



OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

Rio Rancho Candidate Handbook

2017-2018 Edition

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Letter of Introduction



Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in serving as an elected official for the City of Rio Rancho. This handbook serves to answer questions and guide you through the process of running your campaign and declaring your candidacy. Municipal elections are administered through the Office of the City Clerk and Clerk's Office staff is available to answer any questions you have not covered by this handbook.

Rio Rancho is a home-rule municipality, which is governed by a charter adopted by the voters. The City operates under the council-manager form of government, which is described in more detail in this document. There are three classifications of elected officials including: Mayor (elected at large), Council Members (6 members adopted by district for staggered terms), and Municipal Judge (elected at large).

Rio Rancho currently has an estimated population of 96,000 residents and 58,000 registered voters. If running for a city council seat, only those voters in your district may vote for you. If running for Mayor or Municipal Judge, all eligible voters may cast a vote for you.

Many questions that are not specifically covered in this handbook can be found using online resources. Please visit the City's Web site at, <http://www.rrnm.gov> and the City's online municipal code at, <http://www.codepublishing.com/nm/riorancho/>. You will find many resources to assist you in learning about Rio Rancho's government. All applicable state laws and regulations may be accessed online at: <http://www.nmonesource.com/nmnxtadmin/NMPublic.aspx>.

Please review all the pages of this handbook, paying particular attention to the requirements for declaring your candidacy, running your campaign, and the position responsibilities for the office in which you seek to serve. The Office of the City Clerk will provide you with a candidate packet containing all required forms and more detailed information.

We wish you success on your journey. Please do not hesitate to contact the Clerk's Office with any additional questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Keith Riesberg'.

Keith J. Riesberg, City Manager

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Stephen J. Ruger'.

Stephen J. Ruger, City Clerk

Form of Government

Rio Rancho has a City Council-City Manager form of government.

What is the council-manager form of government?

Council-manager government combines the strong political leadership of elected officials with the strong managerial experience of an appointed manager or administrator. All power and authority to set policy rests with an elected governing body, which includes a mayor or chairperson and members of the council, commission, or board. The governing body in turn hires a nonpartisan manager who has very broad authority to run the organization.

Born out of the U.S. progressive reform movement at the turn of the 20th century, the council-manager system was designed to combat corruption and unethical activity in local government by promoting effective management within a transparent, responsive, and accountable structure. Since its establishment, the council-manager form has become the most popular structure of local government in the United States.

How does council-manager government work?

The elected council or board represents their community and develops a long-range vision for its future. They establish policies that affect the overall operation of the community and are responsive to residents' needs and wishes. To ensure that these policies are carried out and that the entire community is equitably served, the governing body appoints a highly trained professional manager on the basis of his/her education, experience, skills, and abilities (and not their political allegiances). If the manager is not responsive to the governing body, it has the authority to terminate the manager at any time.

What is the role of the manager under council-manager government?

The manager is hired to serve the council and the community and brings to the local government the benefits of his/her training and experience in administering municipal or county projects and programs. The manager prepares a budget for the council's consideration; recruits, hires, terminates, and supervises government staff; serves as the council's chief adviser; and carries out the council's policies. Council members and residents count on the manager to provide complete and objective information about local operations, discuss the pros and cons of alternatives, and offer an assessment of the long-term consequences of their decisions.

Appointed managers serve at the pleasure of the governing body. They can be fired by a majority of the council, consistent with local laws, or any employment agreements they may enter into with the council. The manager makes policy recommendations to the council for consideration and final decision. The manager is bound by whatever action the council takes, and control is always in the hands of the elected representatives of the people.

What is the role of the council?

The council is the community's legislative and policy-making body. Power is centralized in the elected council, which, for example, approves the budget and determines the tax rate. The council also focuses on the community's goals, major projects, and such long-term considerations as community growth, land use development, capital improvement and financing, and strategic planning. The council hires a professional manager to implement the administrative responsibilities related to these goals and supervises the manager's performance.

What is the role of the mayor or chairperson?

Mayors or chairpersons in council-manager communities are key political and policy leaders, and their specific duties, responsibilities, and authorities depend on the organization's charter. In council-manager communities, typically the mayor or chairperson is a voting member of the city council who presides at council meetings, represents the city in intergovernmental relationships, appoints members of citizen advisory boards and commissions (with the advice and consent of council), assigns agenda items to committees, facilitates communication and understanding between elected and appointed officials, and assists the council in setting goals and advocating policy decisions.

