

**Grant County Board of Supervisors  
September 17, 2019**

The Grant County Board of Supervisors met on Tuesday, September 17, 2019 at 10:00 a.m. in the Administration Building, 111 South Jefferson Street, Lancaster, WI second floor Room 264, pursuant to the adjournment of the August 20, 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 a notice in the Herald Independent stating the date, time and place of the County Board Meeting and posted in two public posting locations and the county website verified by Linda K. Gebhard, County Clerk.

Roll Call, September 17, 2019

|                   | Present | Absent | Excused |
|-------------------|---------|--------|---------|
| Carol Beals       | X       |        |         |
| John Beinborn     | 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       |        |         |
| Patrick Schroeder | X       |        |         |
| Donald Splinter   | X       |        |         |
| Mark Stead        | X       |        |         |
| Porter Wagner     | X       |        |         |

The Clerk took the roll call resulting in 17 present. Therefore, a quorum was present.

Agenda: John Beinborn, seconded by Patrick Schroeder, made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Minutes: Roger Guthrie, seconded by Porter Wagner, made a motion to approve the minutes of August 20, 2019 as presented. Motion carried.

Communication: Southwest CAP Gala will be coming up on October 24<sup>th</sup>. Carol Beals and Dale Hood have tickets if anyone is interested in attending.

Chair Keeney stated the meeting tonight was called to discuss Administration and County Government structure. He called for a motion to convene to a meeting of the whole.

Motion was made by Dale Hood, seconded by Patrick Schroeder, to reconvene the meeting as a meeting of the whole. Motion carried.

At this point, the meeting was turned over to Jon Hockhammer to facilitate the meeting.

Jon Hockhammer stated a meeting of the whole is a less formal type of meeting, intended to be more open for discussion. Any action taken in the committee of a whole is only a recommendation to the full body; action needs to be finalized at the full County Board Meeting.

Jon gave the Board a brief update on other Counties who have changed their county government status recently and the circumstances that made these changes pertinent. He warned about giving an entity a title with no power, when things are going great it is fine but when things start to go wrong the fingers would be pointed at the entity that holds the title. The trend they are seeing going back over the last 12 years is, counties are moving to a full time Administrator. Usually this is because there has been some kind of crisis. Maybe there has been a large overturn of the Board Members; there may have been a budget crisis, or losing a number of key County Staff or Elected Officials. Another time could be a forced situation were the public goes to referenda and forces the Board to go to a County Administrator.

Jon asked for guidance on what type of governing the Board wanting to discuss. The discussion seemed to be centered on the Administrator or Coordinator Administrator; the Board was not interested in going with an Executive.

The two reasons that Counties consider the Administrator or Coordinator Administrator:

1. With an Administrative Coordinator the County Board retains the right to appoint people to Boards and Commission, if you have a County Administrator they can appoint members to Boards and Commissions that have citizens members, The County maintains the right to confirm those appointment.
2. The Administrator works with the Department Heads and Finance Department to prepare and submit the County Budget, once submitted to the Board they have the final approval.

Jon asked for questions or issues that the Board wanted to discuss tonight, each issue would then be discussed as they went down the list.

**1. *If the County would go with an Administrator, how would this affect committee structures?***

There would be a transition into those committee structures. If the County is anticipating a change in their structure or board size, those changes are usually finalized by December 1 of odd numbers years, prior to the County Board Election. Jon stated there would be two big changes, the Statutes state a County Administrator will be over the Highway Commissioner and the Human Services Director.

**2. *Is the Board willing to transfer authority to one person?***

This is a decision that only the Board can make. Jon stated one thing he found very interesting in looking at the Grant County Strategic Plans of 2009 and 2014 the number one goal was to look at the County structure and hire an Administrator. He went on to say, it is not always in the Boards control, the public can force a Board by referendum to change the County Structure. Twenty five percent of the people that voted in the last gubernatorial election can sign a petition and force the Board to hire an Administrator. Jon stated he could not stress enough, one very important qualification is the chemistry, the chemistry is more important than the title, if you hire the wrong person, that person will not be in the job very long. The other thing is that the County Board Members should not be involved in the everyday activities of the County. The main thing a County Board Supervisor should do is approve your annual budget and hire good people and then get out of their way and let them do their jobs.

