current and old city records.

[The City of Reading Code of Ordinances \[18\]](#) has many features in addition to the current city laws. This book provides references to applicable state and federal legislation. The Code of Ordinances also includes a key that provides the disposition of all city streets, improvements, vacations, etc. The key can also provide the researcher with the history and disposition of city ordinances. The Code of Ordinances have been available [on-line \[19\]](#) since 1999, with updates done annually. The Code of Ordinances can also be found in the Main Branch of the Reading Public Library and the Berks County Law Library.

The office also holds the Journals of Council that include the ordinances and resolutions adopted dating back to 1854. Other old records include departmental reports, solicitor's opinions, Board of Health records, tax assessment records, Water Bureau reports, etc. Unfortunately, record retention and archiving diminished between the 1960's and 1995. In 1996 staff in the City Council/City Clerk's Office restored the practice of records retention and archiving, and the staff is currently working to digitize current and old city records so they are more accessible to the public.

What records are considered ?public? by Pennsylvania's Right to Know Act?

These are public records that must be disclosed under Pennsylvania's Right to Know Act:

- Accounts, vouchers or contracts dealing with the receipt or disbursement of funds or the acquisition, use or disposal of services or supplies, materials, equipment or other property (includes canceled checks and cell phone bills paid by the county)
- Minutes, orders or decisions by an agency fixing the personal or property rights, privileges, immunities, duties or obligations of any person or group of persons
- Reports, communications or other papers pertaining to safety and health in industrial plants
- Records of a conviction for a criminal act In addition, Pennsylvania courts have ruled that the following records are subject to inspection and copying under the Right to Know Act:
- Code of Ethics and manuals fixing duties and obligations regarding the treatment of state inmates
- Penn DOT contract to perform emissions inspection

- Department of Welfare: Nursing home settlement and appeal activity reports ? Real estate appraisals performed in connection with a city's effort to acquire property (held to fix personal or property rights of the owners of the property affected)
- A report prepared by a hospital accreditation commission for welfare department
- A township's and municipality's canceled checks
- Arrest warrant affidavits, unless court order says otherwise
- Examination papers and scores of applicants for civil service jobs
- Records of retired state employees
- Attendance record cards of professional employees of school districts
- The building record portion of property records (containing construction specifications) maintained by county boards for the assessment and revision of taxes
- Accident reports and certain studies conducted by the Commonwealth concerning the accidents
- Completed reports prepared by the Department of Labor and Industry on safety and health in industrial plants
- The review and refund docket of the Board of Finance and Revenue
- The list of names and addresses of kindergarten children in a school district
- Police payroll records
- Lists of people taking CPA exams
- Addresses to which a school district forwarded the scholastic records of former pupils
- Lists of delinquent taxpayers
- Subscriber lists for magazines published by the Commonwealth
- Crime, death and accident reports filed with the police department
- Names and addresses of public high school graduating classes
- Evaluations of state psychiatric institutions compiled by a commission which prescribes standards for hospitals participating in certain federally funded programs
- Statistical data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education on the racial and ethnic composition, by school district, of programs for exceptional children
- Settlement agreement in police brutality lawsuit
- A list of unclaimed checks held by the state Treasury Department
- Escheat records of abandoned and unclaimed property held by the Department of Revenue
- Hearing transcripts of testimony and evidence from an electric utility base rate case before the PUC

Although individual agencies still may agree to release the following information, Pennsylvania courts have ruled that these records are NOT subject to inspection or copying under the Right to Know Act:

- A Pennsylvania Insurance Department investigative file on a licensee
- Psychological, staffing and job evaluations made to complete a state prisoner's suit against Department of Corrections officials in regards to parole consideration
- Criminal pre-sentence reports and related psychiatric and psychological reports
- Notice of compensation records from Bureau of Workers Compensation
- Correspondence and memoranda by Department of General Services concerning request for proposals to lease office space to government agency
- Information relating to assignment of assistant district attorneys to specific cases
- The contents of a contractual settlement between a school board and a teacher
- Field investigation notes taken by city planning department staff to report to a city council member
- Departmental budget reports required by the budget secretary (held to be a statement of facts and events, not an "account" consisting of debits and credits)
- Names, addresses and amounts received by welfare recipients
- Contents of a teacher's personnel file maintained by the school district
- Financial disclosure statements voluntarily submitted in response to executive orders requesting such statements from members of the governor's cabinet and members of certain agencies
- Financial information regarding the operation of state-related universities
- Physical fitness reports and promotional evaluation reports of police departments

- The name of a person who accused a police officer of receiving stolen property as well as the police department's files on the investigation of the complaint
- "Raw data" compiled by the Pennsylvania Department of Health for a study on the connection between the Three Mile Island accident and birth defects
- Information from tax returns filed with a municipality and results of tax audits
- Plans for special education programs submitted to, but not acted on, by the Pennsylvania Department of Education
- Request for the statements and notes of testimony of alleged co-defendants, as well as requests for all relevant newspaper clippings and articles dealing with a criminal case
- Job applications that were not reviewed
- Police investigative reports
- Audio tape recordings of 911 telephone calls
- Urinalysis reports from halfway houses
- Legal opinions from solicitors and attorneys that are not essential components of agency decisions ?
Inmates' medical and mental health records

How do I file a Right to Know Request?

Right to Know request forms are available at City Hall at the Law Department. [The City's Right to Know policy](#) [20] is available on the City's website in the "Open Government" box on the left of the home page. There is also [a link to the form](#) [21] on the Law Department page.

