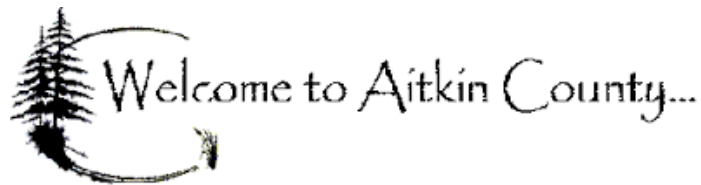

AITKIN COUNTY

ORGANIZATIONAL STUDY

-FINAL REPORT-



MAY 4, 2018

PREPARED BY GARY WEIERS
MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT



DDA

Human Resources, Inc.
a David Drown Associates Company

Background Information

On January 23, 2018, the Aitkin County Board of Commissioners approved an organizational study proposal submitted by DDA Human Resources, Inc. The purpose of the study was to help Aitkin County determine the most cost effective and efficient organizational structure. A thorough examination of the current departmental structure was completed.

A task force was appointed by the County Board to act as a liaison for the consultant. This committee met prior to the study beginning to review the scope and process and met again before the final report was drafted to provide feedback on the preliminary findings. The members of the task force are listed in Addendum A.

Assessment Process Summary

The study consisted of an examination of how Aitkin County is organized, financial documents, a previous study, facility information, organizational information gathered from other counties and interviews with over 70 individuals in the organization. Those interviewed included all Commissioners, all Department Heads, all supervisory staff, and randomly selected direct service staff from each department. The list of those interviewed is attached as Addendum B.

The interviews focused on Aitkin County's organizational effectiveness, structure, cross department interactions, communication and efficiency. Each person was asked to respond to the same set of questions which are attached as Addendum C.

Upon conclusion of the fact-finding process, a meeting was held with the task force to review information gathered from the interviews and other counties. After this discussion, this report was prepared and finalized for consideration by the County Board of Commissioners.

Current Operational Summary

The current organizational structure is a traditional one that has long existed for many of Minnesota's 87 counties. The County has five elected Department Heads including the Attorney, Sheriff, Auditor, Treasurer and Recorder. The County Administrator oversees the other 10 County departments. This model has been used by counties for many decades and some argue continues to meet the needs today just like it has for many years. Attached as Addendum D is the current table of organization.

Most counties have made modifications to the traditional organizational structure over time. For example, there are only nine other Minnesota counties that have a separately elected Auditor, Treasurer and Recorder like Aitkin County. Since 1973, Minnesota Statutes section 375A.10 has allowed appointment of these positions. Attached as Addendum E is a Research Brief from the Minnesota House of Representatives titled *County Offices: Combining or Making Appointed*. This document provides considerable information about the options for these offices.

The County serves its citizens from a few locations throughout the County. The main service locations are the Courthouse and the Health and Human Service annex where the vast majority of services are provided to the citizenry. These facilities are adjacent to one another in downtown Aitkin, MN. The Highway Department, License Center and Long Lake Conservation Center provide services at alternative locations in the County.

It should be noted that the County will soon begin construction on a new addition to the Courthouse and renovations to the current structure will be accomplished as part of this project. This project is being sequenced and is expected to take up to two years to complete. This effort will cause some disruption to operations and to staff because services will continue during demolition, construction and remodeling.

Observations

The information gathering process led to the following organizational observations:

