

Pursuant to Sections 3-21 and 4-10 of the City Charter, I am vetoing the Ordinance R4, "An Ordinance submitting to the eligible electors of the City of Pueblo, Colorado at the regular Municipal Election to be held on November 4, 2025, a proposed amendment to the Charter of the City of Pueblo changing the form of government to City Council-City Manager and fixing the ballot title therefore" from Aug. 11, 2025.

People voted to change to a strong Mayor because they were frustrated with the lack of leadership among council members. City Council was unable to provide a unified, clear and consistent path forward for the City. Nothing has changed. The issue remains that City Council does not show the ability to come to consensus with a thoroughly vetted, informed and well-intentioned plan to help guide Pueblo and its citizens toward better and more progress.

Changing to a City Manager- City Council form of government will not improve the situation. This system will make it too easy to pass the buck and leave complex policy matters unresolved. This Ordinance is simply an attempt to remove me from office the same way they would remove a City Manager that disagreed with them or expressed independent thought. I cannot, in good conscience, allow this Ordinance to go forward unchallenged.

The proponents of this Ordinance have given several open meeting opinions for their desire to abolish a strong Mayor but none of them support the need to change the "form" of the government. Instead, their reasons come down to disapproval of me and my policies. [In their opinion I am unprofessional, unsuccessful, and vindictive.] Personal dislike of me or any one person should not drive a change as important and fundamental as this. If citizens don't like a particular Mayor's politics or personality, they can elect a new Mayor every four years.

By this Ordinance, City Council seeks to take back power they believe they have lost. City Council holds the same power now as it will under the City Manager-City Council form of government. The Mayor brings ideas to City Council but ultimately, it is City Council that decides whether to impose a fee, tear down a building, buy a building, end a franchise agreement, or allocate funds to a particular project. The Mayor does not have that authority without a majority vote by City Council. City Council's legislative power remains the same whether there is for a City Manager or when there is a Mayor. They currently have the ability introduce legislation and to pass or and fail any ordinance or resolution before them.

As a basis for this Ordinance, it was proposed that it is better for seven duly elected officials to have the authority to vet and hire a qualified City Manager because too much political power has been invested in a popular candidate selected by the people. Instead, proponents of this Ordinance believe it is crucial that the City Manager be able to follow the charge and will of the City Council. They want to go back to the City Manager form of government so they can hire someone that must do what they want or risk termination, and what does this separation cost?

The last employment agreement for the City Manager of the City of Pueblo cost the taxpayers \$290,729.19 in 2019 alone. The Mayor makes \$150,000 annually per Charter. Imagine what the cost of a City Manager would be to the City of Pueblo today in 2025? It would surely be more than \$150,000 annually. One of Pueblo's cost comparable cities we currently base our 85% compensation agreements with our unions on is Greeley, Colorado. Greeley's City Manager's salary is \$274,428.85 with a performance incentive of \$10,000 on an annual basis.


There were reasons why people wanted a strong Mayor. They wanted the executive branch to be separate and independent from City Council and wanted that person to be able to exercise independent judgment without fear of retaliation from City Council. They wanted that person to be accountable to the entire community rather than only to seven people. They wanted more influence in local government. Return to a City Manager-City Council form of government will strip all of this away.

The citizens of Pueblo chose a strong Mayor form of government in November 2017. The citizens of Pueblo selected me for Mayor in November 2023 and again in the run-off election in January 2024. The citizens of Pueblo refused to support a recall election in May of 2025. City Council should respect the will of the people rather than attempt to grab power away from their constituents.

This Ordinance lays out no plan past November 5th when it calls for my immediate removal, which then requires City Council to appoint a current City employee to take the interim-City Manager position. The City Council was invited, and neglected, to be part of any budgetary planning discussions for 2026. Only one City Council member showed up for any of the 20 budget meetings I have already conducted for 2026. This is the budget that ultimately City Council approves and is only the Mayor's recommendation.

Some councilors have no professional expertise in projects, budgetary expenditures or personnel and continue to vote with uninformed opinions. Some council members have openly stated in meetings that they do not read the background papers provided and are uninformed about the Ordinance or Resolution before them that they plan to vote on at a meeting. In fact, this Ordinance is derived from a past citizen ballot measure that failed to successfully gather enough signatures.

The Ordinance does not allow the council to hire and fire staff or run the City of Pueblo as they wish to do. This Ordinance sets the hard work of the Mayor-City Council form of government back and it will have significant impacts on a community that is on the cusp of great economic opportunity and prosperity. There are only three strong mayors in the state of Colorado, why would we revert to the past when we are currently progressing into the future? I cannot in good conscience allow this ordinance to stand.



Heather Graham
Mayor