Qualifications of Candidates

Qualifications Required to Run for Municipal Office

All candidates must meet the following basic requirements to run for municipal office:

- Be a resident of the City (see additional explanation below)
- Be over 18 years of age
- Be a qualified voter of Rio Rancho
(You may register to vote or receive more information by contacting the Sandoval County Clerk's Office at: (505) 867-7572 or www.sandovalcounty.com)
- Have no felony convictions

Residency Requirements

All candidates must reside within the municipal boundaries of the City of Rio Rancho. City Council candidates must reside within the district for which they seek election. There are no requirements for the amount of time a candidate must reside within the City, or a particular district, prior to being eligible to run for municipal office; however, it is required that the candidate reside within the City (and applicable district) at the time they file their declaration of candidacy with the City Clerk.

Candidate Packets

Around the middle of November preceding a regular Municipal Election, the City Clerk will schedule appointments, as requested, with candidates and provide a packet with detailed instructions and all applicable forms. It is essential that you meet individually with the City Clerk to pick up your packet. No packets are released by mail or other electronic means. Please contact the City Clerk's Office at (505) 891-5004 to schedule your meeting.

Declaration of Candidacy

Date/Required Documents

The Clerk's Office will publish an online calendar of key dates for each election. All candidates **must declare their candidacy on the 56th day preceding the election** (early January), by filing the following information with the Office of the City Clerk at Rio Rancho City Hall between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.:

- Declaration of Candidacy form (provided by the City Clerk)
- Certified copy of the candidate's voter registration
(A certified copy of your voter registration may be obtained from the Sandoval County Clerk)

Write-in Candidacy

If you miss the deadline to declare your candidacy as described above, you may register as a write-in candidate meaning you will be eligible to run, but your name will not appear on the ballot. All write-in candidates **must declare their candidacy on the 49th day preceding the election**, by filing the following information with the Office of the City Clerk between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.:

- Declaration of Candidacy form (provided by the City Clerk)
- Certified copy of the candidate's voter registration
(A certified copy of your voter registration may be obtained from the Sandoval County Clerk)

Withdrawal of Candidacy

If you declare your candidacy and subsequently wish to withdraw your name from consideration, you must file an affidavit in the City Clerk's office on a form provided by the City Clerk expressing your intent to withdraw. The deadline to withdraw candidacy for those who filed to have their name appear on the ballot is **49 days** prior to the election. Those who declared as write-in candidates must withdraw their candidacy no later than **35 days** prior to the election.

Campaigning

Contributions/Expenditures

It is essential that you track all contributions, loans and expenditures pertinent to your campaign. Your first campaign contribution/expenditure form will be due 28 days prior to the date of the election and will cover activity within 365 days preceding the date of the election. You will file a second campaign contribution/expenditure form the day immediately preceding the election, and a third 30 days following the election. Thereafter, you will file reports as needed every six months until all contributions are exhausted.

Please note, for transparency, that it is essential that you clearly show any loans as such. While Rio Rancho's laws do not prohibit campaign loans and reimbursement thereof, the Clerk's Office may ask for additional back-up information to ensure any loans are reported correctly to the public.

All contributions and expenditures **below \$50** may be reported without identifying the contributor or payee. However, you must include the name and address for all contributions and expenditures for any amount in **excess of \$50**.

Any remaining balance following the election must be disposed of in one of the following manners:

- Retained in the campaign bank checking account for a possible runoff election for that office or challenge to the election
- Returned to the person who made the contribution
- Placed in the City of Rio Rancho's General Fund
- Given to a registered charity identified by the candidate

Signs

Signs on public and private property within the city limits are regulated by ordinance. You may review Section 156 – Sign Regulations – of the municipal code at: <http://www.codepublishing.com/nm/riorancho>. Please contact the City's Department of Development Services at (505) 891-5005 with any questions.

Election

Voting

Regular municipal elections take place on the first Tuesday of March in even numbered years. Voters may vote in-person between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. In addition, voters may vote by requesting an absentee ballot beginning 35 days before Election Day or they may vote early in-person in the Office of the City Clerk or the Loma Colorado Library beginning 20 days before the election during business hours.

Voting Convenience Centers

Rio Rancho consolidates all of its precincts into voting convenience centers. Voters may vote at any of the convenience centers, regardless of where they live in the City, on Election Day.

Run-Off Election

If no candidate for municipal office receives over 50% of the total vote through the regular election, a run-off election is required for that seat between the two highest voter getters in the regular election. Run-off elections are ran the same as regular elections and take place within 45 days following the canvassing of the regular election.

Photo ID Required

A photo ID to vote in Rio Rancho municipal elections is required. As such, a valid photo ID is required for voters who vote in-person. If a voter does not have a valid photo ID, they may obtain one from the Office of the City Clerk.

