New Commissioner
Introductions

1. Name?
2. Which county are you from?
3. What is your primary occupation?
4. Why did you run for County Commissioner?
County Government 101

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Let’s Talk Counties!

Association of Minnesota Counties
In 1849, Territorial Governor Alexander Ramsey proclaimed that Minnesota would be governed by the same laws as Wisconsin.

• The first Minnesota counties were Benton, Isanti, Ramsey, Wabasha, and Washington established on October 27, 1849.

• 57 of the present 87 counties were established during the territorial period that ended in 1857.

• Lake of the Woods County is the youngest Minnesota county, established on November 28, 1922.
Counties were organized to be administrative agencies of the state as well as local governments.

- Counties are a local government unit meeting the needs of the community.
- Counties serve as an administrative arm of the state by providing services on its behalf.
Minnesota is organized under the *Dillon Rule*. This essentially means that counties can only act when explicitly authorized to do so by the state.

The Minnesota county structural model is similar to those found in Wisconsin, Ohio, New York and many other states.
87 counties

447 county commissioners

- 81 boards have five county commissioners.
- 6 boards have seven county commissioners.

Total county expenditures per year range from $8 million to $1.6 billion (2016 estimate)
General Duties of a County Board

- Approve Budgets & Expenditures
- Approve Taxes
- Manage Roads and Ditches
- Land Use & Water Policy
- Public Health
- Social Services and Welfare
- Solid Waste
- Corrections
General Functions

• Represent and be accountable to the public
• Regulate
  • Ordinance - A law set forth by a governmental authority
  • Resolution - A formal expression of opinion, will or intent voted by an official body or assembled group
• Provide services
• Cooperate with other governments
• Oversee county operations
• Represent the county on various boards, committees and commissions
Administrative Functions

• Establish policies and procedures to meet county goals.
• Establish & oversee county personnel system.
  • Set salaries, benefits & other conditions of employment.
  • Negotiate labor agreements.
  • Supervise appointed department heads.
  • Oversee pay equity plan, affirmative action, etc.
• Protect the county from liability.
• Review and evaluate county services and programs.
Financial & Taxation Functions

• Establish the annual budget
• Levy taxes to meet the budget
• Monitor overall financial health of county
• Establish & oversee purchasing procedures
• Authorize expenditures
• Authorize intergovernmental & grant funding
• Establish financial policies
• Establish capital improvement program
• Board of equalization
Where do counties get their revenue?

In Minnesota, local governments derive the majority of their funding from property taxes and from state and federal grants.

- Fees, fines, forfeitures, sale of public lands, investments and special assessments are other revenue sources that augment these major revenue sources.

- The property tax is the chief source of revenue for Minnesota counties. Most counties receive between 30 and 50 percent of their revenues from property tax collections. All property except that owned by governments, churches, charitable institutions and certain other tax exempt entities, is subject to the “ad valorem” property tax. However, the state does put restrictions on these levies, further hampering the county budgeting process.
What does a pie have to do with property taxes?
Learn the two things directly affect how much people pay.
What makes a good Board member?

Understanding the Difference Between Policy and Operations

Policy (Board)
- “What” – Will we provide County Transit?
- “Why” – Is it prudent to merge Health & Human Services?

Operations (Staff)
- “How” – How will we plow the roads?
- “When” – When will we pick up refuse?
- “Where” – Where will we fill potholes?
Board Policy

• Related to overall mission and purpose
• Requires vision
• Longer-term
• Addresses key issues
• Strategic development
Staff Operations

- Implementation of policies and strategies
- Shorter term
- Day to day operations
- Related to smaller functions
- Addresses department or individual issues
- Requires attention to detail
- Requires specialized knowledge and/or training
Focusing Attention on the Right Things

• What results are we trying to achieve?
• How would we know if we were achieving them?
• What strategies are we using to achieve those results?
• Are these strategies working?
• What do we need to do differently to achieve those results?

• If you as Board members aren’t asking these questions, who is?
Thank You!

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