1. The County employs many committed and professional employees who care about the people they serve and try to provide the best possible service. This is an admirable organizational trait.
2. The County Board is attempting to achieve balance between the taxpaying public and the service needs and demands faced by the County. This is a delicate and difficult task that is continuously in motion.
3. The County Board expresses their support for employees and the work being carried out by them. However, that expression of support is not being felt by all employees.
4. It appears that the public is generally satisfied with the services received. This observation is based on comments received from multiple staff and was not formally assessed as part of the process. No survey or other input was gathered directly from the public.
5. The new Administrator is making and encouraging positive changes and helping improve the mood of the organization. Trust in the new Administrator is building every day.
6. There appears to be a well-established chain of command and people know where to turn to with questions. Since the organization has functioned in largely the same way for many years, this is not surprising.
7. The County has a committed and experienced group of Department Heads who know their jobs and roles very well.
8. It appears that Department Heads are working together better than they have been for many years.
9. The County is a good place to work. Many employees commented about this and the length of employment for many people helps to support this statement. More than one person indicated that this was the best job they ever had.
10. Employees feel strongly that they have the resources and equipment needed to do their jobs successfully. This is not to say improvements cannot be made, but this is a strong positive for the County.
11. Morale is a difficult thing to assess when doing an organizational study, but it does appear that morale is generally good. Since overall morale is not yet in the ideal range, this should cause no one to sit back and admire how good it is. It is important to be committed to improving the employee experience at all times.
12. There are many people who would like to see significant enhancement to interdepartmental services and there are some people who feel the separation of departments is a very good thing.
13. The County lacks a clear and defined vision that helps keep everyone pulling in the same direction. For a long time, departments have functioned quite independent of one another.

14. There are several concerns regarding technology use and support. This is not unusual for counties in general, but it is clear that technology is not being used to its maximum potential and this is causing organizational inefficiencies and some employee distress. There are several causes for this situation including commitment to innovation, financial barriers, IT vision, IT support and others. In addition, there are hardware related issues that cause downtime for staff. Any downtime in systems has a significant cost in productivity. If staff cannot perform their essential functions, the cost to the taxpayers is significant. Furthermore, there is a disconnect in perspectives held by IT and those held by other departments.
15. The County is one of the last in the state to implement eRecording of documents. In addition, some county recording practices such as reading documents to each other are not efficient.
16. Management of the human resource is the foundation of any successful organization. Aitkin County is making strides in this area, but clearly there remain significant areas of concern regarding employee relations. The articulated concerns are not exclusively related to the Human Resource Department as they touch almost every corner of the organization. A sampling of these include:
 - a. Hiring processes are not administered the same for every department.
 - b. The development of HR as an integral part of the team is not complete.
 - i. This must be accomplished by building teams not as a top down edict.
 - c. In some cases, departments do not see the value added by the HR department services.
 - d. HR is not included in some instances where it is vitally important they be involved. Accidents and other incidents have occurred where HR is not notified by the department where the issue occurred.
 - e. It is very likely that new staff do not feel welcome because the onboarding process is fragmented and inconsistent.
 - f. Performance reviews are not being uniformly and consistently done.
 - g. Performance expectations differ by department.
 - h. Job descriptions don't always match what employees are doing.
 - i. Attracting and retaining qualified employees is increasingly challenging.
 - j. Approval of hiring new employees is not consistently being administered. For example, the County Attorney was recently asked to go through a review process for replacing a position that other departments have not gone through.
17. Payroll is one of the most important functions performed by any employer and it is not currently receiving the appropriate amount of attention and support.
18. Communication by Department Heads to employees varies greatly by department.
19. There are many departmental silos that exist and working across departments is highly compromised. "That is not my job" is used too frequently. This is due in part to the fact that it is not actually their job. The number of departments and highly specialized roles and responsibilities is a genuine obstacle to the customer experience in some cases. However, the phrase is also used as an excuse that customers dislike hearing.
20. In some cases, customers are quickly shifted to another department when the department they start at is the wrong one. This is due to the number of different departments and to a lack of understanding about the core functions of other departments. There is no incentive to learn more about how all the pieces fit

