**County Government 101** The Role of County Administration





Boards set the direction Administration steers the ship

# AN AN LING

## **History of Co Management**



- First 100+ years of county government, no formal county administration function
  - Auditor served as board clerk
  - Auditor served as on-site supervisor or manager
- In 1966 Joesph Ries was elected Scott County Auditor
  - He develop the first "personnel" policies and developed a County Merit System
  - He gained board approval to establish the Office of County Administrator
  - 1971 Joe was appointed as Scott County's first administrator

## Why Co Administration



- County Auditors had their own office to run with increasing responsibilities
- Counties were growing in size, responsibility, and risk
- Need developed for more centralized, formal governance
- Need to unify county departments for operation efficiency
- Need for professional, trained staff with specific knowledge and skills
- To separate the operations of the organization from the policy of the organization;
- To depoliticize certain actions and decisions such as hiring and whose roads got plowed first<sup>©</sup>



- 63 counties have administrator/manager
- 14 counties have coordinator
- 9 counties have an auditor/ auditor/treasurer
- 1 county has an administration director (county created position)

# TODAY, MOST COUNTIES HAVE COUNTY ADMINISTRATORS

# A A A

## **Types of County Governance**



Number of options available to counties

- Elected Auditor-Administrator Plan
- Elected County Executive
- County Manager Plan
- County Administrator Plan
- County Coordinator

The purpose of all statutorily defined structures is to *clarify the joint and cooperative exercise of power in county governance.* What does the Board do? What does the professional county leader do?



## **Role of Coordinator**



Created by MN Statute 375.49: (1967)

- Manages the affairs of the county which the Board has authority over;
- Update the Board on the financial condition of the county
- Make recommendations about county affairs to the Board
- Serve as clerk of the Board
- Ensure Board actions are executed
- Initiate and present a proposed annual budget to the Board for its consideration

## **Role of Administrator**



Created by MN Statute 375A.06: (1973)

- Hire, manage, suspend, and remove county personnel
- Execute all orders of the Board and laws of the state required to be enforced through the county board
- Provide for county purchases
- Prepare and submit to the county board a proposed annual budget and long-range capital expenditure plan
- Recommend measures for adoption to the Board
- Keep the Board fully advised as to the financial condition and needs of the county

## **Role of County Manager**



Created by MN Statute 375A.03: (1973)

- Chief Executive Officer of the county
- Known as the County Manager
- Directs the county's organizational, operational, management, budget and administrative operations and activities
- Provides oversight for all Division Heads
- Only a small number of counties utilize this form of management
- Examples: Ramsey County, Dakota County

## **Role of Elected Executive**



Created by MN Statute 375A.02: (1973)

- Elected by public like other county elected officials and serve 4year terms
- Known as County Executive
- Duties established by county board
- Same duties as county administrator or manager with one exception
  - May veto any ordinance or resolution adopted by the county board
- No county currently uses this plan

# AND AND

## **Role of Auditor-Administrator**

Association *of* Minnesota Counties

Created by MN Statute 375A.08: (1973)

- Elected
- Office known as Auditor-Administrator
- May use this form if county has not appointed county auditor and not combined offices of Auditor and Treasurer
- Auditor-Administrator must continue to perform duties of county Auditor
- No county currently utilizes this plan



#### **Comparison of most used structures**

#### **Administrator**

- Oversees day to day operations of county
- Manages and directs department heads
- Oversees county administrative functions
- Responsible for budget development and execution
- Coordinates short and long-term strategic planning
- Advises the Board

## **Coordinator**

- Oversees day to day operations
- Peer of department heads
- Provides guidance to department heads on county administrative functions
- Manages budget process and assures operations are executed
- Collaborates with department heads on short and long-term strategic planning



At the End of the Day...



### The scope of the role of each type of county leadership is based on

- the relationship between the board and the administrative leader
- the level of trust the board has in that person
- the Board and how it collectively wants to operate
- the leader's style, experience, knowledge
- the need in that county



## What is important to know?

- Administrators prepare information, make recommendations, and implement the decisions that the Board makes
- Administrators take direction from the full board, not an individual commissioner
- We are public servants who strive to deliver excellence in county governance
- We often make unpopular decisions



# A AA

# What else is important to know? 🚔 Association of Minnesota Counties

- Administrators rely on department experts
  - Are not the expert on all thing's county
- Will provide an answer, will get an answer, will research an answer, will tell you if we do not know an answer
- We need the Board to have a vision for the county to chart the course
- Administrators need to be allowed to steer the ship once that course has been charted
  - Policy/Operations



### Signs of an effective relationship

- Open and consistent communication
- Define and respect each others' roles and responsibilities
  - Must be respectful of the role of an elected official
- Equitable treatment of all elected officials fair
- Maintain confidentiality
  - We share a lot; it makes us successful. Be clear in instances where confidentiality is required.
- County is operating well
  - Service is effective and efficient
  - More compliments than complaints



What does a job description look like?

- **Manage and Lead Others** Implement the organization's vision and mission into the day-to-day business. Guide, direct and influence others to do the same.
- **Apply Essential Business and Professional Skills** Manage human, financial and informational resources in a manner that instills public trust; and accomplishes the organization's mission.
- **Build Effective Work Relationships** Excel at building partnerships and fostering teamwork. Work collaboratively within and across organizational boundaries to achieve common goals.
- **Provide High-Quality Service** Identify customer expectations and respond appropriately to their needs.
- **Understand County Business** Develop a broad understanding of overall county functions and the relationship between functions.



#### What do we really do?







**Professional Organizations** 



- Minnesota Association of County Administrators (MACA)
  - Affiliate organization of AMC (established in 1980)
- Pathways
  - AMC program for new county administrators and coordinators
- International City/County Management Association (ICMA)
- Minnesota City/County Management Association (MCMA) – State Chapter of ICMA



**Time of Transformation** 



There has been more change in local government in the last five years than in the last 25.

- Many causes
  - Changing expectations of the public
  - Covid
  - Changing workforce
  - Workforce crisis
  - Changing demographics
  - Civil Rights
  - Political and ideological Polarization and Fear

### **Questions/Comments**

SAME OF STREET

