

How Laws Are Made in Florida's Cities

In Florida, a city is recognized with certain rights and privileges, the most important being home rule. Home rule is self-government by citizens at the local level. Every city is governed or run by a group of people who make and change laws. These people run the city because the people in the city voted in an election to let them do so. The people elected to run the city are usually called mayor, councilmember or commissioner.

The Florida Constitution recognizes that cities may enact their own laws, known as ordinances at the local level, as long as they do not conflict with state or federal law. In order to propose and vote on ordinances, city councils and commissions create a meeting schedule. Most councils or commissions meet monthly or bi-monthly. Although cities throughout Florida are different, there are common procedures for proposing and passing ordinances, as outlined in the Florida Statutes.

- Proposed ordinances must be presented to the council or commission in writing.
- A proposed ordinance can only be about one subject and that subject must be clear in the title of the proposed ordinance.
- 10 days prior to a vote on a proposed ordinance, a notice must be posted in a local newspaper that states the date, time, and place of the meeting at which the proposed ordinance will be voted on, the title of the proposed ordinance, and a place where citizens can view the full text of the proposed ordinance. This notice must also let citizens know that any interested or concerned citizens will have an opportunity to be heard during the meeting.
- During the meeting, only a majority of the city council or commission members are required to be present. This majority represents a quorum. In order for an ordinance to be passed, a majority of the quorum must vote in favor of it.
- Votes on the proposed ordinance are kept as official record.
- Any ordinance becomes effective as outlined in the proposal or 10 days after the vote.