

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Notices  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 3, 2026 1:32 PM  
**To:** Craig, Sondra; Elsen, Nikki; Janssen, Barb; Kahlow, Chris; Slezniak, Larry; Trost, Jennifer; Mindel, Mackenzie; Dickinson, Tamra; Goggin, Erin; Steele, Annette; Washington-Spivey, Shaundel; Weston, Lisa; Newberry, Aron; Bedford, Crystal; Padesky, Gary; Stine, Olivia; Northwood, Rosanne  
**Subject:** City Council Contact Form: City Administrator

Submitted on: 2/3/2026

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Is this related to a legislative agenda item: Yes

Agenda item number: 26-0071

Subject: City Administrator

The office of the Mayor is three jobs- administrator, legislator, and city leader. It's too much for one person, and I agree with other commenters that city operations have suffered for it. A professional City Administrator would be a good thing for La Crosse.

This updated City Administrator proposal is an improvement in that it is more fleshed-out than the previous version. However, my main question remains unaddressed: why, specifically, does this need to be a charter amendment? When I have asked City Council members, they didn't know. When I asked the City Clerk, my question was forwarded to the City Attorney, who never replied. The best guess I've heard from Council members is that it removes the Mayoral powers decreed by State law, specifically Wis. Stats. § 62.09(8)(a) "The mayor shall be the chief executive officer. The mayor shall take care that city ordinances and state laws are observed and enforced and that all city officers and employees discharge their duties.". Section III of this charter ordinance explicitly removes these duties and transfers them to the City Administrator. The reason for this as stated in CM Newberry's Line-By-Line Justification document is that the City Attorney said "Charter ordinance must explicitly remove those duties and transfer them to Administrator."

Well... why? "Must" is not, by itself, a reason.

If the goal is for the Administrator to have EXCLUSIVE power over the city government, then yes, this would be necessary. However, I still don't see why that's obligatory. If we simply remove this provision, then nothing would change except that the Mayor would have the ability to override Administrator directives.

This would be a good thing!

The Mayor, whether the current or future one, would essentially never do this, as it would be a waste of their time. However, the OPTION for a Mayor to do so would reassure the public that the operation of the city government is still fundamentally in the hands of someone who is directly elected by the people. This also solves the problems of trying to find an Acting City Administrator, whether upon adoption of this ordinance or when the Administrator is absent- the Mayor would automatically be the default Acting City Administrator. The chain of command would also be clear: city staff and department heads would obey the Administrator unless given specific contradictory directives by the Mayor, which would take precedent.

There is a question of whether this would fulfill the Statutory requirement that "The mayor shall take care that

city ordinances and state laws are observed and enforced and that all city officers and employees discharge their duties." I have no familiarity with the City of Onalaska's system, but their website states "As chief executive officer of the City, the Mayor has a statutory duty to "take care that city ordinances and state laws are observed and enforced and that all city officers and employees discharge their duties." Sec. 62.09(8)(a) Wis. Stats. The Mayor works with the City Administrator to ensure the fluid operation of the City." so it seems to work for them. They describe the Administrator as "Chief Operating Officer".

If this provision is removed, I strongly suspect that this would no longer need to be a Charter Ordinance. This would ease passage through the Common Council, and eliminate the possibility of a derailing and potentially highly divisive referendum by petition under Wis. Stats. § 66.0101(5) (which, it should be noted, also states "A charter ordinance does not take effect until 60 days after its passage and publication.").

Kevin Hundt  
La Crosse