

**Chapter 35A.01 RCW  
INTERPRETATION OF TERMS**

**Sections**

- 35A.01.010 Purpose and policy of this title—Interpretation.
- 35A.01.020 Noncharter code city.
- 35A.01.030 Charter code city.
- 35A.01.035 Code city.
- 35A.01.040 Sufficiency of petitions.
- 35A.01.050 The general law.
- 35A.01.060 Optional municipal code—This title.
- 35A.01.070 Definitions—Change of plan or classification of municipal government.
- 35A.01.900 Construction—Chapter applicable to state registered domestic partnerships—2009 c 521.

**RCW 35A.01.010 Purpose and policy of this title—Interpretation.**

The purpose and policy of this title is to confer upon two optional classes of cities created hereby the broadest powers of local self-government consistent with the Constitution of this state. Any specific enumeration of municipal powers contained in this title or in any other general law shall not be construed in any way to limit the general description of power contained in this title, and any such specifically enumerated powers shall be construed as in addition and supplementary to the powers conferred in general terms by this title. All grants of municipal power to municipalities electing to be governed under the provisions of this title, whether the grant is in specific terms or in general terms, shall be liberally construed in favor of the municipality. [1967 ex.s. c 119 § 35A.01.010.]

**RCW 35A.01.020 Noncharter code city.**

A noncharter code city is one, regardless of population, which has initially incorporated as a noncharter code city, subject to the provisions of this title, or is an incorporated municipality which has elected, under the procedure prescribed in this title, to be classified as a noncharter code city and to be governed according to the provisions of this title under one of the optional forms of government provided for noncharter code cities. [1967 ex.s. c 119 § 35A.01.020.]

**RCW 35A.01.030 Charter code city.**

A charter code city is one having at least ten thousand inhabitants at the time of its organization or reorganization which has either initially incorporated as a charter code city and has adopted a charter under the procedure prescribed in this title; or which, as an incorporated municipality, has elected to be classified as a charter code city and to be governed according to the provisions of this title and of its adopted charter. [1967 ex.s. c 119 § 35A.01.030.]

**RCW 35A.01.035 Code city.**

The term "code city" means any noncharter code city or charter code city. [1967 ex.s. c 119 § 35A.01.035.]

**RCW 35A.01.040 Sufficiency of petitions.** Wherever in this title petitions are required to be signed and filed, the following rules shall govern the sufficiency thereof:

(1) A petition may include any page or group of pages containing an identical text or prayer intended by the circulators, signers or sponsors to be presented and considered as one petition and containing the following essential elements when applicable, except that the elements referred to in (d) and (e) of this subsection are essential for petitions referring or initiating legislative matters to the voters, but are directory as to other petitions:

(a) The text or prayer of the petition which shall be a concise statement of the action or relief sought by petitioners and shall include a reference to the applicable state statute or city ordinance, if any;

(b) If the petition initiates or refers an ordinance, a true copy thereof;

(c) If the petition seeks the annexation, incorporation, withdrawal, or reduction of an area for any purpose, an accurate legal description of the area proposed for such action and if practical, a map of the area;

(d) Numbered lines for signatures with space provided beside each signature for the name and address of the signer and the date of signing;

(e) The warning statement prescribed in subsection (2) of this section.

(2) Petitions shall be printed or typed on single sheets of white paper of good quality and each sheet of petition paper having a space thereon for signatures shall contain the text or prayer of the petition and the following warning:

WARNING

Every person who signs this petition with any other than his or her true name, or who knowingly signs more than one of these petitions, or signs a petition seeking an election when he or she is not a legal voter, or signs a petition when he or she is otherwise not qualified to sign, or who makes herein any false statement, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

Each signature shall be executed in ink or indelible pencil and shall be followed by the name and address of the signer and the date of signing.

(3) The term "signer" means any person who signs his or her own name to the petition.

(4) To be sufficient a petition must contain valid signatures of qualified registered voters or property owners, as the case may be, in the number required by the applicable statute or ordinance. Within three working days after the filing of a petition, the officer with whom the petition is filed shall transmit the petition to the county auditor for petitions signed by registered voters, or to the county assessor for petitions signed by property owners for determination of sufficiency. The officer or officers whose duty it is to determine the sufficiency of the petition shall proceed to make such a determination with reasonable promptness and shall file with the officer receiving the petition for filing a certificate stating the date upon which such determination was begun, which date shall be referred to as the terminal date. Additional pages of one or more signatures may be added

to the petition by filing the same with the appropriate filing officer prior to such terminal date. Any signer of a filed petition may withdraw his or her signature by a written request for withdrawal filed with the receiving officer prior to such terminal date. Such written request shall so sufficiently describe the petition as to make identification of the person and the petition certain. The name of any person seeking to withdraw shall be signed exactly the same as contained on the petition and, after the filing of such request for withdrawal, prior to the terminal date, the signature of any person seeking such withdrawal shall be deemed withdrawn.

(5) Petitions containing the required number of signatures shall be accepted as prima facie valid until their invalidity has been proved.

(6) A variation on petitions between the signatures on the petition and that on the voter's permanent registration caused by the substitution of initials instead of the first or middle names, or both, shall not invalidate the signature on the petition if the surname and handwriting are the same.

(7) If a person signs a petition more than once, all but the first valid signature must be rejected.

(8) Signatures followed by a date of signing which is more than six months prior to the date of filing of the petition shall be stricken.

