



URBAN DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT IN MOSCOW: STATE AND MUNICIPAL LEVELS

УПРАВЛЕНИЕ ГОРОДСКИМ РАЗВИТИЕМ В МОСКВЕ: ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ И МУНИЦИПАЛЬНЫЙ УРОВНИ

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The genesis of Moscow city self-government: a historical view of the past from the present

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Abstract. This study outlines the brief history of the institution of public self-government in Moscow over three centuries, from the emergence of its preconditions to the modern period. It traces the trend of expanding the powers of city self-government in the capital — from the Town Hall to the district administration — and provides a brief description of the electoral foundations for forming self-government bodies and their structure, as well as their relationships with state authorities. Significant attention in the study is paid to the reform of local self-government in the present time — from the late 1990s to the present day. The author concludes that the adoption by the State Duma of the Russian Federation of the new Federal Law No. 33-FZ dated March 20, 2025 “On the General Principles of Organizing Local Self-Government in the Unified System of Public Power” is an important stage in the development of Moscow self-government and its adaptation to modern requirements.

Keywords: public self-government, local self-government, electoral system, electoral qualification, local self-government bodies, city Duma, councilors, deputies, city head, mayor, prefect, sub-prefect, head of district administration, intra-city municipal formation

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Генезис московского городского самоуправления: исторический взгляд на прошлое из настоящего

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Аннотация. Раскрыта краткая история института общественного самоуправления в Москве в течение 3 столетий от появления его предпосылок до современного периода. Прослежена тенденция расширения полномочий городского самоуправления в столице — от Ратуши до районной управы. Дана краткая характеристика выборных основ формирования органов самоуправления и их структуры, взаимоотношений с государственными органами власти. Значительное место уделено реформированию местного самоуправления с конца 1990-х гг. до наших дней. Автор делает вывод о том, что принятие Государственной Думой РФ нового федерального закона от 20.03.2025 № 33-ФЗ «Об общих принципах организации местного самоуправления в единой системе публичной власти» является важным этапом в развитии московского самоуправления и адаптации его к современным требованиям.

Ключевые слова: общественное самоуправление, местного самоуправления, избирательная система, избирательный ценз, органы местного самоуправления, городская Дума, гласные, советники, депутаты, городской голова, мэр, префект, супрефект, глава управы, внутригородское муниципальное образование

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Introduction

The history of the formation and development of urban public administration in Moscow has deep roots, spanning over 325 years. Historically, as one of Russia's largest cities and an important center for the development of Russian statehood, Moscow has always served as a prime example of the relationship between municipal and state power. A city with a large population, developed infrastructure, and a scientific and cultural center, Moscow has always required a well-established system of urban self-government [1].

The city administration of Moscow evolved gradually. The gathering of appanage Rus' around Moscow, which began in the fourteenth century, was not accompanied for a long time by changes in the internal administrative and social orders that existed in the former principalities. The old governing orders

in independent appanages retained their former force for a long time. Rus' gradually turned into one huge appanage of the princely house. Only after defeating most of the appanage princes did the successors of Kalita begin reforming the system of governance, including local governance.

Initially, until the 17th century, the governing bodies of Moscow were essentially indistinguishable from national ones. The power of the Grand Princes and Tsars of Moscow extended, as is known, first and foremost to the capital, where the Tsar of the Russian State was the first voivode (military governor) of Moscow. It is known that from the 14th century, the main part of Moscow's population lived in sloboda (settlements) spreading around the Kremlin and Kitay-gorod. The residents of "white" sloboda did not pay taxes, while the population of "black" sloboda was the main tax-paying class. At that time, the Zemsky Prikaz (Zemstvo Department or Court) was a central state institution in Russia from the second half of the 15th to the 17th centuries. It was responsible for maintaining public order, urban improvement, civil and criminal justice, as well as tax collection from the tax-paying population of Moscow.

During this period, there was no local self-government in the classical sense in cities yet. *Namestniki* (viceroys) and *volosteli* (district administrators) governed not only uyezds (districts) and volosts (smaller districts) but also the cities within their territories. Later, special bodies of city governance appeared. In the 15th century, the position of *gorodchik* (city governor) emerged, essentially a military commandant overseeing the condition of city fortifications and the settlement's fulfillment of duties related to defense. Later they became known as *gorodskiy prikazchiki* (city stewards) and were subordinate to the Grand Prince's treasurers¹.

The *Zemsky Prikaz* can be considered a prototype of city self-government. It monitored street safety, attempted to fight fires, in particular by prohibiting heating bathhouses in summer, etc.

The peculiarity of local self-government bodies increased even more in the 16th century. A significant phenomenon of this time in the sphere of local public administration was the establishment of the position of *gorodskoy voevoda* (city voivode). They were appointed by the sovereign or the *Razryadny Prikaz* (Military Service Department). But there were cases when voivodes were appointed at the request of city residents. *D'yaki* (clerks) handled paperwork under the voivodes. The Moscow voivode was the chief administrator, whose competence extended to all city affairs. In other cities, the voivode acted not as a representative of the zemstvo (local assembly) but as a representative of the *prikaz* (central administrative) authority, since he was appointed to his post by a Moscow *prikaz*. He could not belong to the local community, as it was forbidden to appoint a voivode to cities

¹ О полномочиях воевод: Уложение Алексея Михайловича Гл.10 [On the Powers of Voyevodas: Code of Alexis Mikhailovich. Chapter 10]. *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii (PSZ)* [Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire]. 1830;1:17–62. (In Russ.).

where he had estates and patrimonial lands. As a representative of the central authority, the voivode was accountable only to it. Each voivode, before assuming his post, received a so-called “*nakaz*” (instruction) from the Moscow prikaz, listing all his duties. At the same time, government control over the voivode’s activities was practically absent. The main method of “control” was limiting the term of voivodeship to three years².

City Governance in Moscow under Peter I

The comprehensive reforms of Peter I also affected the system of city governance in Moscow. In 1708, Moscow Governorate was formed. Capital functions were increasingly transferred to St. Petersburg at this time, and the significance of Moscow as the former capital of the Russian State diminished considerably. Moscow Governorate included 39 cities and existed under that name until 1929 when Moscow Oblast was formed, its boundaries not coinciding with the previous guberniya borders [1].