**3. *What would be the relationship between an Administrator with the Employees and Constitutional Officers?***

No significant changes, relationships would stay the same. In many cases the staff is in favor of having a full time Administrator because there is someone they can go to on a day to day basis if action is needed immediately. A full time Administrator would be responsible for the day to day duties; however, they can't take away the statutory duties of a Constitutional Officer. An Administrator cannot give a Constitutional Offices any duty that are not listed in their duties, the Constitutional Offices can decline taking on that duty.

**4. *What is the reason to make a change?***

If the County sees there are opportunities falling through the cracks, if there would be a crisis, whether it be budgetary or a controversial issue that is affecting the County. This could lead to an overturn of the County Board Supervisors. If there would be a major change in key employees. County Government is changing; Jon stated that if Grant County is not ready to make a change now, he knows that day is coming.

**5. *What qualifications are needed?***

Jon stated the qualification from the State Statues 59.18(6), experience and knowledge being key factors. Carol Beals asked if a Coordinator Administrator can be a standalone position for the County. Jon gave examples of other County's having a standalone position. Again, Jon stated the qualifications are based on the needs of the County. They should be well rounded, but the County's needs come first.

**6. *What is the compensation?***

Typically the average compensation for an Administrator is \$85,000.00 to \$175,000.00, they are usually the highest paid because of the responsibility they hold and for their experience. A Coordinator Administrator would start at \$82,000.00 and up.

**7. *Time Management for Administrator and delegation of duties.***

These duties are determined by the County, what reporting is the County interested in bringing back to the Board. Jon stated with any Administrator their job is never done. There is always something that needs to be researched and there is always more that can be done. For some Administrator delegating jobs is very difficult. You need to know you have hired good people and then you have to trust them to do their jobs.

**8. *What would be the relationship between and Administrator and County Board Chair?***

A County Board should work together and support the Administrator. The Administrator knows they need to keep the Board happy in order to keep their position. The Board is still the entity that holds the control. Both entities need to work together to build the relationship and the trust. If the Administrator feels they do not have the support of the Board, they will probably leave on their own. In the current governing form in Grant County, the County Board Chair cannot hold the title, but if the Board would choose to give more duties to the County Board Chair that would need to be written out and agreed upon by the whole Board. In the current form with the County Clerk holding the Administrator Coordinator position the letter of the law is being satisfied but this is not fair to the County or to the individual. While things are going great all is well, but when things go bad the title holder will be blamed.

**9. Control of funding sources.**

Jon stated this is not typically what you want an Administrator to do. They have many other duties that are more crucial to fulfil than to take all their time in trying to find grant sources.

**10. What functions will the County Board give up?**

The County Board would give up the involvement of the day to day Administrative decisions of the County. The Board is the policy makers and the Board approves the budget so they should allow the Administrator to carry out those day to day duties. The Board can hold them accountable, but there needs to be the trust that the Administrator is carrying out their duties.

**11(a) Job description/Employment agreement—**

The County Board would establish the job description using the job duties that are outlined in the State Statute. Most Administrators require an employment agreement which can spell out more duties that the County can add to the existing duties that were already outlined by the County Board. Employee Agreement has come into place over the last 10 years. They would contain severance packages and some form of protections because the Board has the authority to fire them with no questions asked.

**11(b) who can serve as County Administrator?**

Anyone qualified person. Jon stated again the State Statute is clear as to the qualifications needed. Jon did state that any potential applicant should understand the position is in Wisconsin. The State of Wisconsin's County government is unique; we do not run like cities and villages. Wisconsin is considered an arm of the State; it was created by the State. We do not have Home Rule authority; we can only do what the State allows us to do. Jon informed the Board this would be a big hiring factor to let any potential applicant know. The State Statute states that a County Board Chair or a County Supervisor cannot act as the County administrator. The Attorney General opinion still stands; the title of Coordinator Administrator should not be placed with the County Board Chair. The County's that do have this situation, the issue has not been tested in Court, but WCA does not recommend a County give the County Board Chair that title.

Even if the individual is a member on the County Board or Current County Board Chair and retired off the Board they cannot run for the position of Administrator or Coordinator Administrator. If the position was created during the period the person was in office it would be a violation of the Ethics Laws to resign from the Board position for the sole purpose to apply for the Administrator or Coordinator Administrator position.

