

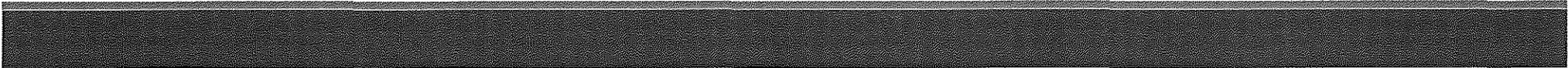
Analyzing Responsive County Government

A response, a case study, and conclusions

SUPERVISOR MATTHEW UNG

WOODBURY COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

MARCH 24, 2015



A Tale of (only) Two Counties: ~~Polk~~ is an outlier in all ways, **Scott** is our only case study in Iowa.

➤ Population/FY16 Budget/employees (approx.)

- Polk: 452,000/\$250M+/1,300+
- Scott: 170,000/\$81M/500+
- Woodbury: 103,000/\$52M/400+

➤ The true average for County Administrator in Iowa exceeds that of a U.S. Senator, or over \$185,000.

March 17th info: **National** ICMA median was \$117,000 in 2011.

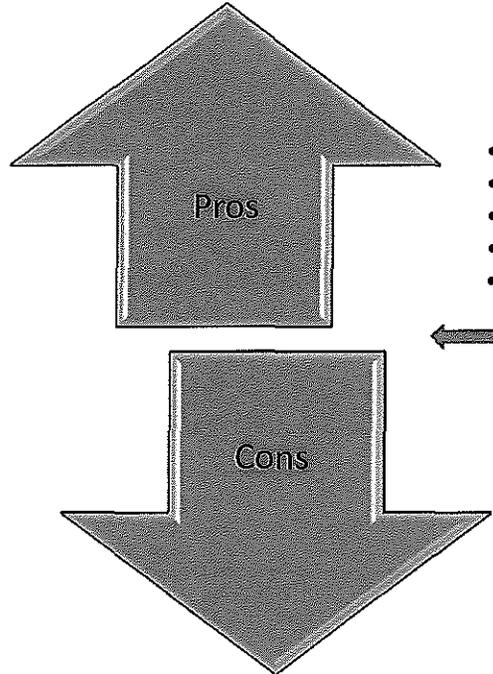
Now: **National** ICMA median is \$135,110 in 2014.

➤ Consensus of Scott County Supervisors:

- Proposed \$98,000 would not be in line with a County Administrator salary as it would draw weak interest in a nationwide search. (I realize this would not be a problem now, but it would be in the future.)
- Hiring a County Administrator is always an investment with real cost.

Feedback: Scott County Supervisors

Scott County Board of Supervisors



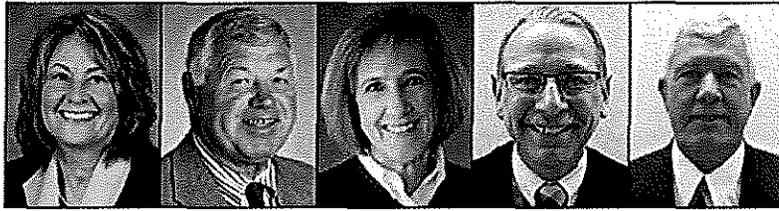
Chairman: "I couldn't encourage it enough."
Graciously welcomes any Woodbury County Supervisor to visit.

- Administrator sets up the agenda, briefs Board, and answers questions related to it.
- Supervisors' time freed up; only need to hold bi-weekly meetings now.
- Larger counties need that full-time oversight.
- Makes it easier to plan for the long-term with 2-3 year budgeting.
- "It takes politics out of it." The Administrator is like the CEO of a corporation.

New Supervisor: "It distances you from the people....I don't think we'll ever go back."

- The Chamber of Commerce likes it because they only have to talk to one person. Also, lobbyists or anyone "selling an idea" to the county only has to convince one person, not three.
- "We have 48 committees and Supervisors only attend 1/4th of them because the Administrator attends the rest."
- Experience with government administration becomes more important than experience with your county.
- You're "moving too fast" with your April timeline.
- Government is not a business; this system prioritizes efficiency over other values like customer service.

Scott County Board of Supervisors



Carol T. Earnhardt

Jim Hancock
Vice-Chair

Diane Holst

Brinson L. Kinzer

Tom Sunderbruch
Chair

(comments used with permission)

- "They may do both jobs, but they won't do them very well."
- "You're setting yourself up for failure by not separating departments."
- "Human Resources is a critical full time job, especially during union negotiations."
- "It would intimidate employees from approaching Human Resources."
- "Oh, no. You don't ever want the Administrator involved in personnel issues."