Under Peter the Great, the separation of powers into legislative and executive began. As noted, Peter took the European principle of building city self-government as a model. At that time, the head of the executive power in any Western European city was the Rathaus (town hall), and its leaders were usually elected from representatives of the merchant and artisan classes. Considering this experience, Tsar Peter sought to create a Moscow system of public self-government counting on the capital’s merchants and manufacturers so that both production and trade, the basis for taxation, would develop more actively in the city. As a result, on January 30, 1699, by decree of Peter the Great, the *Burmisterskaya Palata* (Burmisters’ Chamber) was created in Moscow, located in the Kremlin, soon renamed in the European manner as the *Ratusha* (Town Hall). *Burmistr* or burgomistr (burgomaster), the head of the executive power, was one of the main positions of self-government for the *posad* (townspeople) population of the city. This position was elective, but the burgomasters received salaries from city revenues. The Ratusha allocated and collected state taxes and duties from the *posad* (trading and artisan) population of Moscow and monitored compliance with state monopolies.

It is necessary to note that the *Burmisterskaya Palata* was a city-wide body of estate-based self-government. In March 1699, the first elections of six burgomasters constituting the *Burmisterskaya Palata* were held in Moscow and other cities of the Muscovite Tsardom. Notably, the *Moscow Ratusha* acquired the significance of an all-Russian center. As a result, the town halls of other Russian

² O polnomochiyakh voevod: Ulozhenie Alekseya Mikhailovicha Gl.10 [On the Powers of Voyerodas: Code of Alexis Mikhailovich. Chapter 10]. *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii (PSZ)* [Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire]. 1830;1:17–62. (In Russ.).

cities became accountable to it. Later, the Ratusha included 12 elected burgomasters. Thus, it represented a city collegial body headed by a *president*.

As a city estate institution, the Ratusha had extensive public administration duties. It performed financial, administrative, and judicial functions concerning the trade-industrial stratum of Moscow's population, i.e., it distributed taxes and duties among the posad population, organized tax and duty collection in Moscow, managed the construction of bathhouses, prisons, distilleries, checked the accuracy of weights and measures in markets, the quality of alcohol in taverns, and had the functions of an estate court for the posad population in trade and civil cases (including criminal ones), and also considered complaints from foreign merchants against Moscow residents. The Ratusha made decisions on all these problems by majority vote.

Burgomasters were elected, one person from each trade and artisan corporation, including numerous sloboda united on a professional-territorial principle. The elections were two-stage. The list of elected was certified by the signatures of the most respected townspeople and sent to the tsar for approval. Although Moscow burgomasters were elected at general posad assemblies, in practice they came under the full disposal of the government. On Sundays, burgomasters had the right to a personal report to the tsar about their affairs and needs. For abuse of office, punishments were established for burgomasters: "merciless beating with rods", exile to Azov, and the death penalty. Groups of the urban population that elected them could be fined for the abuses of burgomasters. It is necessary to note that the Ratusha mainly protected the interests of the well-off posad population, as it primarily represented the affluent part of the city.

From the beginning of the 18th century, the Ratusha gradually began to lose its significance, as its main functions — financial, property registration, zemstvo, etc. — were successively transferred to state institutions of the Russian Empire. As a result, in 1710, by decree of Peter I, the Ratusha was subordinated to the Governor-General, which sharply reduced its status and substantive activities. On February 15, 1720, by decree of Peter I, the Ratusha relinquished its powers in connection with the introduction of the *Glavny Magistrat* (Chief Magistracy). It was established in Moscow in 1723 based on the decree and regulations of the Chief Magistracy [1].

From that time, cities became separate structural units of administration. It existed with some interruptions for over 140 years (1723–1799, 1802–1866). Although in 1727 Empress Catherine I issued a decree transforming the Gorodovoy Magistrat (City Magistracy) back into a Ratusha, her daughter Empress Elizabeth later restored the Gorodovoy Magistrat on the previous basis. Unlike the Ratusha, the Magistracy had the functions of an administrative-financial institution, a local institution of estate management, and an estate court: it collected all types of taxes and duties from the posad population and

distributed them, partially financed the construction and repair of churches, inns, bridges, and other structures, the opening of schools, hospitals, and almshouses, was responsible for maintaining cleanliness and order in the city, registered merchants and guilds, kept records of population growth based on information received from priests and sent them to the Chief Magistracy, and ensured police and judicial functions. All members of the Gorodovoy Magistracy's presence were elected by the elite of the posad population. Initially, a lifelong term of service in the magistracy was established, then three-year and one-year terms. A member of the Magistrat who served for many years could count on receiving nobility.

It is necessary to emphasize that Gorodovoy Magistrat *was the first legally formalized representative, albeit estate-restricted, body of city self-government in Moscow, and also that there was no separation of powers — all local authority was concentrated in the hands of a single body.*

However, in the organization of public administration created by Peter I, which included the Burmisters' Chamber, the Ratusha, and then the city magistracies that replaced them, there was no position of gorodskoy golova (city mayor). This position appeared under Catherine II, and its emergence is connected not with the reform of city governance but with the creation in 1767 of the Commission for Drafting a New Code (Ulozhenie). According to the Manifesto of December 14, 1766, elections of city deputies to the Legislative Commission began with the election of a city mayor, who was assigned the role of chairman in electoral assemblies. Thus, the first Moscow city mayor of this kind became (14.12.1767) Procurator-General A.A. Vyazemsky, who came from a noble but “greatly impoverished” family [2]. His selection emphasized the importance attached to this position at the time. Given that the Legislative Commission worked in Moscow, the Moscow city mayor was entrusted with monitoring its activities.