**12. Hiring and firing authority.**

For the Administrators Position the County Board hires or appoints by a simple majority vote the administrator solely on merit giving due regard to training, experience, administrative ability and general qualifications designated by the Board. The Board establishes a job description on what they feel the County's needs are and assign the duties that best reflect these needs. You can enlist a recruiting firm to help in the process. By a simple majority vote the County Board has the authority to fire the administrator with no questions asked. That is why it is important that the County Board, the employees and the Administrator must work together. It probably works better when there can be a transition period. The County can have a person come in and work under the direction of the Executive

or Administrative Committee. That individual must keep the Board happy or else they are gone so it would only stand to reason that each party work together.

Many times the people who are looking for these positions may be looking to relocate back to their family. They may be looking to make a major career change, they watch the classified listings to find these position. It would depend on the compensation and how well they get along with the Board members and how they are treated. The bigger turn around in the Counties may cause issues in refilling these positions because these key people are watching these job opportunities.

Once the Administrator is in place they have the authority to hire, supervise, and fire Department Heads. The Board can confirm the action. However when it comes to disciplining, the Administrator has complete authority to dismiss an employee with no oversight of the County Board.

### ***13. Who will interview and hire an Administrator***

Recruitment firms have assisted County's to find applicants getting as many applicants who are qualified as they can. They go through the applicants and make a recommendation to the County on the best applicants. If you advertise in the classified ads only, after a couple months 95% of those applicants will be gone because, they will be looking somewhere else, the process needs to move along. Some Counties have used the UW Extension Office. The County can make up a committee to review the applicants; the Executive Committee could be involved; this is totally the Boards decision.

### ***14. Responsibility for public relations and communications***

This is usually a combination between the County Board Chair and the Administrator.

### ***15. Average length of service.***

Five and half years are typically the length. Jon went on to say, they are seeing in County Government the people are staying longer than in the private sector. In the past 10 years there has been a significant amount of turnover in County Government and that will continue. Whoever would be looking into this position they will be doing their due diligence, they will be looking at face book, reading minutes, taking a look at newspaper articles, listening to pod casts. The way recruitment, advertising, interviewing is handled now is going to have to change, because the private sector has changed. If we do not change we are going to have a very difficult time in finding recruitments.

Robert Keeney asked Jon about transition time. Jon stated most Counties have been abrupt because the County was in a crisis. There are cases were the transition has gone smooth. It will take cooperation and working together, and in some cases the first attempt may not work.

Mark Stead asked how many Counties have full time County Board Chairs. Jon did not have the numbers, but he stated there were very few.

Gary Ranum asked if he had any examples that there was a full time County Board Chair and an Administrator. Jon stated the position of a full time County Board Chair has changed over the last few years. He found some counties whose average wages for a full time Chair were from \$13,000.00 to \$15,000.00. In Jon's recollection, Washington County was the last County other than Grant, to have a full time Chair; they have now made the transition to an Administrator.

Patrick Schroeder felt with these discussions, WCA was pushing Grant County to make this change which would cost the County more money. Jon stated this is not their intent at all. His point was to explain that at this time Grant County is following the letter of the law in the form of governing we have. But if

the County wants to give the County Board Chair more duties that can be done, but they can't recommend that the title of Coordinator Administrator goes to that position. The job duties need to be outlined in a document, even though the County does have a job description now, Jon felt that needs to expand to make it fair to all the parties.

Patrick Schroeder went on to say he felt the board worked better when there were 31 members instead of the 17 now. He felt it was a vendetta that forced the Board to cut the number. He said there are a certain number of the Board members at this meeting that will not be happy with the outcome and a referendum will be happening anyway.

Jon stated we have to work within the letter of the law. If a change is coming he would rather make that change so the transition can work smoothly instead of being forced into that situation.

Jon went on to say; whatever decision that a County Board makes their first question should be is this good for the county. The desire has to be there in order for this change to work.

John Beinborn stated he didn't feel this was a personal vendetta to try and replace someone at all. He looks at this as an opportunity to make the County better, weigh all the options and then make the decision. Jon stated this was not a change that the Board should take lightly; it will take time and cooperation among the Board. The recruiting process can take time and patience; sometime the strategy needs to be changed to best fit the county's needs.