- together. In fact, some employees feel that cross training is unrealistic. This is due in part to a lack of understanding of what is meant by the term. It does not need to mean that everyone in an area knows every job but knowing more about core functions of other positions increases efficiency and enhances customer service.
21. There is significant resistance to changing anything by some people in the organization. Just because it has always been done this way and it is working does not mean it is the best way to do it. If Henry Ford and other automotive pioneers had felt that way, we may still be travelling by horse and buggy. The horse and buggy still works, but it is not the most efficient means of transportation today.
 22. Some positions are misplaced in departments where their performance cannot be fully maximized.
 23. The County website needs improvement. The site is primarily used to provide information. This is not bad, but today the customer is more demanding of providing online options for actual service interactions. One can argue that the public in Aitkin County is just fine with this, but it is doubtful there is a comprehensive data set that supports that claim.
 24. The use of paper forms and documents is still too commonplace. Furthermore, there are situations where electronic forms and documents are being used, but then printed, signed and then scanned in to another system. There seems to be some lack of trust in electronic data management and there appear to be concerns that an electronic document could be lost. There seems to be a belief that paper forms have never been lost or misplaced. It is highly doubtful a paper form has never been misplaced or lost.
 25. Financial processes are disconnected because the Auditor and Treasurer are two separate offices. This results in a lack of efficiency in those offices and does not encourage innovation or process improvement.
 26. There are instances of carbon copy paper books still being used.
 27. There are situations in the County where supervisors are responsible for over a dozen staff and cases where supervisors are responsible for 1 or 2 staff. Clearly the supervisor with a small number of supervisees has many other tasks, but the logic of needing a supervisor for 1 or 2 people is questionable. Creating middle management where it may not be needed does not increase departmental efficiency.
 28. Some employees feel disconnected from the County Board and County Administration. There are also doubts about how much is known about the work being done by staff. This is difficult to accurately assess and to determine what the right level is, but the feeling is certainly present amongst employees.
 29. For the past several years, the County has relied on fund balance to help fund operations. This practice may have been helpful during challenging times but counting on this as a revenue source for the future is misguided. When applying State Auditor suggested guidelines, the County does not have excess fund balance to spend down. Continued attempts to reduce the need for reliance on this funding source are encouraged.

Elected and Appointed Offices Commentary

As stated earlier, Aitkin County is only one of 10 counties that have 5 elected Department Heads. Most counties have combined the Auditor/Treasurer (either as elected or appointed) and many counties are moving away from an elected Recorder. The argument for keeping them as elected offices is to allow the voting public to decide on these positions. The reality is that very few people know what these three departments do in sufficient detail to make an informed decision about candidate qualifications.

The risk to the County for continuing to operate in the current manner is potentially considerable. If the Auditor, Treasurer or Recorder depart their office, the positions could be filled by anyone. It is concerning to think that an organization with a \$33 million budget could have key leadership positions filled by persons who may not be qualified for their role. If an unqualified person were elected, the County could be faced with hiring additional staff to assist with carrying out key organizational functions. This cannot happen with the County Attorney or Sheriff because the Attorney must be licensed to practice law in Minnesota and the Sheriff must be a licensed peace officer. These requirements assure a minimum standard for those offices. No such minimum standard exists for the Auditor, Treasurer and Recorder.

The other significant issue is that elected Department Heads do not fit neatly into the organizations hierarchical structure and therefore can be as separate from the whole as they choose. No structure like this exists in the private or other local governments. Originally this structure was put in place for reasons that no longer exist today. Since 77 of 87 counties in Minnesota have changed this structure, there is sufficient evidence indicating there may be better ways to be structured.

Mandated Services

One of the items evaluated as part of this study was an assessment of services that the County provides that are not mandated. Each person interviewed was asked to list any services provided by their department that are not required by law. This list is not meant to provide a comprehensive overview of all non-mandated services, but simply a summary of items presented by those interviewed. The comments received from those interviewed included the following non-mandated items:

- Long Lake Conservation Center
- Much of the Land Department is not mandated
- All the Highway Department is not mandated
- GIS
- Economic development
- Notary services
- Passports
- County wide zoning
- Recycling (in part)
- Food, beverage and lodging
- Participation in fairs and other community events
- Sobriety Court
- Sentence to Service

- Juvenile diversion
- Water testing
- Interim use permits
- Vets van
- Car seat program
- Circle of parenting program
- Driving with Care
- Thinking for Change

Recommendations

Upon analysis of all the information, the following recommendations are put forth for consideration by the Aitkin County Board of Commissioners. The recommendations are grouped in broad related categories.

