

City Council Guide

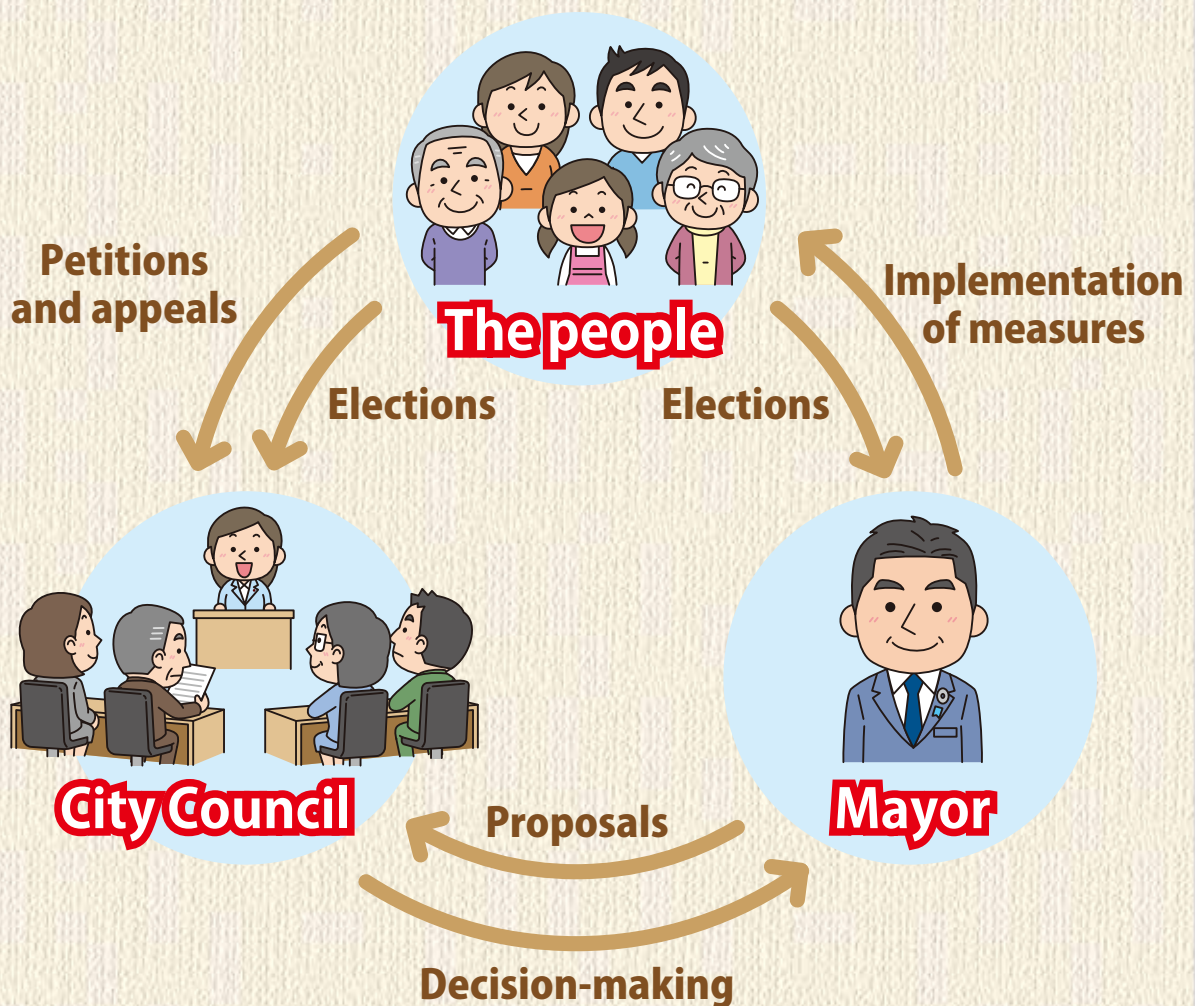


Kawasaki City Council

Oyoyon

City Council and Municipal Government

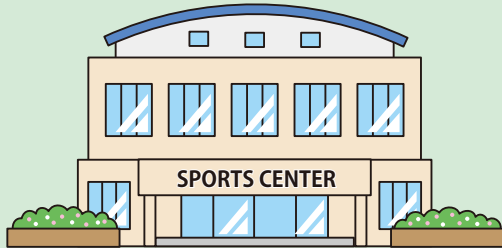
Local governments in Japan consist of a legislative branch, called a council, and an executive branch, vested in the mayor. The council decides the local government's intentions and policies, while the mayor executes local government policy based on the decisions of the council. These two branches, independent of and coequal to each other, cooperate while acting as checks on each other's power, aiming for agreement and balance to accomplish the best possible municipal policy.