(9) When petitions are required to be signed by the owners of property, the determination shall be made by the county assessor. Where validation of signatures to the petition is required, the following shall apply:

(a) The signature of a record owner, as determined by the records of the county auditor, shall be sufficient without the signature of his or her spouse;

(b) In the case of mortgaged property, the signature of the mortgagor shall be sufficient, without the signature of his or her spouse;

(c) In the case of property purchased on contract, the signature of the contract purchaser, as shown by the records of the county auditor, shall be deemed sufficient, without the signature of his or her spouse;

(d) Any officer of a corporation owning land within the area involved who is duly authorized to execute deeds or encumbrances on behalf of the corporation, may sign on behalf of such corporation, and shall attach to the petition a certified excerpt from the bylaws of such corporation showing such authority;

(e) When the petition seeks annexation, any officer of a corporation owning land within the area involved, who is duly authorized to execute deeds or encumbrances on behalf of the corporation, may sign under oath on behalf of such corporation. If an officer signs the petition, he or she must attach an affidavit stating that he or she is duly authorized to sign the petition on behalf of such corporation;

(f) When property stands in the name of a deceased person or any person for whom a guardian has been appointed, the signature of the executor, administrator, or guardian, as the case may be, shall be equivalent to the signature of the owner of the property; and

(g) When a parcel of property is owned by multiple owners, the signature of an owner designated by the multiple owners is sufficient.

(10) The officer or officers responsible for determining the sufficiency of the petition shall do so in writing and transmit the

written certificate to the officer with whom the petition was originally filed. [2014 c 121 § 3; 2008 c 196 § 2; 2003 c 331 § 9; 1996 c 286 § 7; 1985 c 281 § 26; 1967 ex.s. c 119 § 35A.01.040.]

**Finding—Intent—2014 c 121:** See note following RCW 35.21.005.

**Intent—Severability—Effective date—2003 c 331:** See notes following RCW 35.13.410.

**RCW 35A.01.050 The general law.** For the purposes of this optional municipal code, "the general law" means any provision of state law, not inconsistent with this title, enacted before or after the enactment of this title, which is by its terms applicable or available to all cities or towns. Except when expressly provided to the contrary, whenever in this optional municipal code reference is made to "the general law", or to specific provisions of the Revised Code of Washington, it shall mean "the general law, or such specific provisions of the Revised Code of Washington as now enacted or as the same may hereafter be amended". [1967 ex.s. c 119 § 35A.01.050.]

**RCW 35A.01.060 Optional municipal code—This title.** References contained in this title to "Optional Municipal Code", "this title", "this code" or to any specific chapter, section, or provision thereof shall refer to the whole or appropriate part of Title 35A RCW, as now or hereafter amended. [1967 ex.s. c 119 § 35A.01.060.]

**RCW 35A.01.070 Definitions—Change of plan or classification of municipal government.** Where used in this title with reference to procedures established by this title in regard to a change of plan or classification of government, unless a different meaning is plainly required by the context:

(1) "Classify" means a change from a city of the first or second class, an unclassified city, or a town, to a code city.

(2) "Classification" means either that portion of the general law under which a city or a town operates under Title 35 RCW as a first or second-class city, unclassified city, or town, or otherwise as a code city.

(3) "Organize" means to provide for officers after becoming a code city, under the same general plan of government under which the city operated prior to becoming a code city, pursuant to RCW 35A.02.055.

(4) "Organization" means the general plan of government under which a city operates.

(5) "Plan of government" means a mayor-council form of government under chapter 35A.12 RCW, council-manager form of government under chapter 35A.13 RCW, or a mayor-council, council-manager, or commission form of government in general that is retained by a noncharter code city as provided in RCW 35A.02.130, without regard to variations in the number of elective offices or whether officers are elective or appointive.

(6) "Reclassify" means changing from a code city to the classification, if any, held by such a city immediately prior to becoming a code city.

(7) "Reclassification" means changing from city or town operating under Title 35 RCW to a city operating under Title 35A RCW, or vice versa; a change in classification.

(8) "Reorganize" means changing the plan of government under which a city or town operates to a different general plan of government. A city or town shall not be deemed to have reorganized simply by increasing or decreasing the number of members of its legislative body.

(9) "Reorganization" means a change in general plan of government under which a city operates, but an increase or decrease in the number of members of its legislative body shall not be deemed to constitute a reorganization. [2001 c 33 § 1. Prior: 1994 c 223 § 24; 1994 c 81 § 66; 1979 ex.s. c 18 § 1.]

**Severability—1979 ex.s. c 18:** "If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected." [1979 ex.s. c 18 § 36.]

**RCW 35A.01.900 Construction—Chapter applicable to state registered domestic partnerships—2009 c 521.** For the purposes of this chapter, the terms spouse, marriage, marital, husband, wife, widow, widower, next of kin, and family shall be interpreted as applying equally to state registered domestic partnerships or individuals in state registered domestic partnerships as well as to marital relationships and married persons, and references to dissolution of marriage shall apply equally to state registered domestic partnerships that have been terminated, dissolved, or invalidated, to the extent that such interpretation does not conflict with federal law. Where necessary to implement chapter 521, Laws of 2009, gender-specific terms such as husband and wife used in any statute, rule, or other law shall be construed to be gender neutral, and applicable to individuals in state registered domestic partnerships. [2009 c 521 § 80.]