Strategic Vision

1. Develop a strategic plan for the County utilizing AMC resources. This plan should include a methodology for each department to subsequently develop a plan based on the overall mission of the County. Once the “County Plan” is completed, each department should complete their departmental section within six months. Those departmental plans should be presented to the Board for consideration and approval.
2. Develop a comprehensive capital improvement plan for all capital investment including building related items and major equipment purchases. The Administrator should oversee the development of this process with support from the Auditor’s Office for spreadsheets, report formats and other items. There are models other counties use that can be quickly adapted for use in Aitkin County.

Facilities/Remodel

1. When the new County facility is built, and the existing courthouse is remodeled, the locations of departments will change dramatically. The following recommendations address service locations for each floor of the facility.

a. First Floor

- i. License Center
- ii. Veteran’s Services
- iii. Auditor
- iv. Treasurer
- v. Recorder
- vi. Sheriff
- vii. Community Corrections

These three departments will share a single window.

b. Second Floor

- i. Extension
- ii. Environmental Services
- iii. Soil and Water
- iv. Assessor
- v. County Attorney
- vi. Court Administration

These three departments will share a single window.

- c. Third Floor
 - i. Administration
 - ii. Board Room
 - iii. Human Resources
 - iv. Court Functions
- 2. In the remodeled facility, each conference room should be outfitted with a computer that can access county and state data systems. This will allow employees to maximize their effectiveness while meeting with customers.
- 3. Courtrooms should be equipped with the latest technology to maximize efficiency for County employees and for the Courts.
- 4. Hire a high-level Facilities Director position. After construction, it will be important to have someone highly qualified to carry out these responsibilities or the County will end up paying vendors to do functions at a much higher cost. This position can also assist the County with a strategic vision for facilities and grounds.
 - a. Doing this may allow the County to reduce some part-time staff in this department, but that is not a certainty at this point.
 - b. Implementing this recommendation may also save on vendor costs because this position may have the ability to address some items that have historically been contracted out to service providers.

Auditor/Treasurer and Recorder

1. Immediately combine the Auditor and Treasurer into one department (office). As per Minnesota Statute, the incumbents remain in office until the end of their terms and then the positions are merged into one position. In anticipation of combined offices, a review of all business practices should be completed to identify and address process improvements. This should include cross over with Records staff where business practices intersect. Since all three offices will occupy the same space, working across department lines will be possible.
2. Upon merging these offices, reduce the Auditor/Treasurer staff compliment by 1 FTE. Efficiencies gained through the merger will result in process improvements and therefore, cost savings. This can be strategically accomplished through attrition and no one should face a lay off because of this change.
3. The combined department should redesign the management structure to integrate business processes in the most efficient manner.
4. The County should also consider the option of having the new Auditor/Treasurer and Recorder positions be appointed instead of elected.

Land Department

1. Rename the Land Department to Forestry and Recreation. The current name is confusing to the public and does not adequately represent the work being done by the department.
2. Develop a facility at the Long Lake Conservation Center to house the entire Land Department. This will integrate the department more effectively and improve communication within the department. Resources to develop this facility exist in Land Department reserves and need not impact the County levy.
3. Evaluate the use of forfeited land revenues and how they are used in the organization. The County Board should determine allocations based on organizational priorities. Obviously, this must be done within legal parameters.