A motion was made by John Patcle to reconvene to the County Board, seconded by Porter Wagner. Motion carried.

Patrick Schroeder made a motion, seconded by Roger Guthrie, to leave the administrative style of government currently used in Grant County the same and look into the authority of the Chair in his position. Discussion was called for.

Carol Beals stated the motion should be in a twofold request, first vote on the status of governing and then changes in duties. She would like further information from Jon regarding contract agreement, position duties, responsibilities, qualifications, etc. before a decision is made. She brought up the survey that each Board Member was asked to fill out, she feels the information received in that survey is being ignored. The Board Members clearing stated their opinions of what they felt the county needs. The opinion of all the Board members is that they all want a proper chain of command. They are all interested in making a change because there will be change coming down the road. The Board keeps beating their heads against the wall on this issue and never making a decision.

Gary Ranum took away from that survey the board was in agreement to have the proper chain of command that everyone is answerable to someone. It seems from the discussion tonight there are three options, hire an Administrator or an Administrative Coordinator or write a description for the County Board Chair. That seems to be the decision.

Greg Frey stated the discussion tonight is all unknown situations, there are no guarantees. Many of the Counties discussed tonight were in crisis forcing them to make changes in their forms of governing. Greg did not feel Grant County was at that crisis level yet.

Carol Beals wanted to reiterate they have been warned the County Board Chair should not hold the title of Administrative Coordinator. She said the title would go with any person who was the chair if Robert Keeney was not re-elected so would the Board support the same motion if Carol Beals was standing up at the podium?

Patrick Schroeder stated the minority follows the majority, he guessed if it was Carol Beals they would have to support that also. Patrick stated it is not about the person, it is something that has worked, changes are needed, and the County is not in a crisis. We should be proud of our county, we are representing the people of the County and responsible for their money. He takes offense if it is thought they are not doing their job. Maybe Grant County is unique and we are bucking the system. There will be new faces and they know things will change. But for now the County needs to stay with what is working.

Dale Hood asked if the Department Heads had any input. No one responded.

John Beinborn stated we have remained status quo for a long time now; are we sure we are not missing out on opportunities to improve the County.

Chair Keeney repeated the motion.

Patrick Schroeder made a motion, seconded by Roger Guthrie, to leave the administrative style of government currently used in Grant County the same and look into upgrading the authority and responsibilities of the County Board Chair. Roll Call vote was called for.

Ben Wood, Corporation Counsel stated it was a negative motion so a yes vote means to leave it alone, a no vote the motion would fail.

#### ROLL CALL VOTE

DATE: September 17, 2019

QUESTION: Leave form of governing of Grant County the same.

|                      | YES | NO | EXCUSED |
|----------------------|-----|----|---------|
| 1. GARY RANUM        | X   |    |         |
| 2. GARY NORTHOUSE    | X   |    |         |
| 3. ROBERT SCALLON    | X   |    |         |
| 4. ROBERT KEENEY     | X   |    |         |
| 5. ROGER GUTHRIE     | X   |    |         |
| 6. JOHN PATCLE       | X   |    |         |
| 7. GREGORY FRY       | X   |    |         |
| 8. PATRICK SCHROEDER | X   |    |         |
| 9. MIKE LIEURANCE    | X   |    |         |
| 10. MARK STEAD       | X   |    |         |
| 11. DALE HOOD        |     | X  |         |
| 12. DWIGHT NELSON    | X   |    |         |
| 13. CAROL BEALS      |     | X  |         |
| 14. LESTER JANTZEN   |     | X  |         |
| 15. JOHN BEINBORN    |     | X  |         |
| 16. DONALD SPLINTER  | X   |    |         |
| 17. PORTER WAGNER    | X   |    |         |

County Clerk took the roll call vote resulting in 13 Yes votes and 4 No votes. Therefore motion carried.

Chair Keeney stated the Executive Committee will be reviewing the County Board Chair's responsibilities and authority.

Adjournment: Mark Stead, seconded by John Patcle, made a motion to adjourn the meeting pursuant to the next meeting on October 1, 2019 at 10:00 a.m. Motion carried.