What do you think about combining the County Administrator with the Human Resources Director?



Dee F. Bruemmer
Scott County Administrator

"No, you definitely should keep Human Resources separate. It's a full time job."

....

No, empower the right dept heads instead, on specialized projects

"An experienced team of three" for the Board is just as good as a county manager, but **must** represent these three areas:

- Legal
- Budget
- Human Resources

Context of the Scott County Administration

Background

- In place for 36 years, with Scott County itself being the 3rd oldest county in Iowa.
- County has a very strong policy handbook, but also a very strong administration handbook.

Experience

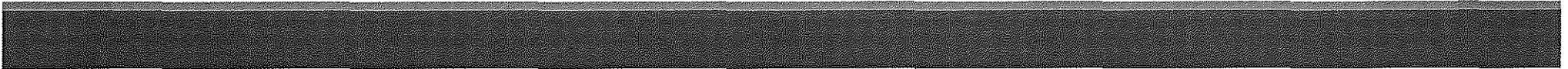
- County Administrator has 36 years experience in 3 local governments;
- Assistant County Administrator has 28 years experience in local governments.

Permanence

- Future County Administrators are groomed by the current one, and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) Liaison Program.
- Employment agreement, like 89% of county administrators (Source: 2014 ICMA CAO Salary and Compensation Survey).

Keep in mind...

If we model our position after the Assistant Administrator, we must first acknowledge the roles and philosophy of the Administrator are duplicated in the Assistant.



Roles of the Scott County Administrator

Leadership comes
from Administrator

- “I push the Board to make decisions.”
- Agenda review before each bi-weekly meeting