The System of City Governance under Catherine II

After Peter I, reforms of public city governance were significantly refined by Empress Catherine II. In the 1770s–1780s, she approved the most important documents for that time: the “Institutions for the Governance of the Governorates of the All-Russian Empire” (November 1775) and the “Charter on the Rights and Benefits to the Cities of Russia”, i.e., the *Zhalovannaya gramota gorodam* (Charter to the Towns), or the Gorodovoye polozheniye (Municipal Statute) of 1785, which for the first time defined a uniform order of urban public administration on a legislative basis. The 1785 Municipal Statute defined the city as a legal entity, as a special local community with its own “special interests and needs”. It also defined the system of city self-government: 1) *General City Duma* (Obshchaya

gorodskaya дума); 2) *Six-Member Duma* (Shestiglasnaya дума); 3) *City Society* (Gradskoye obshchestvo).

In fact, after numerous approvals at all levels, the position of city mayor in the Russian Empire was introduced in 1785, after Empress Catherine II published the “Charter on the Rights and Benefits to the Cities of the Russian Empire”. Somewhat earlier, in September 1782, the position of city mayor was introduced in Moscow during the preparation and practical testing of the provisions of the “Charter”³. The first *city mayor* of Moscow in this new capacity became D.D. Meshchaninov, a Moscow merchant of the first guild, whom Empress Catherine II had favored even earlier and who she proposed for this important state position in Russia’s second capital.

In this regard, it should be noted that in the 18th century, the city began to turn into a single, independent community of people, a separate object of management. Most scholars agree that the fundamental significance of the Charter to the Towns lay in formalizing the city as a legal entity. This meant, in our opinion, a rejection of the view of the city as merely a settlement with only a trade-industrial population. Therefore, the Charter opened up broader societal participation in the affairs of urban economic management [3. P. 408–410].

This document stated that cities could only be built “according to an approved plan, signed by the hand of His/Her Imperial Majesty”. It confirmed the cities’ right to “rightfully belonging” lands, gardens, pastures, meadows, rivers, forests, groves, mills, both within the city and outside it, which were to be “used peacefully and on the basis of laws”. The City Magistracy was instructed to keep a book describing houses, buildings, places, and city lands “by numbers”, in which acts of purchase, sale, lease, and other transactions with city real estate and land plots were to be registered.

However, city institutions received rather modest autonomy under the Charter, and even those “needs and benefits” that the legislator defined as legitimate were satisfied in most cases not by the city дума but by other institutions — the Prikaz obshchestvennogo prizreniya (Board of Public Welfare), the police, and magistracies.

The Charter to the Towns defined the main subject of city self-government as the city assembly — “*obshchestvo gradskoye*” (city society), which included city residents (obyvateli). It convened once every three years on the initiative of the governor to consider the most important proposals related to city development and directions of the provincial administration’s activities, elections of members of all city self-government institutions, judges of estate courts, members for general and estate institutions, members of the General City Дума, and deputies for maintaining the “obyvatel’skaya kniga” (residents’ book), which listed city

³ Zhalovannaya gramota na prava i vygody gorodam Rossiiskoi imperii ot 21 aprelya 1875 g. [Charter to the Towns on the Rights and Benefits for the Towns of the Russian Empire of April 21, 1875]. *Complete Collection of Laws [First Collection]*. 1875;16188(22). (In Russ.).

residents indicating property status, occupation, and real estate owned. The book consisted of 6 categories:

1. Real residents (*nastoyashchiye obyvateli*) owning real estate in the city (In alphabetical order).
2. Merchants of three guilds.
3. Master craftsmen and journeymen.
4. Foreigners and non-resident guests.
5. “Eminent citizens” (*imenityye grazhdane*).
6. The remaining *posad* population not listed in the first five parts (In alphabetical order).

Members of the city assembly with voting rights were men who had reached the age of 25 and paid property taxes of at least 50 rubles. For women or absentees, family members or other persons could vote by proxy.

Current issues of Moscow’s life were resolved by elected bodies of city self-government: *the city General Duma and the city Six-Member Duma*.

The General City Duma was elected for three years by categories. It included representatives of all six “categories” of the city population. Owners of real property and *posad* people elected one deputy (*glasny*) in each city part (there were 15 in Moscow); merchants — one deputy per guild; guildsmen (artisans) — one per guild; eminent citizens — one deputy per subdivision if it had at least five people. Initially, the Duma included: the city mayor, 15 deputies from “real city residents”, i.e., persons owning real property in the city (initially these were mainly officials, later — merchants), 3 members from guild merchants (one from each of the three guilds), 16 — from guild artisans (one from each guild), 15 — from *meshchane* (townspeople) (one from each city police part), 16 — from non-resident merchants, 12 — from foreign guests (one from each “nation”), one — from eminent citizens.

The General City Duma once every three years elected from among the deputies a Six-Member Duma consisting of 6 people (one from each category). The Moscow General City Duma was a representative body. Executive and administrative functions were transferred to the Six-Member City Duma.

The electoral system considered not only the estate structure of the city but also property qualifications. The rights of low-income Muscovites were substantially limited. The competence of Moscow city self-government was defined by solving issues of local significance, including: monitoring the soundness of public city buildings; construction of everything necessary for Muscovites, including market squares, wharves, warehouses, shops; development of the public welfare system; activities to increase sources of local revenues; providing city residents with necessary means for “sustenance and maintenance”; protecting the city from disputes and lawsuits with surrounding cities and villages, maintaining “peace, tranquility, and good agreement” among city residents; police functions; resolving disputes and conflicts between guilds and artisan guild organizations.

The Charter to the Towns provided certain guarantees for the activities of local self-government bodies. In particular, just like the noble assembly, the city assembly, as indicated by Catherine II, “shall not appear in court, but shall be defended by its attorney”. Complaints about the work of the city general assembly and the city Six-Member Duma were submitted to the provincial magistracy. It was also important that the state acted as an arbiter in resolving conflict situations between city self-government bodies and citizens.

Thus, the *Municipal Statute of 1785 formed the basis for subsequent reforms of public city governance.*

The General City Duma in Moscow was solemnly opened on January 15, 1786, in the presence of Moscow Governor V.P. Lopukhin. The Duma was headed by the city mayor, whose position was established by Catherine II in connection with the planned election of city representatives to the Commission for Drafting a New Code. The first city mayor of Moscow, elected according to the 1785 Municipal Statute, became the eminent citizen, commerce councilor Semyon Dmitrievich Sitnikov.