A typical example

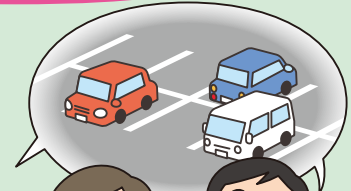
How the wishes of the people are reflected in a plan to build a sports center

The city announces a plan to build a sports center.



Demands of the people

We want a spacious parking lot!



The people's demand for a spacious parking lot is conveyed to City Council (by presentation of a petition (seigan) or an appeal (chinjō)).



City Council discusses and considers the issue (examines petitions and appeals).



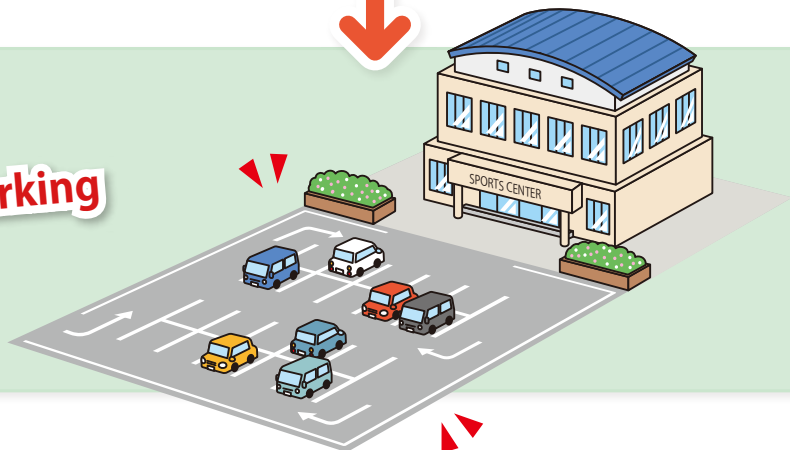
Petitions and appeals are adopted.



Responding to the decision of City Council, the city gets to work.



