

Democracy 1: Find out about local government

What is democracy?

Democracy is a form of government in which people are in charge. The word 'democracy' comes from Greek, and means 'rule by the people'. Every person participates in decision making.

Democracy has come in different forms for thousands of years and in many different places. In the United States, we practice democracy at many different levels and in different ways. We are going to explore these ways in our badge work together.

In a democracy, the people are powerful: they can vote on issues and representatives and they can voice their opinions. But the people -- you and I -- also have a responsibility to understand government and current events, and to participate.

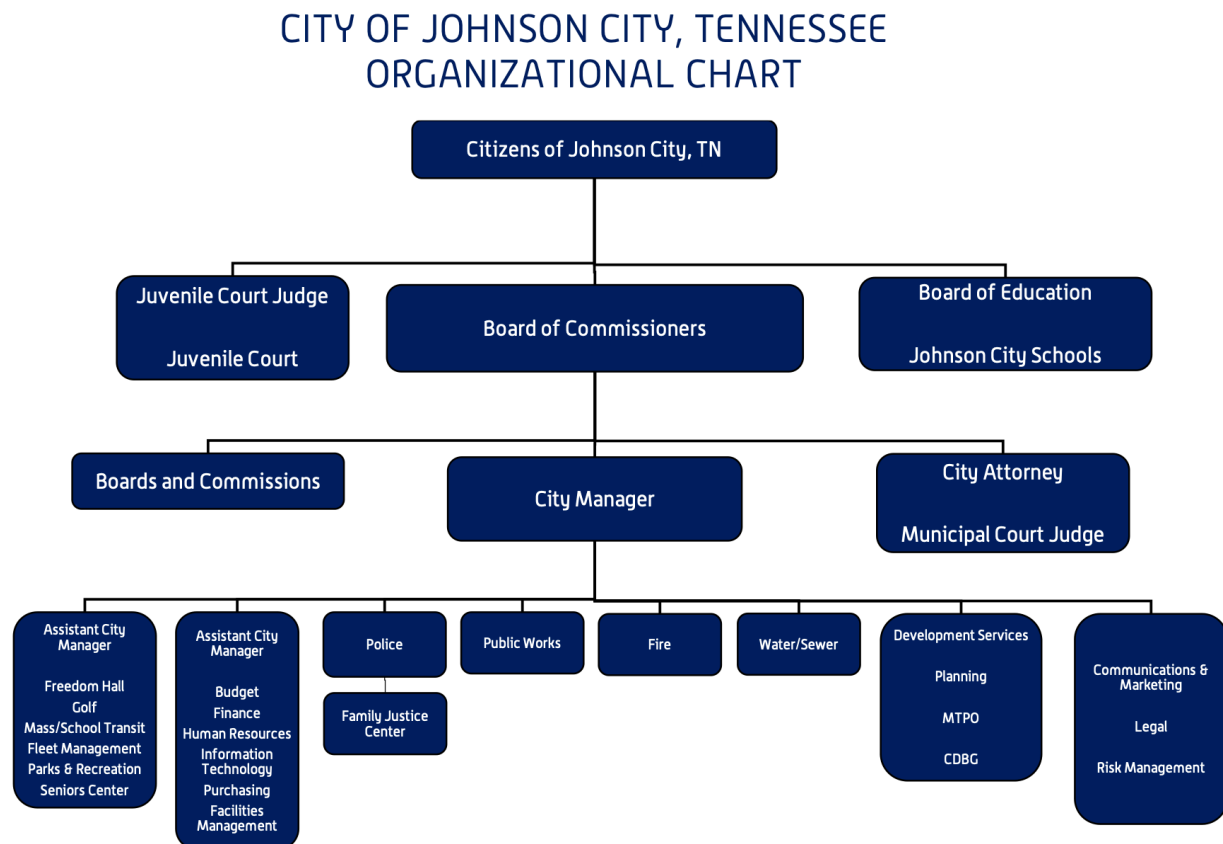
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What is the Johnson City, Tennessee, city government?

Look at the organizational chart of the city government. Who is at the top?

It's citizens -- you and I -- who are in charge. City government works for its citizens, and citizens are responsible for knowing what the government does and communicating with them.

City government includes a large variety of departments and workers that affect daily life. What departments affect your own life every day?



Source: https://www.johnsoncitytn.org/document_center/Government/Government%20Structure%20Chart/government-structure.pdf

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What does our city government do?

It provides community services that the people of Johnson City need and want.

It manages the city's infrastructure, projects and investments efficiently.

It passes and enforces ordinances (city laws).

It plans for the city's long-term future.

For more information, explore <https://www.johnsoncitytn.org> and read "Introduction to Johnson City Government" at the end of this document.

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How can you practice democracy in your city?

We can practice democracy in our community by sharing ideas with our community. Your troop volunteer will combine our discussion notes and written activities into a newsletter to share with friends, families, and Girl Scouts supporters. If you have a photo, drawing, or other original artwork to go with your writing, send that too!

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Group Activity: Live discussion about a local matter in the news.

Suggested for Daisies, Brownies, Juniors, Cadettes

For those attending a live discussion, we will discuss a current issue in Johnson City city government. See the Democracy Supplement.

We need one volunteer to take notes and write up a summary of the discussion for our newsletter.

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Individual Activities

If you can't make the group meeting, no worries! Just pick one activity from the list below. Ask your troop volunteer for assistance getting started.

Our activities will appear in a newsletter. Please write complete sentences and pay attention to grammar and spelling. Original artwork is also welcome!

Individual Activity: Write a letter to our city commissioners.

Suggested for Daisies, Brownies, Juniors, Cadettes

For example, ask for information about a local matter, make a suggestion, or send thanks. Your troop volunteer can help find the address for board of commissioners.

Individual Activity: Attend a commission meeting.

Suggested for Juniors, Cadettes

Meetings are all online at www.johnsoncitytn.org/meetings. Write about what was discussed, including the who, what, when, where, and why.

Individual Activity: Find out ways to participate.

Suggested for Juniors, Cadettes

Read through "Introduction to Johnson City Government" in the Democracy Supplement. Write down all the statements you find that indicate how citizens like you and I can participate in local government.