

## Political History of Kewanee

There are four basic types of government available to municipalities in Illinois and Kewanee has experienced all four: village board, mayor-council, commission, and manager-council.

While Kewanee was founded in 1854, it was not incorporated as a municipality until 1867 when the Illinois General Assembly granted Kewanee a charter as a village.

In 1897 with a population of about 7,000 Kewanee was incorporated as a city by the state legislature. The only type of city government available at that time was mayor-council (also called aldermanic form).

In 1911 during the so-called Progressive Era in American history, Kewanee joined many other “progressive” cities by adopting the commission form of municipal government. Both the commission form, founded in Texas in 1901, and the manager-council form, founded in Ohio in 1908, were hailed by progressive or reform-minded thinkers as a solution to the political corruption that they perceived was rampant in American cities.

Finally, in 1986 Kewanee residents decided to abandon the commission form and try the fourth type of city government—council manager. After several challenges at the ballot box, the council-manager form remains as the political structure under which the city of Kewanee is governed as we move into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century A.D.