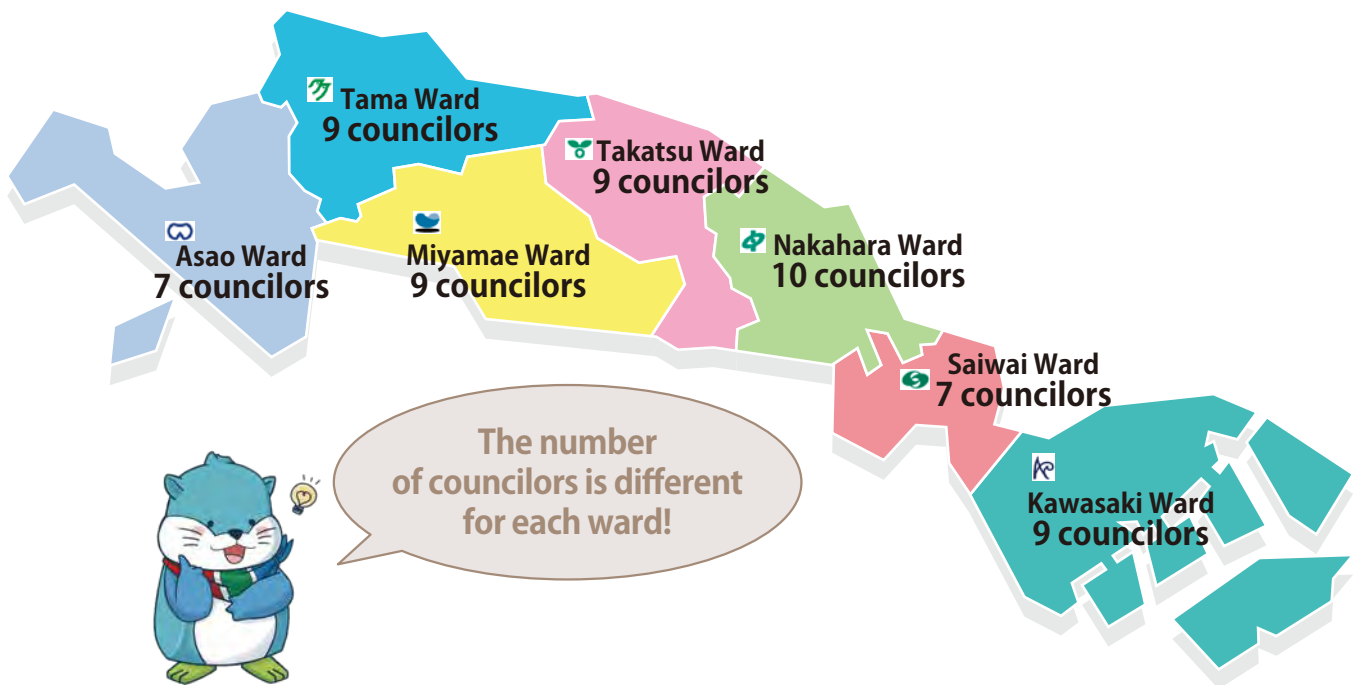
The sports center with its spacious parking lot is complete!



Composition of City Council

Councilors

City Council is composed of councilors, who are selected by the people by direct election. Any citizen of Japan at least 18 years of age who has an address in the city at which he or she has resided for at least 3 months is qualified to vote. A citizen of Japan at least 25 years of age who has voting rights is qualified to stand for election as a city councilor. Kawasaki City Council consists of 60 councilors serving a term of 4 years. Each councilor is elected by, and represents, a ward. Each ward can have multiple councilors, with the number of councilors determined in proportion to the population of that ward.



Chair and Vice Chair

City Council has a chair and vice chair, who are elected by the councilors from among their number. The chair is the representative of City Council. He or she works to ensure the smooth operation of City Council, maintains order in the Council chambers, and supervises and processes the Council's work. The vice chair serves in place of the chair if the chair is unable to serve for some reason, such as accident or illness.

Factions

City councilors who share the same principles and opinions may gather together to form factions and act on that basis.

How City Council Works

Every year City Council holds four regular sessions, on a scheduled basis, usually in February, June, September and December. City Council may also hold irregular sessions, convened as necessary. Both regular and irregular sessions are convened by the mayor. The mayor must convene an irregular session if the chair requests it following a resolution to that effect by the Council Steering Committee, or if a request to do so is supported by at least one quarter of councilors. When a regular or irregular session

convenes, the first order of business is to determine the session length (fixed period over which City Council will be in session). In principle the plenary session and committees meet during this period to deliberate on and examine bills. Activities of City Council in principle take place during sessions. In cases where a decision cannot be reached during the session, however, committees may meet (after certain procedures are followed) and continue to deliberate on the matter even after the session has ended. Kawasaki City Council's committees are typically active even when City Council is not in session.

Timeline of City Council Activities

Plenary Sessions

Plenary sessions are meetings of all members of City Council. Final yes-or-no decisions on bills, declarations of intent and so on of City Council are all made during the plenary sessions. In principle, resolutions require the approval of a simple majority of councilors present.

Opening of session

Tabling of bills

When a bill is tabled, it becomes an agenda item of the plenary session.

Explanation of proposals

The councilor who proposes a bill explains the content of the bill and the reasons for proposing it.

Representatives' questions

Representatives of each faction ask questions about each bill.

Referral to committee

Bills, petitions and appeals are entrusted to the appropriate committees.

Committees (explanation, questions, voting)

Bills that are particularly complex and wide-ranging in nature are exceptionally difficult to deliberate on in plenary session alone. To handle such bills, five standing committees of small numbers of councilors are established as described below. These standing committees examine bills in detail from specialized perspectives. In addition to examining bills, the committees examine petitions and appeals referred to them.