During the reign of Paul I, elected bodies practically ceased to exist. Upon ascending the throne, he first abolished the “Charter to the Towns” and carried out a new city reform by decree of September 12, 1798. The “Charter of the Capital City of St. Petersburg” was adopted, which limited city self-government and strengthened the state principle in governance. Instead of elected bodies, *Ratgauzy* (administrative boards) were introduced, which essentially represented a state territorial body. The *Ratgauz* was headed by a president appointed by the emperor. In the same year, “commissions for supplying the capitals with provisions, arranging quarters, and other matters related to the police” were created.

Such a system of city governance was extended to Moscow. By decree of Paul I, the Moscow General Duma was abolished on January 17, 1799. In April of that year, the “Charter of the Capital City of Moscow” came into force, which for the economic management of the city established a *ratgauz*, consisting of crown and elected officials headed by a president appointed by imperial decree. However, already in 1801, Alexander I, by Manifesto of April 2, restored the effect of the 1785 Municipal Statute and thereby confirmed its “inviolability and immunity” [1].

Development of Moscow City Self-Government in the 19th Century

In general, Russian cities were legally governed on the principles of public self-government, but the independence of city representative power, including in Moscow, was reduced to a possible minimum.

Public self-government of the city consisted of disparate corporations forced to submit to state power, and the central state power used self-government for the purposes of absolutism. As a result, by the mid-19th century, the provisions of the

“Charter to the Towns” had become largely obsolete or were repealed by other legal acts. Russian legislation did not correspond to the level of socio-economic development of cities and their significance in the economic, political, and cultural life.

Work on restructuring local self-government based on broad participation of the local population did not cease. However, a common Regulation for all cities of the empire did not appear, except for St. Petersburg, where a new *Municipal Statute* was introduced in 1846, which with some changes was introduced in Moscow on March 20, 1862, as the “*Regulation on Public Self-Government of the City of Moscow*”. From this moment, city self-government turns from estate-based into public⁴.

This Regulation was favorably distinguished by its democracy from the administrative-bureaucratic arbitrariness of Nicholas I’s reign. Its content indicates that it significantly narrowed the circle of townspeople enjoying “rights of status” in city society, and consequently, electoral rights in local government bodies. As a result, city society was divided into five main categories:

1. Hereditary nobles owning real estate in the capital.
2. Personal nobles, honorary citizens, and *raznochintsy* (commoners such as scholars, artists, actors, etc.) owning similar property.
3. Local merchants of all three guilds.
4. *Meshchane* not registered in guilds.
5. Artisans or *meshchane* registered in artisan guilds for an unlimited time (perpetual guild members).

The principles of forming the General City Duma changed. For its election every three years, assemblies of elected citizens from each of the five estates were formed, 100–150 people from each estate. They then elected from their midst 35 deputies each.

In Moscow, thus, the number of deputies amounted to 175.

In accordance with the opinion of the State Council of December 12, 1866, candidates for deputies of the General City Duma were to be elected (their number could not exceed 1/3 of the total number of deputies).

The General Duma initiated the bestowal of the title “Honorary Citizen of Moscow.” The first to be awarded this title was City Mayor Prince A.A. Shcherbatov (05.03.1866).

It should be noted that the right to vote was granted only to persons with an income of at least 100 rubles per year and not younger than 21 years of age. And the right to be elected as a Duma deputy required being at least 25 years old. They had to own real estate in Moscow or possess monetary capital or goods yielding at least 100 rubles per year and be registered in the city for at least two years.

⁴Polozhenie ob obshchestvennom samoupravlenii g. Moskvy ot 20 marta 1862 g. [Statute on Public Self-Government of Moscow of March 20, 1862]. *PSZ* [Complete Collection of Laws]. 1862; 37.1;38078. (In Russ.).

The deputies of each category constituted special departments of the Duma. The General Duma elected a permanent executive body — the *Administrative Duma* (*Rasporyaditel'naya дума*) under the chairmanship of the City Mayor, who simultaneously chaired the General Duma and was appointed by the government from among two candidates proposed by the Duma. The term of office of the City Mayor was set at 6 years, while all deputies were elected for 4 years. To the Administrative Duma, the first three (“senior”) departments elected 3 representatives each, and the last two (“junior”) departments, i.e., from artisans and meshchane, elected a total of 3 people. The Administrative Duma also included a representative of the administration, the so-called “member from the crown”. Thus, the Administrative Duma consisted of 12 deputies, the “member from the crown”, and the city mayor. Members of the Administrative Duma were elected for 4 years and confirmed by the Governor-General of Moscow. Supervision of the activities of the Administrative Duma was carried out by the provincial prosecutor.

This peculiar division into “senior” and “junior” departments affected the decision-making at meetings of the General Duma. Usually, issues were discussed in each department separately, with the “senior” departments examining matters, and the “junior” departments only sanctioning already made decisions. This order infringed on the rights of meshchane and artisans and created a special position for the nobility and merchantry. Duma meetings were subdivided into ordinary and special, or extraordinary. The city mayor informed the Moscow Governor-General about the appointment of each meeting.

The competence of the General and Administrative Dumas differed little from that of the General and Six-Member Dumas. Their rights also did not change much. Essentially, what was new compared to the 1785 Municipal Statute was the introduction of representatives from the nobility into the Duma and a decrease in the number of voters due to an increased property qualification.

The new Municipal Statute did not invigorate the Duma’s work. The activity of deputies, especially from the nobility, remained low. Meetings of the General Duma occurred very rarely. In the first 14 years of its existence, the General Duma of St. Petersburg met only 17 times, and in Moscow even less [1].

Under the aforementioned Regulation, nobles, both hereditary and personal, entered the city community as owners of personal property. The other three categories entered the city community as a tax-paying estate (by right of “status”), i.e., as townspeople bearing state duties. Recall that according to the 1785 Statute, all residents “who have a house or other building, or place, or land in that city” were part of the city society, and by right of property ownership, they entered the city society under the category of “real residents” without distinction of origin or occupation. Thus, by granting property rights only to the nobility, honorary citizens, and *raznochintsy*, the new Regulation deprived property rights from

a significant circle of townspeople who did not belong to the other three tax-paying estates but owned real property in the city.