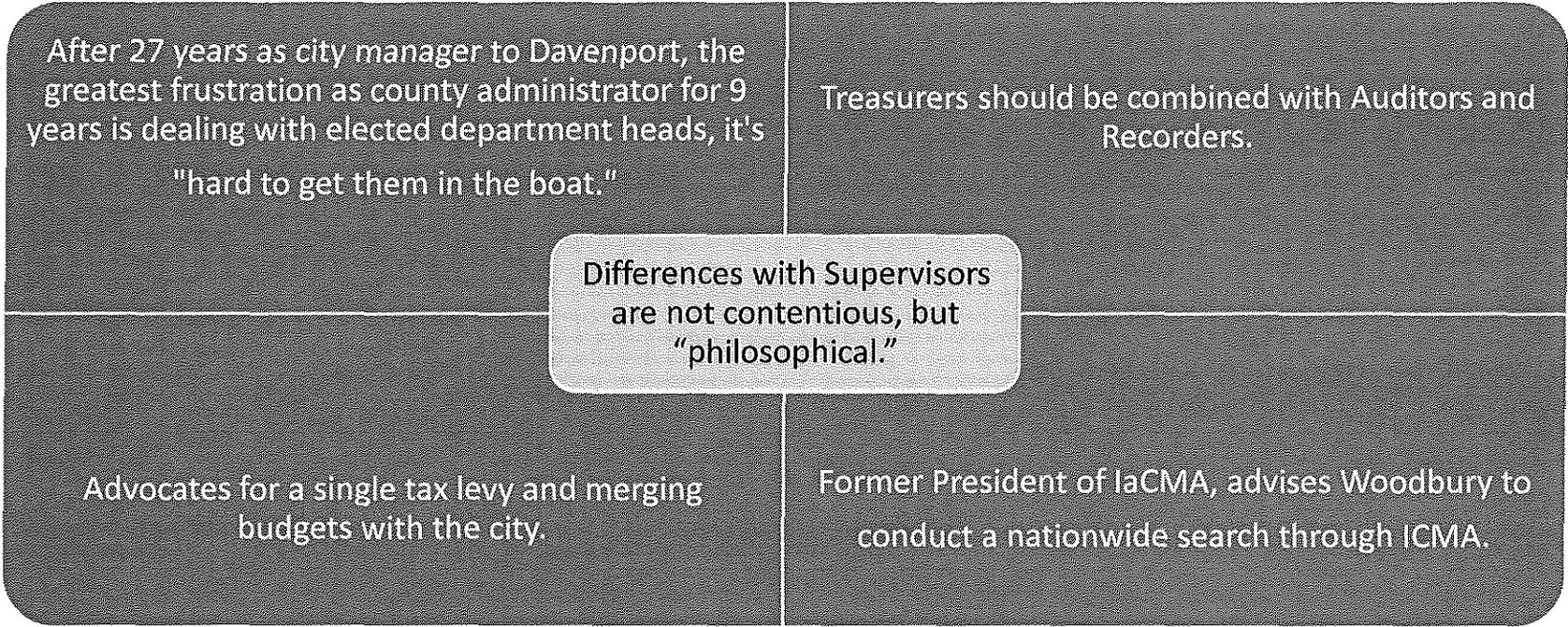
Planning &
Operations

- 3-year budget planned by Administrator
- Uses budget director as a sounding board

Represents the Board
to other governments

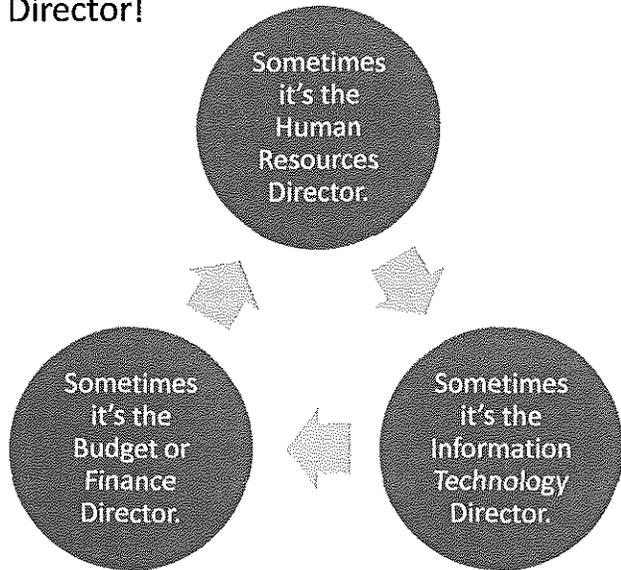
- Liaison to cities and department heads
- Sends a lobbyist to the state legislature

Philosophy of the Scott County Administrator

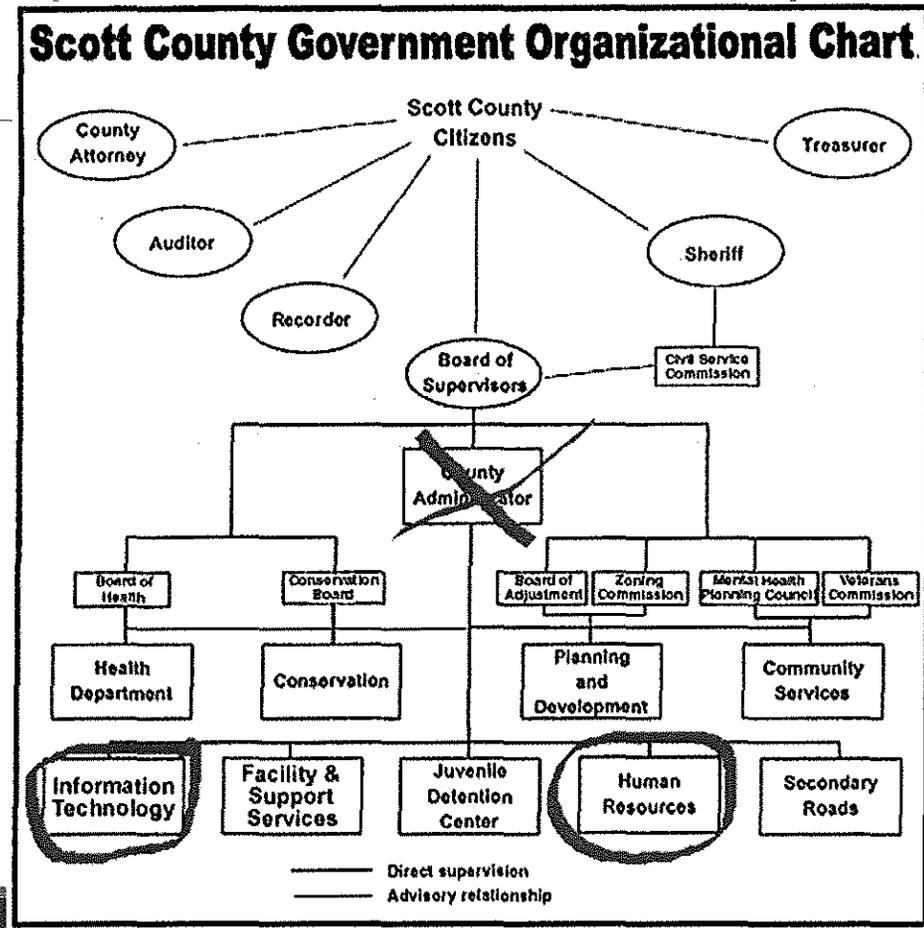


Who is Scott County's Assistant County Administrator?