General Affairs Committee

Examines bills on the general plan, financial policy, commerce, industry, tourism, the waterfront and other matters.



Culture and Education Committee

Examines bills on cultural promotion, sports, daycare facilities, schools, education and other, related matters.



Health and Social Welfare Committee

Examines bills on social services, healthcare, hygiene, hospitals, firefighting and other, related matters.



Urban Development Committee

Examines bills on the city plan, residential housing, roads, parks, rivers and other, related matters.



Environmental Committee

Examines bills on the environment, ports, waterworks, sewerage, municipal bus services and other, related matters.



Steering Committee

Established to ensure the smooth operation of City Council. Confers on various issues related to the operation of City Council and coordinates communication among councilors.

Special Committees

Established for limited periods as needed to examine specific issues. Originally established to examine budgets and settlement of accounts. Today the only Special Committee in operation is the Special Committee for the Examination of Metropolitan Tax and Financial Systems.

Plenary Session

Reports of Committee Chairs

The committee chairs report on the items discussed in their respective committees and the results of those discussions.

Debate

Councilors express their support for or opposition to bills and other matters.

Voting

Councilors vote to determine whether City Council supports or opposes various actions, stances, etc.

General Questions

Councilors who wish to do so can ask questions regarding the City's policies.

Closing of Session

Powers of City Council

City Council is vested with a broad range of powers, by means of laws and ordinances, enabling it to act fully in its capacity as the body that represents the people of the City of Kawasaki.

Voting Rights (Bills)

Councilors vote on important matters such as the enactment and repeal of ordinances, budget decisions, approval of the City's accounts, conclusion of contracts above a certain value, and the acquisition and disposal of important municipal assets.

Voting Rights (Election of Officials)

Councilors elect the chair and vice chair of City Council as well as members of the Election Steering Committee and other officers of the City.

Right to Approve Appointments

When the mayor appoints a deputy mayor, secretary of education, members of the Education, Audit and Personnel Committees or other officers of City, such appointments require the approval of City Council.

Right to Conduct Inspections and Demand Audits

Councilors can conduct inspection of documents regarding the conduct of City affairs and can demand audits by Audit Committee members.

Right of Examination

Councilors can examine City affairs. If necessary, they can demand that related persons present themselves to City Council or submit testimony or records.

Right to Submit Written Opinions

Councilors can submit written opinions to the Diet (national parliament), the prefectural government or related administrative agencies regarding matters affecting the interests of the City.