The form must be completed and returned to the City's Law Department, 815 Washington St, Reading, PA 19601. Please call 610-655-6208 with additional questions.

What is Citizen Initiative and Referendum?

Citizen Initiative and Referendum are two ways that citizens not holding political office may present legislation for the City. The two opportunities are as follows:

Initiative: The qualified voters of the City shall have the power to propose ordinances to the Council. If the Council fails to adopt such an ordinance, the initiative process would place the proposed ordinance before the voters as a referendum at an election, providing the City voters with the opportunity to adopt or reject the ordinance at a City election.

Referendum: The qualified voters of the City shall have the power to require reconsideration by the Council of any adopted ordinance. If the Council fails to repeal an ordinance so reconsidered, the Referendum process may be commenced giving the qualified voters of the City the opportunity to approve or reject said ordinance at a City election.

For more detail, please contact the Council Office by calling 610 655 6204 or e-mail to council@readingpa.org [4].

Can the Council Office help me with a complaint about City Services?

The Council Office can take a concern or complaint about City Services, and work with the appropriate City department(s) to efficiently rectify the problem. In addition, Council members note problematic trends in order to improve upon or implement any additional services that benefit the City. If you have a concern that the City Clerk or City Council can assist with, contact the Council staff office at 610 655 6204, via e-mail council@readingpa.gov [1] or by writing to 815 Washington Street Reading, PA 19601.

Campaign Finance Reporting Regulations

In 2013, City Council enacted new campaign finance reporting regulations as recommended by the City Board of Ethics. A summary of the requirements are:

Campaign Limits

The Code of Ethics sets limits for campaign contributions for both election years and non-election years as follows:

- Election year:
 - Maximum contribution by individuals - \$2,600
 - Maximum contribution by organizations - \$10,000
 - Maximum contribution by campaign committees - \$10,000
- Non-Election year:
 - Mayor ? contributions may not exceed \$250,000 per year
 - Auditor ? contributions may not exceed \$100,000 per year
 - City Council (including Council President) ? contributions may not exceed \$100,000 per year
- Post Election
 - Maximum contribution by individuals - \$2,600
 - Maximum contribution by organizations - \$10,600

Pre-Candidacy contributions may not be used to influence the outcome of an election, on transition or inauguration expenses, or to retire debt incurred on a completed election.

These limits do not include volunteer labor.

Financial Disclosure

Candidates may have only one political committee and one checking account. Other funds may not be used to influence an election or to retire debt incurred.

Candidates must notify the City of Reading Board of Ethics when a political committee is formed and must submit the following information to the Board of Ethics:

- Name of the Committee
- Mailing Address
- Bank Name
- Bank Information
- Committee Treasurer Name
- Any other information as required by the Board of Ethics

Candidates must file a Financial Interest Statement and provide a copy to the Board of Ethics.

Candidates must submit a copy of their State report of receipts and expenditures to the office of the City Clerk along with a written statement signed by the filer swearing that the information is true and correct.

Publication

These provisions will be published every six months and will be available on the City of Reading website ? www.readingpa.gov on the [Board of Ethics page](#) [22]

? at all times.

Where do I vote?

Please call the Berks County Election Services offices at 610-478-6490 or visit their website at www.co.berks.pa.us [23] and click on [Election Services](#) [24].

Source URL (retrieved on Feb 1 2017 - 1:35pm): <https://www.readingpa.gov/content/city-council-frequently-asked-questions>

Links:

[1] <mailto:council@readingpa.gov>

[2] <https://www.readingpa.gov/content/council-districts-map>

[3] https://www.readingpa.gov/council_minutes_agendas

[4] <mailto:council@readingpa.org>

[5]

[http://library.amlegal.com/nxt/gateway.dll/Pennsylvania/reading_pa/readingpacodeofordinances?f=templates\\$fn=def](http://library.amlegal.com/nxt/gateway.dll/Pennsylvania/reading_pa/readingpacodeofordinances?f=templates$fn=def)

[6] <https://www.readingpa.gov/new-ordinances-and-resolutions-2014>

[7] <https://www.readingpa.gov/content/register-comment-regular-council-meeting>

[8] <https://www.readingpa.gov/content/city-council-video>

[9] <https://www.readingpa.gov/content/authorities>

[10] <https://www.readingpa.gov/content/boards-commissions>

[11] <https://www.readingpa.gov/content/boards-authorities-and-commissions-application-form>

[12] <https://www.readingpa.gov/content/board-ethics>

[13] <https://www.readingpa.gov/content/code-ethics>

[14] <https://www.readingpa.gov/content/board-ethics-complaint-form>

[15] <https://www.readingpa.gov/content/reading-city-charter>

[16] <https://www.readingpa.gov/content/charter-board>

[17] <https://www.readingpa.gov/content/charter-board-complaint-form>

[18] http://www.readingpa.gov/sites/default/files/council/ordinance/master_nco/Codified_Ordinances.pdf

[19] <http://www.readingpa.gov/sites/default/files/council/ordinance/master/Introduction.pdf>

[20] <https://www.readingpa.gov/content/right-know-policy>

[21] <https://www.readingpa.gov/content/right-know-request-form>

[22] <https://www.readingpa.gov/content/election-finance-and-city-reading-code-ethics>

[23] <http://www.co.berks.pa.us>

[24] <http://www.co.berks.pa.us/Dept/Elections/Pages/default.aspx>