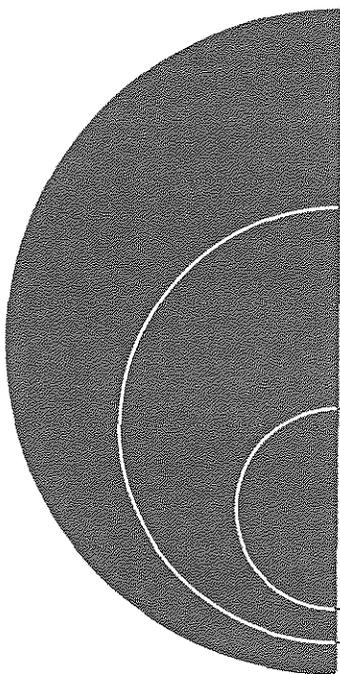
Not necessarily the Human Resources Director!



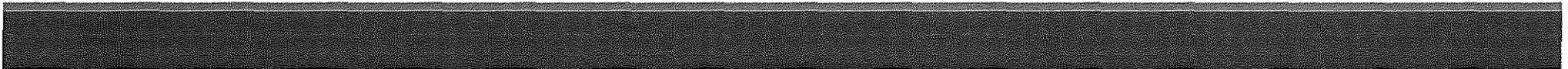
It depends on who has the most experience...



The Scott County Assistant Administrator/Human Resources Director



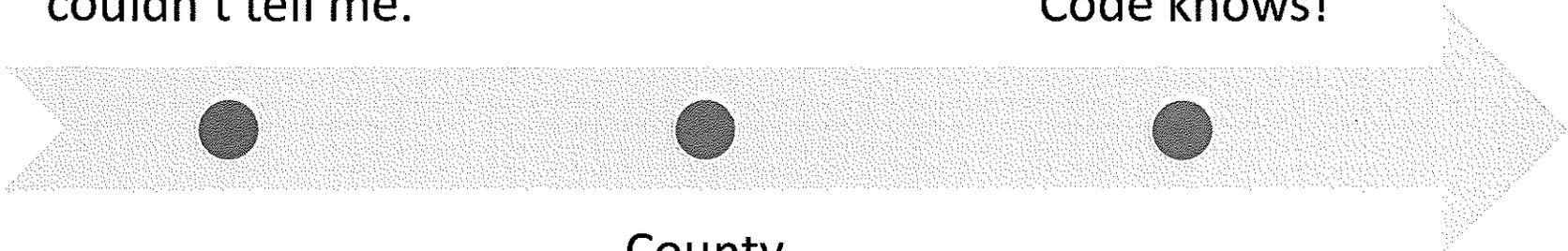
<p>Human Resources Director duties are primary; Fills in for Administrator only 2-3x a year.</p>
<p>Administrator's view: Main reasoning for having this particular Assistant Administrator is legal counsel to the Board, as she maintains a Juris Doctorate.</p>
<p>"Budget/Finance Director position is more suited to being Assistant County Administrator, because of how often they deal with money issues."</p>



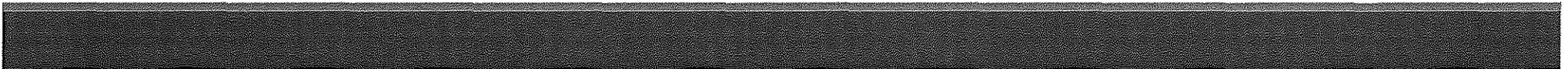
What is the difference between County Manager & County Administrator?

County
Supervisors
couldn't tell me.

Only the (Iowa)
Code knows!



County
Administrators
answer to both.



“WILL”

Same, but different, but similar, but not?