It is important to note that the leadership of the Duma passed from the merchantry to the noble estate, and for the first time, a nobleman, Prince A.A. Shcherbatov, and then Prince V.A. Cherkassky, were elected city mayor.

Exceptionally important for the further development of city self-government was the *Municipal Statute of June 16, 1870*, which was amended several times⁵. The corresponding principles of zemstvo (local) self-government remained practically unchanged. After the approval of the Municipal Statute by Emperor Alexander II on June 16, 1870, another 2 years were required to prepare the “Rules for the Application of this 1870 Municipal Statute in the Cities of St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Odessa,” which were put into effect on June 20, 1872.

According to the Municipal Statute, city self-government bodies included: the *City Duma* (Gorodskaya дума) under the chairmanship of the city mayor and the executive body of city self-government — the *City Administration* (Gorodskaya uprava), which were elected for a term of four years. The 1870 Municipal Statute rejected the estate principle of representation but retained the property qualification. Specifically: the electoral system was based on the principle of the urban population paying taxes to the city treasury (*tax qualification*). A three-category electoral system was introduced, in which all voters were entered into a general electoral list in descending order of taxes paid, then divided into three parts, each corresponding to one-third of the total sum of all taxes. The wealthiest strata of the population fell into the first category, people of average means into the second, and the main mass of taxpayers into the third. The City Duma necessarily included the chairman of the local district administration and a deputy from the ecclesiastical department. The total number of elected deputies in Russia varied from 30 to 72 depending on the city’s size. In Moscow, their number was 180.

The position of *tovarishch* (deputy) city mayor was introduced, with his appointment in the position carried out by the Minister of Internal Affairs. A feature of the legal status of the city mayor was that he was elected from persons of all estates without restrictions, who had reached the age of 30 and owned property worth at least 15 thousand rubles. The city mayor was elected for 4 years from two candidates presented by the Governor-General. The one who received the most votes was confirmed by the supreme authority. The mayor presided over the meetings, “if it is not pleasing to the Sovereign Emperor to appoint a special person”. Meetings were called at the discretion of the city mayor, at the request of the Governor-General, or at the desire of no less than 1/5 of the deputies. A meeting was valid if no less than 1/5 of the deputies were present [3].

⁵ Gorodovoe polozhenie, vysochaishe utverzhdennoe ot 16 iyunya 1870 g. [Municipal Statute, Supremely Approved on June 16, 1870]. St. Petersburg: Ministerstvo Vnutrennikh Del (MVD); 1870. PSZ-2 [Second Collection]. 1870;48498(45). (In Russ.).

In this regard, it is necessary to note that the government, forced to grant city public administration some autonomy in solving economic issues and independence from the local administrative-police apparatus, during the preparation of the city reform showed particular concern about the social composition of the dumas. Therefore, at all stages of developing the Municipal Statute, primary importance was given precisely to the law on electoral rights, on which the circle of voters depended and to a large extent predetermined the composition of those elected to city self-government bodies. The government, forced to reckon with the growing strength of the urban bourgeoisie, at the same time sought to somewhat weaken its influence in city public administration bodies, dilute it in the mass of voters not belonging to the trade-industrial strata of the city's population, and provide the latter with some benefits for participating in elections. At the same time, the government showed little interest in attracting representatives of the noble estate to city self-government. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, directly engaged in preparing and implementing the reform of city self-government, attached great importance to clarifying the ratio in the composition of both voters and deputies between persons belonging to the bourgeois strata of the population and those not engaged in trade-industrial activity. Thus, the trade-industrial strata of the city now began to set the tone in the Duma.

The mayor was elected for four years from two candidates on behalf of all urban classes.

On June 11, 1892, Emperor Alexander III approved the Municipal Statute, according to which the electoral system was reorganized: the tax qualification was replaced by a property qualification based on ownership of city real estate, with wealthy tenants of city real estate also receiving voting rights. The number of deputies was reduced to 130, and a new elective category was introduced — candidate for deputy, whose number was to be no less than 1/5 of the total composition of deputies (26 persons). Voters formed a single electoral assembly, divided into territorial districts. Only persons with the right to vote in a given district could run for deputy in that district. Operators of wine shops and drinking houses were deprived of the right to participate in elections. Clergymen could be neither voters nor deputies. The right to vote was granted to: 1) persons of Russian citizenship, 2) 25 years of age, 3) paying taxes to the city treasury, 4) if they had no arrears in city taxes.

The presence of electoral qualifications in the second half of the 19th century significantly limited the ability of the population of cities, including Moscow, to participate in elections of representative bodies. For example, voting rights were granted only to large payers of city taxes, homeowners whose possessions were valued at no less than 3,000 rubles, and first-guild merchants paying a tax of at least 500 rubles. With such a high qualification, the number of voters in Moscow sharply decreased.

In Moscow, only 0.7% of the city's population had the right to vote, and by 1898 this percentage dropped to 0.3 [4].

Subsequently, in most cities, the percentage of participation in elections decreased further. At the same time, in all cities without exception, the trade-industrial element showed relatively greater interest in the elections. As a result, according to the final Municipal Statute of 1892, which was in force until 1917, the rights of city self-government were significantly curtailed and once again sharply narrowed the circle of voters. After its adoption, strict state control was established over city self-government. The candidacy of the Moscow city mayor after the elections was approved by the emperor himself; he became considered a state servant. His duties included chairing Duma meetings, monitoring the implementation of decisions, and numerous representational functions.

For non-attendance at Duma meetings without valid reasons, deputies were subjected to monetary fines, reprimands, and even temporary exclusion from the duma. A new meeting schedule was established: no less than 4 and no more than 24 meetings per year.

