

Comparative Charter County Matrix -- General Provisions (2013)

Charter Sections	Clallam	King	Pierce	San Juan	Snohomish	Whatcom	Clark (notes)
Year of charter vote	1976	1969	1980	2005	1979	1978	
County population year charter passed	43,100	1,150,000	485,667	15,180	318,800	100,500	
Legislative body	County Commissioners	County Council	County Council	County Council	County Council	County Council	
Number of Commissioners/Councilors	3 Commissioners	9 Councilors	7 Councilors	3 Councilors	5 Councilors	7 Councilors	
Elected by district or at large	District	District	District	District	District	6=District, 1=At Large	
Councilors/Commissioners partisan or non-partisan?	Partisan	Nonpartisan	Partisan	Nonpartisan	Partisan	Partisan	
Executive power vested in.....	Commissioners	County Executive	County Executive	Countywide Electeds	County Executive	County Executive	
Title of exec./admin. head of county	County Administrator	County Executive	County Executive	County Manager	County Executive	Chief Exec. Officer	
Exec./Admin. elected or appointed?	Appointed	Elected	Elected	Appointed	Elected	Elected	
Executive/Admin. partisan or non-partisan?	Nonpartisan	Nonpartisan	Partisan	Nonpartisan	Partisan	Partisan	
Exec./Admin. veto authority	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	
Council confirmation reqd. for dept. head hires by Exec.?	n/a	No	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes	
Other Electeds:							
Assessor	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Auditor	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Clerk				✓	✓		
Director of Community Development	✓						
Director of Elections		✓					
Sheriff	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Treasurer	✓			✓	✓	✓	
Assessor-Treasurer			✓				
Initiative power to the people?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Initiative petition signature threshold	10%	10%	10%	15%	7%	15%	
.....of votes cast in the last.....	Gubernatorial Election	County Exec. Election	County Exec. Election	Gubernatorial Election	Gubernatorial Election	General Election	
Unfunded initiatives prohibited?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	
Other initiative powers	Mini-Initiative	Institutional Initiative	Agenda Petition	Mini-Initiative to Council	Mini-Initiative to Council	Mini-Initiative	
Other initiative threshold	3% of Gubern. Election	Half of Cities in County	3% of Council Election	3% of Gubern. Election	3% of Gubern. Election	3% of Gubern. Election	
Other initiative affects	Ord. or Amend. to Ord.	Ordinance Proposals	Ord. or Amend. to Ord.	Ord. or Amend. to Ord.	Ord. or Amend. to Ord.	Ord. or Amend. to Ord.	
Referendum power to the people?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Referendum petition signature threshold	10%	8%	8%	15%	5%	15%	
.....of votes cast in the last.....	Gubernatorial Election	County Exec. Election	County Exec. Election	Gubernatorial Election	Gubernatorial Election	General Election	
Days after ord. passes to file for referendum	10 Days	Prior to eff. date of ord.	15 Days	45 Days	10 Days	45 Days	
Council/Commission has subpoena power?	Yes	Yes ⁵	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	
Nonpartisan Elective Offices (non-judicial)?	Yes ¹	Yes (all)	Yes ³	Yes ²	Yes ²	Yes ¹	
County Sheriff: elected or appointed	Elected	Elected	Elected	Elected	Elected	Elected	
County Assessor: elected or appointed	Elected	Elected	Elected**	Elected	Elected	Elected	
County Auditor: elected or appointed	Elected	Appointed	Elected	Elected	Elected	Elected	
County Treasurer: elected or appointed	Elected	Appointed	Elected**	Elected	Elected	Elected	
Superior Court Clerk: elected or appointed	Appointed	Appointed	Appointed	Elected	Elected	Appointed	
Coroner/Medical Examiner: Elected or Appointed	Elected*	Appointed	Appointed	Appointed	Appointed	Appointed	
Term limits?	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
if yes, number consecutive terms	n/a	n/a	Limited to 2 or 3 Terms ⁴	n/a	Limited to 3 Terms	n/a	
Frequency of re-districting	Every 10 Years	Every 10 Years	Every 10 Years	n/a	Every 10 Years	Every 10 Years	
Charter review commission: frequency	Every 8 Years	Every 10 Years	Every 10 Years	Every 10 Years	Every 10 Years	Every 10 Years	
number members	15 Members	15 Members	21 Members	15-25 Members	15 Members	15 Members	
elected or appointed	Elected	Appointed	Elected	Elected	Elected	Elected	
Charter amendment proposals placed on ballot by:							
County Council/Commission	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Charter Review Commission	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Public petition method	Yes	No ⁶	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Public petition threshold percentage	20%	n/a ⁶	20%	15%	20%	20%	
Recall of elected officials?	Yes (General Law)	Yes (General Law)	Yes (General Law)	Yes (General Law)	Yes (General Law)	Yes (General Law)	
Hearings examiner?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	
Ombudsman or Citizens' Commission (type)	No	Yes (board of appeals)	Yes (ethics comm.)	Yes (salary comm.)	No	Yes (salary comm.)	
Eminent domain provisions?	Yes (12.40)	No	Yes (9.80)	No	Yes, a reference (9.20)	Yes, a reference (9.30)	
Franchise term limitations (not to exceed)	20 Years	None	25 Years	25 Years	25 Years	25 Years	

* In Clallam County, the elected Prosecuting Attorney serves as the ex-officio coroner.

** In Pierce County, the Assessor and Treasurer constitute a combined office.

¹ The non-partisan elective offices are Treasurer, Auditor, Assessor, and Sheriff

² The non-partisan elective offices are Treasurer, Auditor, Assessor, Sheriff, and Clerk

³ The non-partisan elective offices are Assessor-Treasurer, Auditor, and Sheriff

⁴ Up to two consecutive terms for Councilmember or Executive, up to three terms for Sheriff, Assessor-Treasurer, and Auditor

⁵ Limited to matters relating to proposed ordinances which are being considered by the county council.

⁶ Because King County charter has no public petition method for amendments, regular initiative can be brought to Council to have placed on ballot