

Albany
Municipal
Government

ALBANY MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Charter City Authority

Albany is a charter city, having adopted its original charter by a vote of the electorate in April, 1927. Since that time, Albany voters have amended the charter many times, but the basic form and functioning of the City have remained essentially the same. As a charter city, Albany exercises a broad scope of local authority based on its locally adopted charter. This is in contrast to a general law city, which is restricted to the exercise of powers specifically set forth in State general law.

City Council – City Administrator Form of Government

The Albany City Charter establishes a City Council – City Administrator form of government. Under this form of government, the Albany City Council is the legislative body responsible for setting City policy and adopting the City budget. The five City Councilmembers are elected at-large by the Albany electorate for four year staggered terms. Elections are held in even-numbered years, with three Councilmembers elected in one cycle and two Councilmembers elected in the alternate cycle. The City Charter limits City Council service to two consecutive terms, but allows individuals to serve again following a lapse of two years. The Charter also specifies that Councilmembers must be electors of the City and must have been residents of the City for thirty (30) days immediately preceding nomination. Annually, the five City Councilmembers select a Mayor and Vice-Mayor. The City Councilmembers also serve as the Albany Community Reinvestment Agency and the Albany Public Facilities Financing Authority.

The City Council appoints a City Administrator, who is the administrative head of the government. The City Administrator is responsible for policy implementation and management of the day-to-day operations of the City. The City Administrator advises and makes recommendations to the City Council concerning any conditions or situations, which require Council, direction or policy determination and prepares the recommended budget for consideration and adoption by the City Council. Department heads are appointed by the City Council upon recommendation of the City Administrator.

The Albany City Council holds regular meetings on the first and third Monday of each month at 8:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers, located in Albany City Hall at 1000 San Pablo Avenue. The City Council also calls special meetings as necessary. All Council meetings are broadcast live on Channel 33.

Elected City Officials

In addition to the five City Councilmembers, Albany voters elect the City Treasurer and City Attorney. Both of these officials are elected for four-year terms with no limitation to the numbers of terms they may serve.

The **City Treasurer** is an elected part-time position who is responsible for receiving and safely keeping City funds and securities pursuant to the City Charter. In addition, the City Treasurer invests surplus City funds and advises the City Council on treasury issues. The City Treasurer also serves as a board member and Treasurer of the Police & Fire Relief and Pension Fund, and oversees the administration of business licensing, as well as certain tax revenues.

The **City Attorney** is an elected part-time position who serves as legal advisor to the City Council and all other City officials on matters related to their municipal duties. The City Attorney regularly attends all City Council meetings to provide advice and legal guidance to the City Council and staff. The qualifications for City Attorney are established by City Council ordinance.

Appointed City Officials

As described in the previous section, the City Council appoints a City Administrator, who oversees all City operations and advises the City Council on budget and policy matters. The Department Heads include the City Clerk, the Community Development & Environmental Resources Director, the Finance & Administrative Services Director, the Fire Chief, the Police Chief, and the Recreation & Community Services Director.

City Organization and Departmental Responsibilities

To carry out the responsibilities of municipal government, Albany is currently organized into seven departments: City Administrator, City Clerk, Community Development & Environmental Resources, Finance & Administrative Services, Fire & Emergency Medical Services, Police and Recreation & Community Services. Following is a brief description of the major responsibilities of each department.

City Administrator

The City Administrator's Office provides support to the City Council and the City Administrator in managing the daily operations of the City. In addition, the department is responsible for economic and environmental sustainability, public information, employee training and development, and a variety of special programs and projects. The City Administrator's Office also includes all personnel functions including labor relations, benefits administration and recruitment.

City Clerk

The City Clerk is the keeper of the official records of the City. The City Clerk prepares agendas packets for City Council meetings, records and maintains the proceedings, prepares minutes for distribution, and processes all official documents enacted by the City Council. The City Clerk also serves as the elections officer, which involves coordinating municipal elections every two years and special elections as they are called. The City Clerk is also the Fair Political Practices Commission filing officer, the secretary to the Albany Community Reinvestment Agency and the Albany Public Facilities Financing Authority, and serves as a board member of the Albany Police & Fire Relief and Pension Fund.

Community Development & Environmental Resources

The Community Development & Environmental Resources Department is responsible for City services and programs in the areas of planning, building, engineering, maintenance and environmental resources. The department provides staff support to the Planning & Zoning Commission, Traffic & Safety Commission and the Waterfront Committee. In the area of planning, the department is responsible for current and long-range planning related to the land-use patterns and physical development of the City. This involves development and administration of the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance. In the area of building, the department ensures compliance with City and State building, electrical, plumbing, mechanical and housing codes, maintains records of all permits issued and provides building inspections and plan check services. The maintenance division is responsible for maintenance of streets, sewers, storm drains, traffic signs and markings, parks, street trees and City-owned and operated buildings, and computer systems. The environmental resources function is responsible for overseeing Albany's recycling and urban forestry programs, clean water efforts, such as creek restoration, and promotion of alternative transit. The Community Development and Environmental Resources Department also administers the Community Development Block Grant program and assists in the City's economic development program.

Finance & Administrative Services

The Finance & Administrative Services Department is responsible for day-to-day fiscal operations, long-term fiscal planning and implementation and development of administrative policies. Day-to-day operations include payroll, revenue collections, accounts payable, processing of license and permits, and financial reporting. Long-term fiscal planning includes budget forecasting and preparation, cost analysis, debt issuance, and capital budgeting and finance.

Fire & Emergency Medical Services

The Albany Fire & Emergency Medical Services Department provides the community with a wide range of services, including fire suppression and rescue services, paramedic emergency medical response and ambulance transport, fire prevention services, and community education and disaster preparedness. The Fire Department operates out of one fire station located next to Albany City Hall at 1001 Marin Avenue. The Fire Department is also responsible for the City's Emergency Operation Center located in the basement of the Albany Community Center, which will be activated as the central operations point in the event of a major disaster. The Fire Department also offers a range of successful community education programs related to fire prevention, medical issues and disaster preparedness.

Police

The Police Department is responsible for preservation of public peace enforcement of laws and protection of life and property. These responsibilities are accomplished through police patrol, traffic control and enforcement, criminal investigation and the ongoing support functions of dispatch and records management. The Albany Police Department focuses on crime prevention through an active community policing effort. The department receives auxiliary assistance on a variety of assignments through the Albany Police Reserves, which is a group of highly trained and dedicated volunteer police officers; and runs the Albany Police Athletic League (APA).

Recreation & Community Services

The Recreation & Community Services Department provides a full range of community programs to residents of all ages and interests, including child care, teen programs, senior programs, recreation classes and activities, adult sports, civic arts and cable television. The Department manages and rents four facilities, including the Community Center, Senior Center, Memorial Park Childcare Center and the Teen Center at Ocean View Park, as well as tennis courts, athletic fields and picnic grounds. The Department provides staff support to the Park & Recreation Commission, Arts Committee and Cable T.V. Committee.