
Local Government Committee

SB 5244

Brief Description: Authorizing additional powers for unclassified cities.

Sponsors: Senator Hewitt.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes an unclassified city to adopt by resolution any of the powers granted to code cities.
- Authorizes an unclassified city to adopt by resolution a four-year election cycle for its city officials.

Hearing Date: 3/20/03

Staff: Amy Wood (786-7127).

Background:

Municipal governments in Washington are classified according to their population at the time of organization or reorganization. A first class city is a city with a population of 10,000 or more that has adopted a charter. A second class city is a city with a population over 1,500 that does not have a charter. A town has a population between 300 and 1,500.

The Legislature added an additional classification for a "code city" in 1967. The optional municipal code provides for broad home rule authority in all matters of local concern, and includes all of the powers of any city that is consistent with the State Constitution and not specifically denied to it by law. Any city or town without regard to population may reorganize as a code city.

An unclassified city is a city created by special charter prior to the adoption of the State Constitution and which has not since reincorporated under any general statute. An unclassified city has specific powers provided by statute and the powers granted by its charter. The only unclassified city existing in the State today is Waitsburg, which was created by territorial charter in 1885. Waitsburg is organized as a mayor-council form of government. Its charter calls for an annual election of its city officials.

Summary of Bill:

The legislative body of an unclassified city may adopt, by resolution, any powers granted to code cities, including the power to define the functions and duties of city officers and employees.

The legislative body of an unclassified city can adopt a resolution implementing a four-year election cycle for city officials, with elections held biennially in odd-numbered years. At the first election under the bill, the terms of the city officers shall be staggered, with a majority of council members elected to four-year terms, and the remaining council members and the treasurer elected to two-year terms.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.