Inside County Government Structure

CHUCK WHITING, POLK COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
MACA PRESIDENT
SARA FOLSTED, RICE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
MACA BOARD MEMBER
Who is working for you?

Elected Positions and Appointed Positions
- Elected – Auditors, Sheriffs, County Attorneys, Treasurers, Recorders
- Appointed Positions – County Engineer, Assessor, Veterans Services Officer by the Board according to statute. In some Counties Auditors, Treasurers and Recorders.
- Administrative leadership – County Manager, County Administrator, County Coordinator.
- Choice of these implies structural relationship between the County Board and administration.
Government organizations are simple variations of this. Counties have basic structure by statute, options for each to select for your own organization.

Your decision making process is effected by the organizational structure that exists in your county. Your leadership and that of your Board is the constant in any variation of this organizational structure.
Executive and Legislative Roles

The legislative role is the “what” are we doing role.

- County, state and federal policies, programs, laws, processes all with their own requirements.
- Counties as creatures of the state, arm of state government, looks for balance with local control. This tension is a constant and subject to change.
- County Board leadership critical in setting organization direction within these constraints, or challenging them with activism
• The executive role is the responsible party for carrying out this “what” or the direction of the Board, perhaps viewed as the “how”.
• The County Board is the default executive role under basic county organization structure designed by state statute.
• Delegation of authority and/or responsibility to carry out this executive function is the first key component to understanding the organization structure in place in your county.
• County Board appointment of a county manager, county administrator or county coordinator is the first step in delegating a portion of executive responsibility.
• Each statutory option lays out the principles for this sharing of responsibility for carrying out the direction of the County Board.
Optional Forms of County Government

- Statutory authority for optional forms of government include County Administrator and County Manager. (MN Stat. 375A.01)
- Hennepin County – Individual Statutory Authority establishing Hennepin County Administrator (MN Stat. 383B.101)
- If one of the optional forms is not chosen, statutory authority to appoint Coordinator. (MN Stat. 375.48)
- The differences between the three most common forms of county government management are essentially in the level of autonomous decision making authority and level of involvement of the County Board regarding day to day operations.
Coordinator, Administrator, and Manager Forms of Government

- Coordinator → Administrator → Manager

- Increasing levels of authority/autonomy, decreasing levels of County Board involvement in day to day direction of subordinate staff.
County Coordinator

- Serves at the pleasure of the board and employment can be terminated without notice. Considered a department head.
- More limited statutory duties/responsibilities.
  - Manage affairs of the County
  - Examine books etc. of each department, office, and agency of the county under control of the county board and to report condition to board.
  - Submit recommendations concerning the affairs of the county.
  - See that all orders, resolutions and regulations of the county board are faithfully executed.
  - Initiate and present a proposed budget to the county board for its review and consideration.
  - To serve as clerk of the County Board.
County Administrator

- Appointed by County Board for indefinite term, may be removed by county board at any time however after one year the administrator may demand written charges and a public hearing on the charges before the county board. Administrative head of the County.
- Shall exercise general supervision over all county institutions and agencies, with approval of the county board, coordinate the various activities of the county and unify the management of its affairs.
- May act as head of any department.
- Administrator Powers and Duties:
  - Hiring – as approved by board,
  - Execution of all ordinances, resolutions and orders of the board and all laws of the state required to be enforced through the county board, administrator or by officers under the administrator’s direction and supervision.
  - Appoint, suspend, and remove with the approval of the county board county personnel whose appointment, suspension or removal is a function of the county board under general law.
  - Provide for purchasing following county board established regulations.
  - Prepare and submit to county board, annual budget, long-range capital plan for such period as the board directs and enforce adopted budget.
  - Attend meetings, make recommendations
  - Examine the books etc. of officers and departments of the county and make report.
  - Keep board fully advised as to the financial condition and needs of the county.
County Manager

- Appointed by County Board for indefinite term, may be removed by county board at any time however after one year the administrator may demand written charges and a public hearing on the charges before the county board.
- Manager as Chief Administrator: shall have all the powers and shall perform all the duties of an administrative or executive nature vested in or imposed upon the board of county commissioners by law or by agreement (...) and such additional powers as granted or imposed by the board.
- May serve as department head by resolution.
- Responsibilities include, but not limited to:
  - Appoint and hire qualified staff
  - Execution of all ordinances, resolutions and orders of the board and all laws of the state required to be enforced through the county board, administrator or by officers under the administrator's direction and supervision.
  - Exercise all authority of the board of county commissioners to appoint, suspend, and remove county personnel whose appointment, suspension or removal is a function of the county board under general law. Make appointments to advisor boards and committees etc.
  - Purchasing pursuant to regulations established by county board, but services may be made available for use by other counties and governmental subdivisions.
  - Prepare and submit, and administrative code, details of administrative procedure for the operation of the county.
  - Prepare and submit to county board, annual budget, long-range capital plan covering a period of not less than five ensuing years, and enforce adopted budget.
  - Attend meetings with the right to take part in discussion but not to vote and to recommend measures for adoption.
  - Keep board fully advised as to the financial condition and needs of the county.

*Board to manage manager, not subordinates.
  - Shall not dictate the appointment of any person to office or employment
  - Shall not interfere in any manner with the county manager or prevent the county manager from exercising personal judgment in the appointment of officers and employees in the administrative services.
  - Shall not give orders to any subordinate of the county manager either publically or privately.
  - Does not prohibit the county board from establishing a personnel administration system governing county employment.
Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

- Level 4 Leadership: Looking at the “big picture”, the County’s vision, goals, values, and overall work culture.
- Level 3 Leadership: Developing overall strategy and allocating resources to achieve the goals.
- Level 2 Leadership: The overall management of the workforce and day-to-day activities.
- Level 1 Leadership: The daily action of County employees.
The Commissioners’ primary job is to provide leadership at levels 3 & 4
Board members need to spend more time on major issues and less time on minor issues
Board members need to spend more time being visionary and looking at the big picture, developing goals and collaborating with other units of government, and less time micro-managing
Leadership starts with a positive attitude.
Leaders deal with possibilities and hope.
Minnesota Association of County Administrators

- Composed of county administrators, coordinators, managers and assistants focusing on professional development, peer support, and legislative issues relating to management of our counties.
- Each administrator’s primary responsibility is to their County Board.
- Time and cost devoted to MACA membership varies by each member, size of their county, and interests.
- MACA conference held each fall, MACA meetings held in conjunction with AMC conferences. Executive Board meetings held roughly monthly.
- MACA works closely with Minnesota Counties Human Resources Management Association (MCHRMA), shares annual conference.
- Other professional associations your administrator may belong to are ICMA and MCMA, which share similar professional development objectives with city managers and administrators.
MACA 2017 Goals

- Represent 71 Counties with staff as MACA members
- Track legislation effecting counties and county programs
- Increase profile of MACA as resource for AMC and County Boards
- Continue to support professional development of MACA members
- Address administrative issues and policy needs of Counties
- Maintain close working relationship with MCHRMA and attentiveness to human resources needs, trends and legislation
- As we do as individual administrators with our own county boards, be available to assist any of you as you may need
Thank you and good luck as you serve your county!

Questions?