

**Grant County Board of Supervisors
Special Meeting
March 26, 2019**

The Grant County Board of Supervisors met on Tuesday, March 26, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 264 on second floor of the Administration Building, Lancaster, WI pursuant to the adjournment of the April 16, 2019 meeting.

Robert Keeney, County Board Chair called the meeting to order and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Verification of compliance with the open meeting law was postings stating the date, time and place of the County Board Meeting in two public posting locations and the county website verified by Linda K. Gebhard, County Clerk.

Roll Call, March 26, 2019

	Present	Absent	Excused
Carol Beals	X		
John Beinborn	X		
Ronald Coppernoll	X		
Gregory Fry	X		
Roger Guthrie	X		
Dale Hood	X		
Lester Jantzen	X		
Robert Keeney	X		
Mike Lieurance	X		
Dwight Nelson	X		
Gary Northouse	X		
John Patcle	X		
Gary Ranum	X		
Robert Scallon			X
Donald Splinter	X		
Mark Stead	X		
Porter Wagner	X		

The Clerk took the roll call resulting in 16 present; Robert Scallon had asked to be excused. Therefore a quorum was present.

Agenda: Lester Jantzen, seconded by John Beinborn, made a motion to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

Presentation on County governmental structure:

Jon Hochkammer, Outreach Manager, Wisconsin Counties Association started the presentation giving a recap of the three Administrative Structure options.

1. County Executive 59.17: 11 counties have this structure
County Executive is the chief executive officer, coordinates and directs all administrative and management functions.
 - a. Appoints and supervises department heads subject to the county board confirmation unless confirmation waived or civil service.

- b. Appoints members to boards and commission, where statutes give this authority to county board or its chairperson subject to board confirmation.
 - c. Submits the annual budget.
 - d. Veto authority: Ordinances and resolutions, appropriation in whole or part, County Board can override with 2/3 vote.
2. County Administrator: Chief administrative officer of the county. 28 counties have this structure
- a. Coordinate and direct all administrative and management functions of the county government.
 - b. Appoints and supervises department heads subject to county board confirmation, unless confirmation waived or civil service.
 - c. Appoints members to boards and commissions where statues give this authority to county board or its chairperson, subject to board confirmation.
 - d. Answers to the county board of supervisors.
 - e. Submit annual budget.

The Board may remove the county administrator at any time that the county administrator's conduct becomes unsatisfactory, and engage a successor. The action of the board in removing the county administrator shall be final. 59.18(7).

3. County Administrative Coordinator: Similar to county Administrator but does not have appointment authority and "responsible for coordinating" rather than "coordinates and directs". 33 counties have this structure; currently, 14 County Clerk's serve as the administrative coordinator.

Jon Hochkammer explained this is unfortunate for the County Clerks because they have been given these titles with no additional authority or job descriptions so when everything is working fine it goes smoothly, but when things are not working great, the County Clerk could get the blame.

- a. The administrative coordinator shall be responsible for coordinating all administrative and management functions of the county government not otherwise vested by law in boards or commissions, or in other elected officers. 59.19

An elected or appointed official shall be designated Administrative Coordinator. 59.19

The positions of County Supervisor and Administrative Coordinator are legally incompatible, Attorney General Opinion, October 27, 2011.

Bob Kopisch, County Board Chair, Price County. Bob is in his 10th term as a County Supervisor and 5th term as the County Board Chair. In 2014 Price County created the position of Administrator. Prior to hiring Nick Trimner, Bob Kopisch received the title of Coordinator Administrator with no authority. There were issues because there was not a person in place full time to address all the circumstances that needed attention. After a couple attempts to hire an out of county Administrator which did not transpire, Price County hired Nick as the Administrator. Prior to taking the Administrator position Nick had been the Finance Director for 4 years.

Price County had gone through a reduction of their County Board from 21 to 13. They had 16 standing committees down to 7, each Board member serving on 3 committees sometimes 4, which has been acceptable to the Board Members.