Position Responsibilities

Mayor

The City's charter specifies the responsibilities and duties of the Mayor, as follows:

- A. The mayor shall be a member of the Governing Body entitled to cast a vote only in the event of a tie among the city councilors or in case there are fewer than six (6) City Council members present
- B. The mayor shall (pursuant to Section 3.01A of the City's Charter):
- (1) Preside at meetings of the Governing Body;
 - (2) Be the chief executive officer of the City and shall exercise all administrative and executive powers, except to the extent that those powers are vested with the city manager;
 - (3) Devote her/his full time to the discharge of mayoral duties and have outside employment only if the outside employment is approved by the Governing Body by resolution;
 - (4) Initiate an annual performance review of the City Manager with the advice of the Council;
 - (5) Provide leadership in the promotion and marketing of Rio Rancho to large and small businesses to achieve growth in products and services available to residents and growth in tax revenues;
 - (6) Participate with and provide input to the City Manager in preparation of the city's budget for the mayor to perform the duties in item 5;
 - (7) Listen to and build relationships with citizens to address the needs of the community;
 - (8) Convene and lead an annual meeting of the Governing Body to discuss and identify the city's goals and priorities in order to provide guidance for the City Manager and to inform the public.
 - (9) Propose programs and policies to the Governing Body;
 - (10) Appoint, as provided in this Charter and by applicable ordinance, and subject to the confirmation of the Governing Body, all members of boards, commissions or authorities, including city representatives to outside regional, state or national boards, commissions or authorities;
 - (11) Represent the City in intergovernmental relationships including but not limited to representing the city on regional, state and national boards and committees as necessary;
 - (12) Present an annual State of the City report to the City Council; and
 - (13) Perform other duties and exercise such other powers as specified in this Charter, the City's ordinances and resolutions, or by the Governing Body.
- C. The mayor shall be recognized as head of the City government for ceremonial purposes, for purposes of responding to civil emergencies, and by the Governor for purposes of military law.

City Councilor

There are no specific job responsibilities for city councilor. The six city councilors and the Mayor collectively make up the City's Governing Body. All corporate authority of the City is vested in the Governing Body. In general, council members are required to attend all meetings of the Governing Body, vote on each item appearing on the agenda (unless there is a conflict of interest), and are expected to represent the residents of their district. This includes serving as a liaison between citizens and city staff. In addition, the Governing Body serves as the City's Board of Finance and annually reviews and adopts a budget, which serves as the organizations key policy document. As a member of the governing body, City Councilors individually have no authority to provide direction. All authority and power is exercised through action of the Governing Body.

Municipal Judge

The City's charter specifies the responsibilities and duties of the Municipal Judge, as follows:

- (1) Shall constitute the judicial branch of the City government;
- (2) Shall be entitled to exercise all of the powers and duties of office as are authorized by the Constitution and laws of the State of New Mexico;
- (3) Shall have jurisdiction over all offenses and complaints under the ordinances of the City; and
- (4) May issue subpoenas, warrants and punishment for contempt.

Compensation & Benefits

Compensation

Currently, based on existing municipal code/ordinance, the annual salary for elected officials is:

Mayor – Beginning in 2018 and thereafter, the annual salary of the Mayor shall be the most current estimated median household income, as reported by the United States Census Bureau, on the day the Mayor is sworn into office.

City Councilor – Beginning in 2018 and thereafter, the annual salary of City Council members shall be 28% of the most current estimated median household income, as reported by the United States Census Bureau, on the day each Councilor is sworn into office.

Municipal Judge – Effective from the date the Municipal Judge takes the oath of office in 2018, the Municipal Judge shall receive an annual salary of \$70,000.

Beginning with the 2022 municipal election for Municipal Judge and thereafter, one year prior to the regular municipal Election Day where the office of the Municipal Judge, a four-year term, shall be voted on, the Governing Body shall review the annual Municipal Judge salary. If the Governing Body, by majority vote, decides to adjust the annual salary for the Municipal Judge, it shall do so no later than 11 months prior to the regular municipal Election Day where the office of Municipal Judge shall be voted on. The adjusted Municipal Judge salary shall become effective for the applicable Municipal Judge term (the oath of office day beginning a four-year term).

Pursuant to the State of New Mexico Constitution, an elected official's compensation cannot be increased or reduced during their term of office.

Benefits

Based on existing municipal code/ordinance, the Mayor, City Councilors, Municipal Judge and eligible family members shall be offered medical, dental and vision insurance coverage as provided to other City employees. The mayor is provided a city vehicle.