“SHALL”

**Current Woodbury County DRAFT Job Description for
“County Administrator/Human Resources Director”
The administrator WILL:**

**§331.231 ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT
§331.241 BOARD-MANAGER FORM. §331.242 DUTIES OF MANAGER.
The manager SHALL:**

Acts as the agent of the Board in ensuring the proper administration of the affairs of the County and compliance with applicable Federal, State, and local laws;

Responsible and accountable for the development, coordination, and effective administration of all County personnel policies, programs, and procedures...This position is under administrative direction of the Woodbury County Board of Supervisors and serves as the administrative officer of the County

oversees/directs the operations, departments, and personnel directly accountable to the Board of Supervisors to ensure compliance with all County Board directives, policies, and procedures...directs preparation of meeting agendas, informs the Board of pertinent items on the agenda which require particular attention and/or concern.

manages centralized administrative functions of the County including fiscal control, budget preparation, strategic planning, and human resources....Develops, interprets, and administers policies as directed by the Board of Supervisors; monitors/evaluates the efficiency, effectiveness, and cost effectiveness of the County's service delivery and governance with emphasis on the departments/functions under the authority of the Board, provides on-going analysis/review of County programs

Advises the Board on matters of policy/administration; directs the preparation of information for the use of Board of Supervisors in making programmatic/policy decisions; briefs the County Board on issues requiring Board action; attends meetings of the Board, takes part in discussions/recommends measures for adoption;

Supervises and evaluates the work of appointed department heads and Board staff; recommends personnel actions related to selection, performance review, scheduling, and discipline; administers personnel and related policies/procedures....For appointed departments, oversees and provides administrative direction for operations, program, and personnel; serves as the appointing authority and retains authority over organizational structures, budget planning, allocation of resources, and priorities

1. Enforce laws, ordinances, and resolutions.
2. Perform the duties required of the manager by law, ordinance, or resolution.
3. Administer the affairs of the county government.
4. Direct, supervise, and administer all departments, agencies, and offices of the county government unit except as otherwise provided by law or ordinance.

5. Carry out policies established by the board.
6. Prepare the board agenda.
7. Recommend measures to the board.

8. Report to the board on the affairs and financial condition of the county government.
9. Execute bonds, notes, contracts, and written obligations of the board, subject to the approval of the board.
10. Report to the board as the board may require.

11. Attend board meetings and take part in the discussion, but shall not vote.
12. Prepare and present the budget to the board for its approval and execute the budget adopted by the board.

13. Appoint, suspend, and remove all employees of the county government except as otherwise provided by law or ordinance.
14. Appoint members of temporary advisory committees.

Requires:

3 Supervisors to vote “aye”

Requires: §331.232 PLAN FOR AN ALTERNATIVE FORM OF GOVERNMENT. Eligible electors petition to change the form of government. Board establishes independent commission. Commission must recommend. Board resolves charter. Adopted by majority vote at next general election.

What does Scott County's form of government represent?

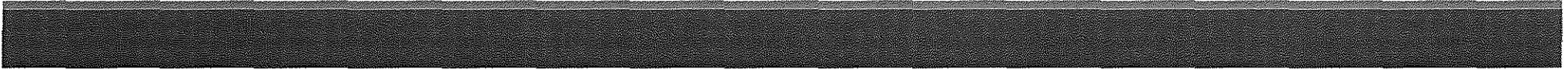
My starting assumption echoed the March 17th claim:

- "A Balance Between Strong Manager Style and the Traditional Board"

However:

- Scott County is also an outlier, in terms of administration staff and budget/finance staff.
- **All proposed training goals** with exception of budget are already under the purview of the HR Director and **this Board will encourage, support, and enforce them all.**
- I did indeed campaign on, and was elected to exercise performance-based budgeting, so I'll do it with the invaluable advice of our experienced team of advisors. The expertise for budget/finance and personnel organization is split between two people precisely because Supervisors must balance them.

My current understanding:

- We already have the true, balanced, hybrid system. It's the one 97 of 99 Iowa counties retain: The Commissioner/Supervisor system. The law's intent (previous slide) is for the **electorate** to petition for a change of government if they want to adopt either extreme—an "Elected Executive" (Strong Mayor) or a "Board-Manager" (Parliamentary).
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The continued search for a fair comparison— Johnson County (pop. 140,000)

It's been suggested their "Executive Assistant (to the Board): \$93,069 (FY 15)" may be another model to emulate as we seek a "hybrid/weak" county administrator----- (applies also to Linn County).