Cost was not a driving factor in their decision to hire an Administrator; the biggest reason was to have someone in place that was qualified to handle all the issues that needed professional attention with all the changing rules in business today, so they needed to move forward.

This decision took a few years of discussion among the Board, there were some failed motions to go forward but eventually when it was brought back the motion carried to go forward. It was not a unanimous vote but there were control issues in the minds of some of the Board Members. The level of support today would be in favor of keeping the Administrator; over time most of the Board Members have transitioned into the mindset that things are working much better now.

They allocated a setup cost of \$50,000.00 to get the position started. To recover that cost they feel that cost was gained back within a 6 to 8 month period through Administrative staff attrition, crunching the numbers on expense costs and getting rid on unneeded inventory.

Micro managing by some of the County Board members will always be present, but with an Administrator position it is stated very clearly what the duties of a County Board Member are and what the Administrator's is responsible for. There are definite lines of authority.

Their County Budgeting process has been changed immensely. The Administrator sets with the Department Heads and brings it before the Board, very little falls on the Board, and this has worked very well for them.

This has been a positive experience for Price County having the benefit of a day to day professional manager in place; they would not go back to the previous method. The position has been accepted by all the Department Heads because Nick Trimner had worked in the County so the transition was very easy. They had the luxury of having someone in house qualified to take the position.

Bob Kopisch's advice to the Board was to have a game plan in place before hiring an Administrator. The Board needs to know what the issues are they want addressed and have a plan of expectation they would like an Administrator to work on, this also gives the Administrator an idea of what is expected of them.

Donna Kalata, Waushara County Board Supervisor for 22 years, County Board Chair for 3 terms. They had 21 members on the Board, they downsized to 11, which has proved to be a challenge, she would not recommend that number.

They previously had a Coordinator Administrator; upon her retirement they opted to hire an Administrator. It was felt that a Coordinator Administrator did not have the proper amount of authority to deal with many of the issues and Department Heads. With an Administrator Donna Kalata as County Board Chair stated it has been a hard transition for some of the Board Members, she has directed them to communicate more with the Administrator.

Donna Kalata feels the budget process has become much better and simplified. The Administrator works directly with the Department Heads, the draft budget is then presented before the Board for their approval. By hiring an Administrator from outside the County also benefited because new ideas and concepts were brought to their county. He has experience in bringing more tourism to their county. The Administrator helped them keep their full time 4H leaders when the Extension Offices across the State were being cut. He was on board because when you have a successful program why would you let that be cut; not all of the students in their region are into sports or music. Donna also stated their Administrator encourages the Board Members to go to the conferences and listen to other counties issues; this was not encouraged in the past.

Marty Krueger, Board Supervisor of Sauk County. Sauk County currently as 31 Board Members, which he stated comes with some challenges. He enlightened the Board on the struggles they had in hiring a

person to be the Coordinator Administrator who was not a good fit for them. He felt coming in to a position like this with an agenda is not good.

Sauk County had hired a couple Coordinator Administrators and had very good success but they eventually opted to move on to better opportunities. In going forward Sauk County opted to use a search firm to help them recruit candidates. Although this option did not work well for Sauk County, John Hochkammer stated this resource, in most cases, is a good option to use. These companies can pull from a larger pool of qualified candidates and they can screen the candidates professionally. In Jon Hochkammer's opinion, "it all seems to come down to the chemistry between the Board and candidate".

They do have a Coordinator Administrator today; they hired the former Assistant to the Corporation Counsel. She has done a good job so far but is still learning. There are still the Board Members who want to micro manage but they are trying to work through that. For now they will stay with the Coordinator Administrator because the current Board does not want to give up the control they have.

Their budget process has not been a proven one, they use a process called Foresite which is like establishing a budget looking backwards, basing choices off something that may not have worked. He would hope that they can incorporate into their budget process where they want to be in five years. He hopes down the road they can accept more input from the Department Heads and listen to their innovative ideas without a fear of losing their positions.