And yet, despite all the vicissitudes, the position of Moscow city mayor was considered honorable. It was held by such outstanding public figures as Prince V.A. Cherkassky, Professor B.N. Chicherin, S.M. Tretyakov — one of the founding brothers of the famous Tretyakov Gallery, and other well-known Moscow figures. Among the brightest representatives of city governance, one can name N.A. Alekseyev and Prince V.M. Golitsyn, who held many positions in the city power system. He was the Moscow Governor, but before taking this post, he went through all the steps of the city bureaucratic ladder. In 1897, he was elected Moscow city mayor and remained so until 1905. For his great merits in the development of the city, he was elected an Honorary Citizen of Moscow, and the City Duma commissioned his portrait from V.A. Serov to decorate the meeting hall. Among the few scholarly sources on the history of Moscow city governance in the 19th — early 20th centuries, Golitsyn's memoirs are the most important both in completeness and accuracy of presentation. Contemporaries left this definition of Prince V.M. Golitsyn's activities as Moscow city mayor: "He received the city with kerosene lamps and water-drawing fountains and left it with telephones and a water supply"⁶. They deserve a separate narrative.

The City Duma contributed to the development of the Moscow economy and general improvement of the city. Very significant sums were allocated for these purposes. As recalled by Prince V.M. Golitsyn, city self-government was constantly subjected to petty quibbles by officials from St. Petersburg and attacks from democratic publications.

⁶ *ZaDumchivaya stolitsa. Moi raion*. 28.08.2023. URL: <https://mr.moscow/zadumchivaya-stolicza/> (accessed: 10.10.2025). (In Russ.).

The Six-Member Duma was located in the house of provincial government offices on the site later occupied by the Historical Museum. The General and Administrative Dumas occupied premises in the Razumovsky-Sheremetev estate on Vozdvizhenka (8/1). From 1892, the Duma and the Administration were in a specially built building in the center of Moscow on Voskresenskaya Square, later transferred to the V.I. Lenin Museum (now the building of the Historical Museum).

City Self-Government in Moscow in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Periods

In the history of Moscow city self-government, there was a period (1912–1914) when, due to the confrontation between the City Duma and the central authority, the post of city mayor remained vacant. The last city mayor of Moscow was V.M. Chelnokov, who held this position in 1914–1917, until the fall of the autocracy in Russia. He was also the first commissar of the Provisional Government in Moscow.

Until 1917, Moscow was divided into 17 police parts, consisting of police precincts. After the February Revolution, the Committee of Public Organizations and the City Duma carried out a reform of city administration. Instead of police precincts, 44 commissariat precincts were organized. At the same time, the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies back in March divided Moscow into 8 districts (City, Zamoskvoretsky, Presnensky, Sokolniki, Rogozhsko-Basmanny, Lefortovo, Khamovniki, Butyrsky), on which the Bolshevik party, operating underground, traditionally divided Moscow, having its party committees in the districts. By autumn, there were already 11 territorial districts in Moscow with their own soviets. The districts differed sharply in size (from 1 to 13 commissariat precincts) and population (from 45 to 365 thousand people). The names of the districts were not yet stable and sometimes changed. There also existed a non-territorial association of workers and employees of the Moscow railway junction — such an association was called the Railway District. The interweaving of Duma and Soviet zoning was a peculiar manifestation of dual power in Moscow. The October Revolution consolidated the administrative-territorial division of Moscow into districts, based on the principle of division according to the number of Bolshevik party members, later members of the CPSU. This principle lasted until 1991. *By that time, there were 33 districts in Moscow: 13 in the inner belt, which reached the Kremlin and Red Square, and 19 in the outer belt, plus the satellite city Zelenograd.*

On April 15, 1917, the Interim Government carried out a city reform, approved a new electoral system, establishing universal, equal suffrage from the age of twenty in elections by party lists. Along with the position of city mayor, the position of *Chairman of the Duma* was established, and already in June, elections for 200 deputies of the City Duma took place.

After the armed uprising in Moscow, establishing the new power, the City Duma and the City Administration were liquidated. The management of the city

economy was transferred to the *Council of District Dumas*, and already in March 1918, the *Moscow Soviet* — the new city power — received the status of the highest representative body for governing Moscow. Its highest body was the Plenum, and between sessions, power was exercised by the Executive Committee (Ispolkom) and the *Presidium of Mossovet*. For decades, power in the city was exercised by Soviets. First, there were the Soviets of Workers', Peasants', and Soldiers' Deputies, a name they retained until 1936 when they were replaced by Soviets of Working People's Deputies, and from 1977 onwards — by Soviets of People's Deputies. These were representative bodies of state power that exercised the political authority of the working people and were elected directly by the population. To ensure state administration, the Soviets created *executive committees* (ispolkoms), standing deputy commissions, and bodies of people's control. Under the jurisdiction of these authorities, both at the city and district levels, were industrial facilities, transport, construction, trade and public catering, domestic and communal services, material-technical and food supply and sales, housing and communal services, social security, healthcare, physical culture and sports, culture and public education, lending and state insurance, and the apparatuses of administrative bodies. At the same time, political leadership of the Soviets was exercised by corresponding party organs, which in their influence were superior to the bodies of people's power. This system of power had both strengths and weaknesses. However, by the end of the 1970s and 1980s, it became evident that managing a metropolis like Moscow according to the old structural-territorial and organizational-economic patterns was becoming increasingly difficult. By the early 1990s, objective conditions for serious state management reforms in the country had developed. A pressing need for serious urban management reforms had also matured in Moscow.

In March 1990, elections were held for deputies to the Mossovet and district Soviets of People's Deputies. One thousand deputies were elected to the Mossovet. Following established tradition, mandate number 1 was issued in the name of V.I. Lenin. On March 17, 1991, in accordance with the results of a city referendum, the position of Mayor of Moscow was introduced, who became the legal successor of the Mossovet Executive Committee.

On June 12, 1991, the first elections for the Mayor and Vice-Mayor of Moscow took place. The functions of the Mossovet were divided: the Mayor headed the executive power — the Mayoralty, forming executive bodies — the Moscow Government, sectoral and territorial institutions. Thus, a separation of powers occurred: the Mossovet became the representative and administrative body of power, while the Moscow Government became the executive body.

In its development, the system of state and municipal power and administration in Moscow at the present stage has passed through several phases.