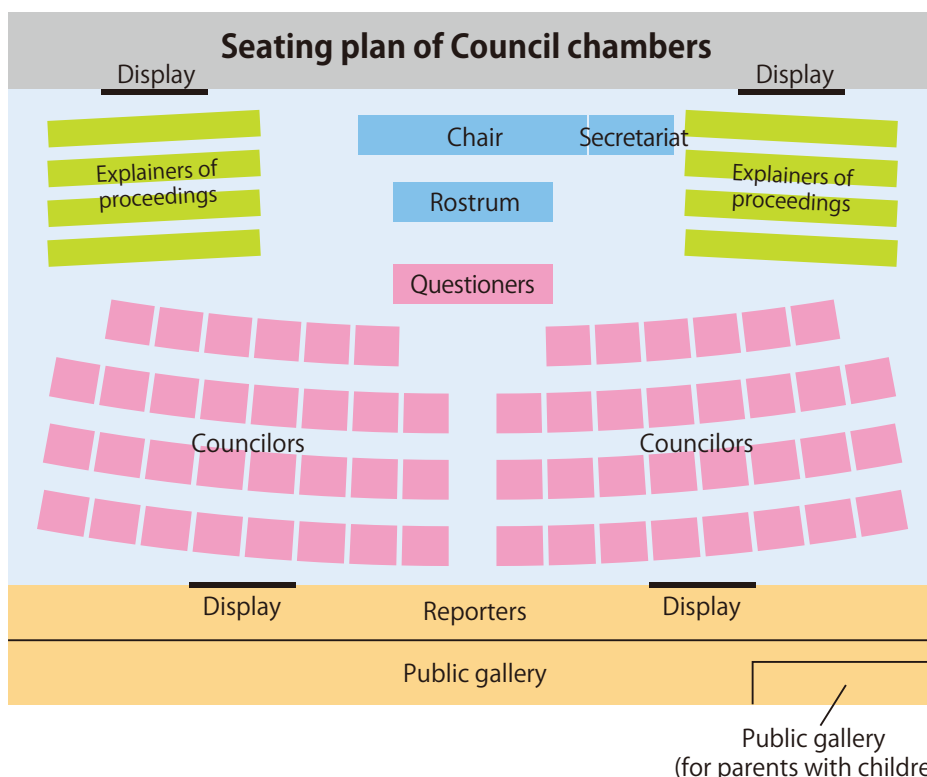
Right of Vote of Non-confidence

If opposition between City Council and the mayor has reached an impasse such that no solution can be found, councilors can hold a vote of non-confidence in the mayor, so that the matter can be brought before the people for final judgment.

Right of Self-determination

To secure the independence and autonomy of City Council, the right of City Council to determine its own affairs is guaranteed.

City councilors aim for better municipal policy based on this wide range of rights!



Explainers of Proceedings

To explain the bills submitted for Council's consideration, the mayor, deputy mayor, Secretary of Education, manager of hospital operations, managers of waterworks and sewerage operations, various bureau chiefs, manager of the Waterfront International Strategy Division, accounts manager, chief administrators of each ward, director of crisis management, Deputy Secretary of Education and members of each policy committee (committee chairs and representative Audit Committee members) attend City Council, seated to the left and right of the chair.

How do we make our voices heard to City Council?

Direct Demand

With the signatures of a certain number of voters, any citizen who disagrees with any aspect of the implementation of municipal policy can demand the establishment, amendment or repeal of city ordinances, dismissal of councilors, dissolution of City Council, dismissal of the mayor, deputy mayor or other principal public servants, audit of city affairs or other, similar actions.

Petitions and Appeals

Citizens can submit their wishes directly to City Council in written form. If the demand is submitted with the introduction of a councilor, it is called a petition; if not, it is called an appeal. Petitions are typically deliberated in committee or in plenary session of City Council; in Kawasaki City Council, however, both petitions and appeals are examined in committee.

How Can I Find Out What City Council is Doing?

Attending the sessions

Plenary sessions are in principle open to the public. Anyone is welcome to sit in the public gallery and listen to the proceedings. It is also possible to attend committee meetings, although permission is required.

TV Broadcasts

TV programs presenting New Year discussions with the chair and vice chair, in which the participants discuss their New Year's resolutions and so on; round-table discussions with the various faction representatives, on topics such as budget proposals for the New Year; and other content are produced and broadcast.

Gikai Kawasaki, a City Council Newsletter

Kawasaki City Council publishes the newsletter Gikai Kawasaki on a quarterly basis, to notify citizens of the activities of City Council and the results of its deliberations. The newsletter is distributed directly to mailboxes or through neighborhood associations (chōnaikai) and neighborhood councils (jichikai) in the City of Kawasaki as well as through public facilities such as ward offices and train stations. It is also posted on the City Council website.

City Council Minutes

Search Engine This search engine makes it easy to find details of the deliberations and examinations conducted in the plenary session and committees, simply by entering keywords. Minutes of City Council proceedings can also be viewed at ward offices, libraries and other public facilities.



City Council minutes search engine

Live Broadcasts from City Council

Interested persons can watch the proceedings of City Council and its committees in the Council chambers and committee rooms on the Kawasaki City Council website, either live or pre-recorded. Proceedings conducted in the City Council chambers can also be viewed live on monitors in each ward office.



City Council live broadcasts

City Council Website, Facebook and X (formerly Twitter)

- The roster of councilors, dates and results of meetings, actions of City Council and other details are listed on the City Council website.
- Information about City Council is also disseminated through City Council's Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) accounts.

Website

<https://www.city.kawasaki.jp/council/>

Kawasaki City Council



Kawasaki City Council website