Their County is looking for the perfect person who can bring their county back together after the damage done by the previous Coordinator Administrator. They are recovering and they are hoping the person they hire will be that person.

Gary Ranum – How important is it to have a clear chain of command and a unified direction on the Executive side and how does an Administrator or Coordinator Administrator assist that? Marty Krueger stated he felt there needs to be a clear understanding on where the responsibilities land in each position. What is expected of the Board Members and what is the expectation for an Administrator. He felt there needs to be trust and respect; he feels the positions of Administrator or Coordinator Administrator come with that knowledge. Communication between all the parties is key in making it work between the Administrator and the Board.

Roger Guthrie – How do you decide which way to go, using a search companies to find candidates or go through the County? Donna Kalata stated they went through the county starting with their Coordinator Administrator at the time and their Corporation Counsel. Bob Kopisch stated they started working on the decision with the Executive and Personnel Committees and then they hired Northwest Regional Planning Commission to help them recruit the candidates, posting the jobs, screening the candidates and setting up the interviews. The Executive Committee and two local Administrators from the community chose the final candidates that would be brought before their Board. Marty Krueger stated they decided to go outside the County because there were two people in the county that would have been interested but they did not feel they would be good for the County.

Jon Hochkammer interjected that he felt that even though sometimes counties try to do this process internally; more times than not these Recruitment Firms are enlisted. They have a bigger base in finding more qualified candidates who would be good fits. It is not only the position but also the position and the chemistry that will work. He also stated it is very important when enlisting these Recruitment Firms, to make them aware they have knowledge in how County Government works within the State of Wisconsin. The State of Wisconsin has its own unique form of government in working with the Counties; no other State uses this County form of governing and the practices we use. This is why it is

important these Recruiting Firms know if they are finding candidates from out of State, they need to be aware of the form of County Government they will be working with.

Porter Wagner, ***What credentials were you looking for?*** Marty Krueger , first you need to know what you want, the responsibilities you will give the Administrator to do, and then the education and credentials would be put together to match those needs. Bob Kopisch, first they put a job description together and the Recruiting Firm helps with the qualification and other duties that may be needed. Donna Kalata stated they were very lucky, they found a candidate outside the State who understood the form of Government and brought many innovative ideas back that benefited their County.

John Beinborn, ***Do you feel you were ready for the job?*** Nick Trimner stated he was hired after a failed search of two other candidates and he had been with the County for 4 years prior so he felt his transition was very smooth because he already had the trust of Department Heads. He had a chance in those 4 years to learn the County Government. He felt the Board in the beginning had high expectations of the perfect person walking through the door and all would go smoothly. When this did not happen and they hired him he felt this was a good fit. He felt he had the skill set that they were looking for. He is a “numbers” person. Through attrition and crunching the numbers and with his prior experience as their Finance Director he came in with a game plan. One of the first things the County did was to absorb the Human Resource position into his duties so he did have a little learning curve with people skills. His education was in Business Administration and Marketing, he worked for a short time, traveled for a while and then went back to get his MBA in Business Administration and Management.

Dwight Nelson, ***How much was the cost for an Administrator?*** Donna Kalata said they felt they had to raise the salary because he was an attorney; they paid him \$111,000.00 with benefits. Nick Trimner stated in the beginning the County set aside \$50,000.00 as a set up cost. As Accounting Manager his salary was around \$50,000.00 once he took the Administrator's position the salary went to \$82,000.00. Once a restructuring took place he signed a contract for \$99,000.00 with a 1 ½ % raise each year, he is not attached to the wages of all the employees in the County he has his own contract which takes him out of the emotional factors in negotiating wages and health plans. When he goes into the negotiations the results are for the better of all the employees and not what is best for the person doing the negotiations which is what was happening in the previous process, it was not objective enough.