An important step in the urban management reform was the transition from a two-tier system of executive power to a three-tier one. As noted above, until

1991, Moscow was divided into districts. Based on the principle of their formation by scale, Moscow's districts differed significantly more than districts in other large cities of the country. For example, the territory of the Krasnogvardeysky District was more than 10 times larger than that of the Baumansky District. The population of the Perovsky District was more than 5 times larger than that of the Sokolniki District. The established territorial division of the city gave rise to the following problems: in large districts, management bodies were overloaded with economic issues, leading to difficulties for the population of a large district to “reach” the authorities, i.e., a problem of “accessibility of power”; the large number of districts as objects of management hampered the activities of city bodies (scope of control); the large number of districts within the Garden Ring hindered clear coordination of efforts to perform capital city functions. All this forced the city authorities to adopt a new administrative-territorial division of the city: instead of 33 districts, 10 *administrative okrugs* and 143 *municipal okrugs* (later 125) were created.

At the head of an administrative okrug was a prefect, appointed by the mayor, with a management apparatus—the prefecture, which later became a territorial body of the city's executive power. The prefect and his apparatus were entrusted with functions: administrative-economic, coordinating, and controlling. And what was the prefect supposed to coordinate and control? The fact is that, according to the plans of the ideologists of the urban reform — then Mayor of Moscow G. Kh. Popov and Vice-Mayor Yu.M. Luzhkov — a new sectoral and territorial structure, unique to Moscow as a giant metropolis, was created, called a *line-staff structure*. Under this structure, city departments, committees, and administrations performed managerial functions, creating the normative base for the sector and managing city property, while the current management of sectoral institutions and enterprises was entrusted to the okrug level. Okrug sectoral administrations were created: administrations for education, healthcare, culture, physical culture and sports, social security, youth policy, and others. The prefects, who became members of the city government (later with ministerial powers, elevating their role in the city management system), were tasked with coordinating and controlling their activities within the okrug territory in the interests of the population.

For two years, 1991–1993, in Moscow, city and district councils of deputies existed in parallel, formed according to the existing Soviet scheme. However, many deputies elected through alternative elections, representing the scientific intelligentsia, who went to the elections with slogans like “All power to the Soviets!” (as once in 1917 — paradoxes of history), against the omnipotence of the CPSU, were oppositionally inclined against the innovations of the city management reformers. Although within the composition of those councils, there were also deputies who shared the innovations of the newly elected mayor and his team. An ambiguous management situation developed: de facto, a division of power occurred: executive power was no longer formed by the deputies and did not report to the councils.

But the councils still wanted to lead the executive power. This led to dangerous collisions when a number of district councils, by their decisions, assumed functions uncharacteristic of representative bodies, especially in distributing objects of city property — residential and non-residential premises, land plots. It went so far that some councils even decided to dissolve executive committees and take over their functions with their deputy commissions. The executive power could not tolerate this. Urgent action was needed.

In October 1991, the executive committees of the district councils were liquidated, which caused an ambiguous reaction from some deputies of the district councils who were oppositional to this reform. Their functions were transferred to the newly created prefectures of administrative okrugs. To bring the authorities closer to the population and to solve their immediate problems and issues, the institution of sub-prefects (*the French word for an official standing next to the prefect*) with their own apparatus, appointed by the prefect, was created in municipal okrugs. This structure lasted until 1997 when sub-prefects were replaced by heads of district administrations.

The dramatic events of September-October 1993 put an end to dual power in Moscow: the councils were dissolved by a decree of the President of the Russian Federation⁷, and instead of the Moscow Council of People's Deputies, the *Moscow City Duma* (MGD) was to be elected.

The first composition of the MGD was elected on December 12, 1993. Thirty-five deputies were elected, becoming representatives of the population working on a professional basis. Subsequently, their number increased to 45 deputies. An important feature and difference from all previously existing representative bodies in Moscow was the function of adopting Moscow laws and MGD resolutions, the main one being the approval of the city budget and exercising deputy control over its execution. According to the current Constitution adopted on December 12, 1993, Moscow has a triple status: Moscow is a subject of the Russian Federation, a city of federal significance, and the capital of the Russian Federation. Consequently, special functions are imposed on Moscow's authorities, not inherent to any other city or subject of the Russian Federation.

In July 1995, an important city law was adopted — the Charter of the City of Moscow. The Charter consolidated the positive results of the management reform being conducted in the city and created a legal basis for its further continuation, primarily at the level of local self-government⁸. The following system of city power developed in Moscow. At the city level, the legislative and

⁷ Decree of the President of the Russian Federation “On the reform of Representative authorities and Local Self-government bodies in the Russian Federation (dated October 9, 1993)”. *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*. 12.10.1993. (In Russ.).

⁸ *The Charter of the City of Moscow was adopted by the Moscow City Duma on June 28, 1995*. Moscow; 1995. (In Russ.).

representative body is the Moscow City Duma, elected through universal, equal, direct elections by secret ballot for 4 years (currently for 5 years). Executive power is formed by the elected Mayor and Vice-Mayor of Moscow (this position was later abolished) as part of the Moscow Government, sectoral bodies — departments, committees, administrations, inspections — and territorial bodies — prefectures and district administrations. Issues that could and should be solved by territorial bodies were transferred to their jurisdiction along with corresponding funding, material provision, and staff. Simultaneously, prefects of administrative okrugs were granted the powers of the city administration on corresponding territories with a population comparable to medium-sized regions of the Russian Federation; they were tasked with carrying out executive-administrative, coordinating, and controlling activities ensuring the livelihood of the okrug's population; solving issues of okrug-wide significance; organizing and conducting okrug-wide events. Under their jurisdiction were objects of the social sphere, except for objects of city-wide significance. At the same time, heads of administrations received all necessary powers for independent, under their own responsibility, resolution of local issues not affecting the interests of the city, administrative okrug, or other districts. Budgets were formed both at the city and district levels. At the level of administrative okrugs, there were government-approved estimates of expenditures, and additional sources of replenishing financial resources in the form of special funds were also defined, both at the okrug and district levels, which stimulated territorial bodies to care about filling these funds. Municipal okrugs became districts.

Executive bodies were declared independent in their actions according to federal and Moscow legislation.

