



**Michael P. May**

**Aldersperson**  
*Third District*

**Vice Chairperson**  
*Advisory Committee*

**Member**  
*Administration and Finance  
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January 24, 2014

City of West Allis  
Dan Devine, Mayor  
Thomas Lajsic, Common Council President  
Fellow Members, Common Council  
7525 W. Greenfield Avenue  
West Allis, WI 53214

RE: City Organizational Structure

Dear Mayor, Council President, and Fellow Council Members,

With years of continued faithful service to our City, Paul Ziehler will be retiring honorably from his position as our Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and Clerk/Treasurer in April of 2014. Over the past two months we have debated the merits of keeping or eliminating the position of an administrator, how to possibly reorganize department heads and division heads, and to what extent roles should change (if at all). The purpose of this letter is to outline an alternative we may wish to consider regarding the organizational structure as we move forward.

With the input received during the last several Committee of the Whole meetings, after personal discussions with many of our department and division heads, and after much personal debate of pros/cons, I have come to the conclusion that maintaining the position of a City Administrator is a wise decision (with revisions in roles/responsibilities). I believe several of the bigger questions before us relate to lines of communication between Council, administrator, and department heads; the independence and roles of department heads and administrator; the responsibilities relative to the hiring and firing of positions; and certainly the question of value added.

Attached please find an alternative organizational structure we may wish to consider. The primary change with this concept (when compared to the concept presented by Paul Ziehler at our January 6<sup>th</sup> meeting) is the division heads become department heads and the administrator has only an "indirect line" of authority with the departments. What does this mean?

Using the analogy of the "forest and the trees", our department heads would be charged with overseeing the day-to-day operations of their professional area of expertise (their stand of trees, if you will). When problems and questions arise on operational, administrative or financial matters, the administrator's day-to-day task from an "aerial view" of the forest would be to serve as a resource, collaborator, coordinator, mediator, etc. to help the department heads come to resolution. When departments have unresolved, complex and controversial issues and problems that cannot be solved internally with the help of the administrator, the department heads can bring such matters to Council.



In addition to equipping all department heads with the freedom to come directly to Council with problems after requiring them to work out issues internally first, the alternative concept provides a more horizontal organizational structure. As such, ideas and concepts conceived internally by our department heads and staff would face fewer hurdles in making it to the Council because there is one less position in the "chain of command." The potential to see new, innovative ideas for providing services for our citizens is an expected result.

I believe to make this alternative concept work, the Council would want to take on the hiring and firing of all department heads rather than only having the authority to hire/fire the heads of only Engineering/DPW, BINS, Development and Health like today. That is, if we are to realize the potential benefits of direct lines of communication with all department heads, we do not want to keep the hiring/firing of department heads with an unelected city administrator position.

Lastly, with regards to value, we need to be cautious so-as not to be pennywise and pound foolish. This statement is made with the realization that the amount of work to be completed by city staff does not change based on what we do with the organization – eliminating the position of administrator would require us to hire new employees to keep up with the work. We would also lose the many benefits of internal oversight. The cost associated with the potential loss of service value and higher risk associated with uncoordinated departments is greater than the incremental monetary cost associated with retaining a modified administrator position.

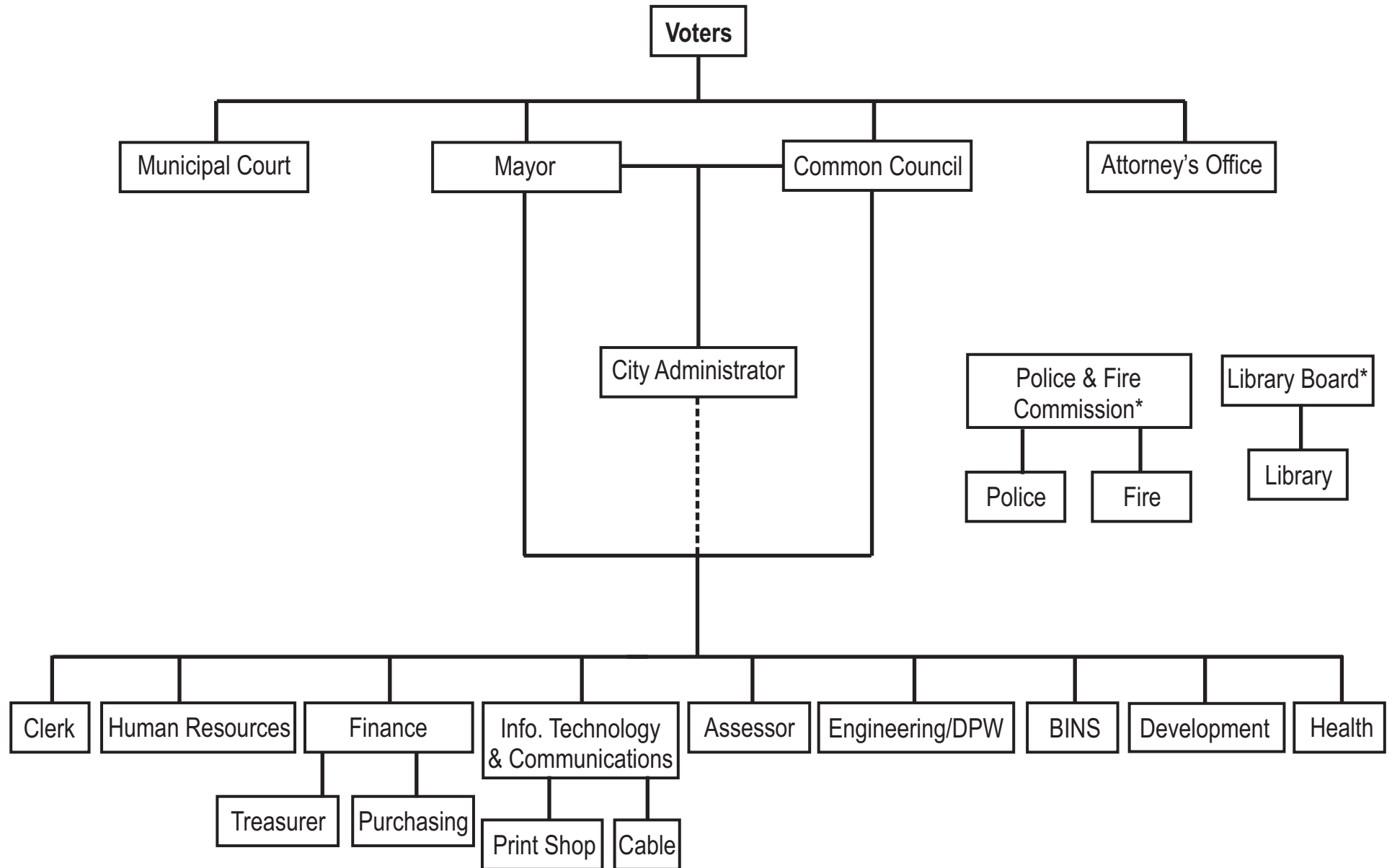
Thank you for your time in considering this alternative. In a nutshell, this alternative would open new lines of communication with our departments, would provide a more horizontal organizational structure (which encourages efficiencies), would move the hiring and firing of department positions away from an unelected administrator position, and would retain (and potentially enhance) the value of service our taxpayers expect.

I look forward to input relative to this concept, and other concepts, as we refine our organizational structure to meet the demands of today and tomorrow.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael P. May", written over a circular scribble.

Michael P. May  
Alderman, Third District



\*Appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Common Council with policy responsibility  
 Note: Solid lines indicate direct lines of authority; dashed lines indicate indirect lines of administration.