Nick Trimner stated there is a Group of Administrators and Executives in the region who meet regularly at WCA meeting and with WCA staff to discuss hot topics from each county like wages, benefits, health insurance, roads, hiring positions, etc. and compare issues and how to resolve these issues. This forms a very strong network to fall back on and benefit all the counties. Their goal is to run the counties as a business, their goals are to streamline the processes, bring this back to the committees, educate them on why this is being done this way the Counties will be successful.

John Beinborn: ***Was there money saved in bringing in an Administrator?*** Nick Trimner stated through Administration attrition they found savings, cutting staff where they could. Combining some of the departments helped, utilizing less employees time more effectively, using a good business sense stopping unnecessary inventory on hand going from millions of dollars on hand to almost nothing. There are plans in place to purchase the large cost items such as Highway equipment in a timely manner. Utilizing other resources such as the Chambers and Economic/Tourism Commissions by giving them donations for the work they do which helps the County in the long run. By working the debt of the county in their favor has benefited them very much. When an employee retires their job responsibilities are looked at; in some cases changing the job description or utilizing other options to fill those position has helped save money.

Jon Hochkammer stated he feels that when a county does implement a full time Administrator or full time Coordinator Administrator he hears many times the County feels having a full time person working on the issues that may have gotten overlooked or have fell through the crack is a good thing. The work is never done for a good Administrator, there is always project to work on to find more cost effective processes better staff efficiencies, having the knowledge is definitely an advantage. A full time position such as these takes the emotion out of the decisions; problems can be solved so much easier and efficiently, making the tough decision because they can look into the issue deeper than before.

Ron Coppernoll, ***Did he understand that when Nick Trimner took the job of Administrator the Human Resource position was absorbed in his position?*** Nick stated yes, there were a Finance Director, HR Director and an Assistant to HR. There had to be a decision made which position was more important. They felt the Finance position was a vital position so they resolved both the HR Director and Assistance and hired an HR Specialist. The Administrator takes over the decision making part of HR the hiring and firing. They hired an HR Specialist who takes care of the FMLA, Work Comp keeping up on the regulation, does the recruiting for new hires; work with the Department Head on the paperwork. In Waushara County's case, their previous Coordinator Administrator was in charge of so many duties the County could see that these duties needed to be divided up so all would be covered in the instance that the Administrator or Coordinator Administrators would leave. Jon Hochkammer stated this is a very good point also in having a full time person in the position, there is consistent institutional knowledge that will be there if someone leaves the County or there is a big shift in Board Members.

Roger Guthrie --***How do you know you have the right person?*** Jon Hochkammer stated the chemistry is most important. Sometimes the first person does not work out. In most cases the Department Heads come together because they like to have a consistent person at the helm. Most contracts for Administrators have severance allowances built in to help protect the County and the Administrator. Donna Kalata stated in Waushara, now under their current Administrator, there seems to be a better working relationship; the Department Heads work together better, this has benefited the budget process making it fair for all the departments, the emotion has been taken out of the tough decision. Donna went on to say in the budget process she can see the most benefit because now it works so much smoother.

Bob Kopisch followed up with a very critical part of their decision in hiring an Administrator instead of an Administrative Coordinator was in the Statutory Authority in the State Statutes. The duties of an Administrator are very clear. There is no board debate on what an Administrator should be doing. That gives the Administrator a level of authority that they do not have to be questioned, once their decision is made that is it. It also takes the Board out of Personnel decision which can split a Board in half in a hurry. Bob Kopisch thinks that is a relief because the order of the law is being followed.

Dale Hood asked if their Standing Committees meet once a month. Marty Krueger stated yes for now but there have been discussion on that topic, some committees don't have a lot to discuss per month. Marty Krueger went on to say it is too expensive to work in silos this day and age; all departments need to work together, we cannot afford to have these kingdoms anymore.

Adjournment: Dwight Nelson, seconded by Don Splinter made a motion to adjourn the meeting pursuant to the next meeting on April 16, 2019 at 10:00 a.m. Motion carried.