Later, the city law “On the District Administration” was adopted, which regulated their activities and endowed the newly created executive bodies at the district level with their own competence and powers. A unique (Moscow *know-how*) system of city management was created, where at the district level, executive power (the management vertical: city-okrug-district) was combined with local, or municipal power, elected directly by the population. “...with the help of districts, we hope to realize our long-standing desire — not to push up issues that can be resolved below, and to resolve them where they should be, by organizing corresponding elected and appointed structures and establishing a business-like regime of interaction between them” [5]. How was the district administration formed and how did it function? After the law was adopted in 1997, elections were held for district councilors (deputies) of the District Assembly as the representative body of the district's population. The number of councilors ranged from 10 to 20 members depending on the number of voters, and hence, the population of the districts, which also varied. Districts (formerly municipal okrugs) were initially formed from territories of compact residence of inhabitants. Over years, a process

of enlarging municipal okrugs took place. And at the final stage of the urban management reform, there were 125 of them (without *New Moscow*).

Councilors elected the head of the administration, or rather, gave consent to his appointment, since he was presented by the Mayor of Moscow upon the proposal of the okrug prefect. This procedure guaranteed unity and manageability of the city's economy. There were cases when deputies did not agree with the proposed candidate (then an acting head was appointed for a term not exceeding 6 months), or when the Mayor submitted two candidates. The Mayor of Moscow could also dismiss the head of the administration. The grounds were stipulated in the law. The head chaired meetings of the district assembly, signed its adopted decisions, and also led the district administration. The head of the administration, the district assembly, and the district administration constituted a single body — the district administration. The powers of the district administration numbered over 100, covering all issues of the population's livelihood and the district's territorial development, except for issues of city-wide significance (construction and major repairs of facilities, roads, utilities, etc.).

District leaders constantly conducted individual receptions of the population, held regular meetings, territorial walkabouts; heads of subordinate institutions reported on their activities to the deputies. Deputies held receptions for the population, solved their specific problems, cared about the condition of the territory assigned to them [6].

Such a system of local power was stable and allowed for combining local interests with city-wide ones, ensuring the functionality of power, its subordination to the population represented by elected representatives, and to the city management bodies represented by the Mayor of Moscow. Control over the activities of administrations was entrusted to the prefect of the corresponding administrative okrug. I repeat, such a structure was functional and effective. In the districts, local means of informing Muscovites living and working in the district operated: district newspapers, cable television, information boards [7]. It seemed that the necessary balance of interests had been found and normal contact between residents and the authorities had been established. However, this system did not last long.

The fact is that Article 12 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation states: *“Local self-government shall be recognized and guaranteed in the Russian Federation. Local self-government shall be independent within the limits of its authority. Bodies of local self-government shall not be part of the system of state authorities”*⁹. This constitutional norm required an adjustment of Moscow legislation regarding the relationship between state power and local self-government. Creating a unique structure of local power, the Moscow legislator proceeded from

⁹ *The Constitution of the Russian Federation (adopted by popular vote on December 12, 1993) (with amendments approved during the nationwide vote on July 1, 2020)*. Articles 12, 130, 131. (In Russ.).

the fact that Moscow as a city exercises local self-government at two levels: city and district. Federal legislation allows this. But at the city level, the state power of Moscow as a subject of the federation is exercised and therefore combining it with municipal power is impermissible. The legislator then had to reformat the entire system of local (municipal) power. A scheme was found and legally fixed, which is still in effect today.

To preserve the unity of the city's economy and its manageability, a vertical of executive power is implemented: government and its sectoral bodies — prefecture — district administration. Essentially, these structures exercise state power from top to bottom — from the city level to the district level. The head of a district administration is appointed by the Mayor of Moscow, their current management is carried out by the prefect, who makes proposals to the Mayor of Moscow regarding the appointment and dismissal of heads of administrations.

But where is local self-government in this?

The article 131 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation establishes that *“Local self-government shall be exercised in municipal formations, the types of which shall be established by federal law. The territories of municipal formations shall be determined considering historical and other local traditions”*¹⁰. To avoid creating new territorial formations, the Moscow legislator established that the territory of intra-city municipal formations (hereinafter — ICMF) coincides with the territory of the district, names to which Muscovites have long been accustomed. Thus, in Moscow, on one territory, there exists a district with state management in the person of the district administration and its economic structures, and a municipal formation with municipal deputies headed by the head of the ICMF. The municipal formation has its own budget, largely formed from subsidies from the city budget; municipal deputies hold receptions for the population, organize and conduct important socially significant and useful events and actions, especially for children and adolescents, engage in military-patriotic education of youth, make decisions on lowering the marriageable age, and exercise other powers established by law.

*This feature of self-government in Moscow is guaranteed by Article 131 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation (In the new edition), which states that “The specifics of the exercise of public power in the territories of cities of federal significance, administrative centers (capitals) of subjects of the Russian Federation, and in other territories may be established by federal law”*¹¹.

¹⁰ The Constitution of the Russian Federation (adopted by popular vote on December 12, 1993) (with amendments approved during the nationwide vote on July 1, 2020). Articles 12, 130, 131. (In Russ.).

¹¹ Federal Law No. 33-FZ dated 20.03.2025 “On the General Principles of the organization of local Self-government in the Unified System of Public Authority”. URL: https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_501319/ (accessed: 10.10.2025). (In Russ.).

Conclusion

An important stage in the development of Moscow self-government and its adaptation to today's realities of modern development of one of the world's largest metropolises — Moscow — was the adoption by the State Duma of the Russian Federation of the new Federal Law No. 33-FZ dated March 20, 2025 “On the General Principles of Organizing Local Self-Government in the Unified System of Public Power”. Article 87 of this Law grants significant rights to the Moscow legislator as the legislative body of a subject of the federation — a city of federal significance — in creating a special scheme for exercising local self-government in interaction with the state authorities of Moscow to preserve the unity of the city's economy.

In conclusion, I express hope that the new Moscow law on local self-government will incorporate all the valuable aspects from the history of the formation and development of Moscow city self-government, including over the past 30 years.

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