My conversations with their Vice-Chair & Executive Assistant revealed the following:

- Their Exec. Asst. is often mistaken as a manager because of the salary, but they are not and do not oversee other departments. The position is paid extra to lobby state government, and coordinate special projects not assigned to department heads (fleet management, centralized purchasing, etc).
- Board's Exec. Asst. & HR Director are both very proactive in communication and shared tasks. "This relationship is critical for smooth management of government and implementation of the Board's wishes."
- They do not have a County Administrator, but also advise against combining an Administrator with any department head.

Johnson County's Alternative to County Administrator

Began with our same main concern:

"We have 400 employees. Someone needs to be available all day, every day, to address county business."

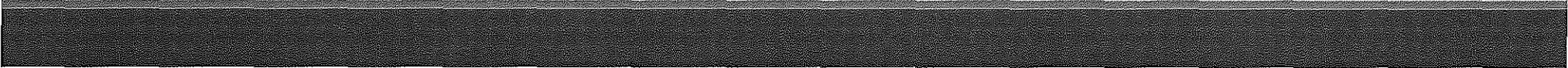
–Chairman Monson.

"The duties and will of the Board can be carried out to a greater degree and with more efficiency and fidelity." –Vice-Chairman Taylor

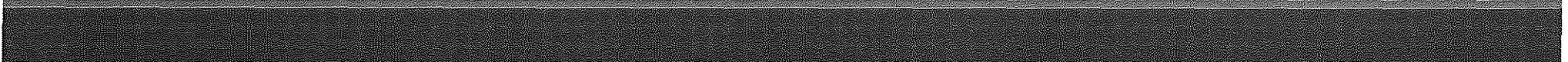
- Two liaisons for not only every department, but every small city and school district.
 - Junior paired up with senior; liaisons serve 2 years on the same committee; **seniors rotated out.**
 - Much more extended updates AND discussion on "committee report-backs", before or after main agenda.
 - After Johnson County public sentiment decided against a County Administrator, the public reached consensus that Supervisors would not remain part-time or go full-time, but commit to "3/4ths time."
 - At least one Supervisor is in the courthouse every day.
 - The Board acts as a referee when departments disagree with HR Director or vice versa, but this became much rarer with the above implementation. Board majority maintains right to reassign liaisons.
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➤ I recommend our Board adopt a similar practice by the January 2016 organizational meeting.

Conclusions

- ✓ Cities tend to Council-Manager form because emphasis on efficiency serves best a homogenous population. Counties tend to Commissioners form because emphasis on responsiveness serves best a diverse population. **Woodbury's rural residents want Board representation, not a county manager. I have heard this firsthand.**
 - ✓ While assumed to “take the politics out of it,” **the very idea of a county manager was a political one**—aimed at mitigating corruption among elected officials. Media coverage and citizen involvement was and is the remedy.
 - ✓ In the words of Polk County's application: “The County Administrator position receives its operational authority from the Board, and **the amount and extent of that authority has evolved and increased over the past ten years.**” The same is true of Scott County, and the same would be true of Woodbury County.
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Conclusions (cont.)

- ✓ The County Administrator comparison to a "CEO in the private sector" is invalid. **How many CEO's do you know that get involved in daily oversight?** The County Administrator is not the CEO; the Board of Supervisors is the CEO. We have 5 CEO's in Woodbury County simply because 1 would be a king.
 - ✓ The Board-Manager form carries the romantic notion that all power is concentrated in the elected whole, which deals with higher matters like policy, while the Manager produces the end result under the constant oversight of the Board which can remove them at any time. But whose "constant" oversight is really "constant", and **whose oversight leads to more institutionalized power in the long-term?** Knowledge is power, is it not?
 - ✓ "A County Manager" is a popular campaign issue because it appears selfless and is itself a criticism of the incumbency.
 - ✓ That said, while in office, virtually no one has told me they hope it's the next thing we do.
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Final Conclusion

- ❖ As counties get bigger, the Supervisors simply transition from part-time to full-time as warranted. The Chairman's role also becomes extremely varied in scope, power, and practice.
- ❖ I believe representative government (think Congress) incurs its lowest approval ratings not because they exercise too much power, but because they abdicate too much, whether to other governments or to unelected bureaucrats, **giving the people the feeling they don't control their government.**

I cannot support a County Administrator, not because of short-term concerns, but because of long-term repercussions to the influence of the voters, and Woodbury County's own troubled history with administrators.