Human Resources

1. Enhance orientation and onboarding processes to include a systematic and coordinated plan for each new employee. If the employee experience starts positive, the potential for a satisfied employee grows. Each plan should include ways that a new employee can feel welcomed by others in the organization. Today's hires are the future of the organization.
 - a. Develop a task force to help design the system. Newly hired employees should be included on this task force to shed light on the deficiencies.
2. Find meaningful ways to demonstrate employee appreciation from the Board and all leadership. Employees are the organization's greatest asset and more recognition would be a positive step for the County. This need not cost great sums of money, in some cases, there is no cost at all. Leaders expressing appreciation both in public and private goes a long way.
3. Continue the work of department leaders to develop a county-wide effort to significantly increase training opportunities for employees. This includes more online options, on site options and off-site options. In some cases, training for employees has not been a high priority and increasing investment in staff will prove beneficial and motivating.
4. Move payroll to the Human Resources Department. This will streamline processes and provide employees with a one stop shop for all HR and payroll related items. Working directly with the Auditors office remains important and that relationship needs to be valued and supported by all. This will also free up some time in the Auditors office because they will not provide backup to payroll. This change helps to support the 1 FTE reduction in the combined Auditor/Treasurers/Recorders Department.
5. Practices for hiring new employees should be consistent across the organization and not impacted by which department is seeking to replace a position.
6. Each department should evaluate the number of supervisory staff and see if the number of people supervised is optimal. As mentioned in the observation section, this currently varies greatly by department and within departments.
7. It is recommended the Human Resources Department continue to make efforts to build teamwork with all County departments. While this needs to be a reciprocal relationship, expanding outreach will improve perceptions and working relationships.
8. Leaders of County departments are strongly encouraged to enhance relationships with the HR department and understand that centralized human resource services are a new reality.

Department Structure/Process

1. Move the GIS service to the Highway Department and place the GIS staff person under the supervision of the County Engineer. GIS provides services to a host of different departments and coordination is critical. The Highway Department is well positioned to provide leadership for this service. Some would argue that GIS should be located in the IT Department but that is not the best option. The work is far different than the mission of IT and therefore, that location is not ideal. Continue to fund this service using existing revenue sources.

2. Move the County Surveyor to the Highway Department and place the Surveyor under the supervision of the County Engineer. The position is currently misplaced in the Land Department and can better serve the needs of the County in the Highway Department.
 - a. Keep the survey tech positions under the supervision of the Surveyor and therefore, move them to the Highway Department as well.
 - b. Continue to fund this service using existing revenue sources.
3. With the recent additional part-time staff hired in the Veterans Service office, scheduling of the van should be moved to that department.
4. Consideration should be given to opting out of water testing. This is an excellent service but is time consuming and does not fully fund itself. If this option is not pursued, an increased fee structure should be considered.
5. All departments should have staff meetings on a weekly or biweekly basis. Information is not consistently and effectively being communicated to everyone in the organization and a structured meeting process can help address that issue. These meetings may only be 15 minutes long, but they should take place. Based on departmental size and functions, these meetings may involve the whole department or units within a department.
6. Reduce the Economic Development position to a .5 FTE non-department head position. There are greater organizational priorities for resource investment at this time and much of this position can still be accomplished in a part-time role. This position should not be a department head position and it should be placed in the Land Department, under the supervision of the Land Commissioner, as much of the position pertains to timber related activities.
7. Continue to enhance working relationships amongst countywide accounting staff and the Auditor's office. Quarterly meetings of all departmental accounting staff and the Auditor's office should occur. These meetings will help pave the way for greater understanding of the overall accounting functions of the organization and help foster better working relationships among accounting staff throughout the County.

Process Improvement

1. Stop issuing paper permits in departments where those are being done and where electronic options exist. For example, online permitting software provides the necessary information and there is no need for paper permits to also be issued. This is simply a waste of time and resources.
2. For each of the departments that will be co-located after construction, staff from co-located departments should develop protocols for processing information that overlaps more than one department. This should be done by using LEAN process improvement principles and business practices should be broken down and reconstructed in a way that maximizes efficiency of business practices. Some believe what has always been done, is the most efficient way of doing things. LEAN process improvement can help prove that point or make improvements where possible. Simply assuming current practices are most efficient is not a valid reason for keeping things as they are now. This work should commence immediately so that new processes can be launched upon moving into the new or remodeled facility.

3. In addition, the County should develop a strategy for training all employees in LEAN process improvement and provide the necessary resources to make this a reality. The LEAN process is very empowering to employees because the people directly providing services become the catalyst for change. When changes are simply handed down from management, employee buy-in is compromised. However, management still needs to hold staff accountable for improved business practices. LEAN process improvement gives employees a say in business practices and management sees greater return on investment. The County should not consider adding newly created positions until the requesting department has implemented significant process improvements. Simply adding more staff to keep doing the same thing is not the solution in most cases.
4. Develop a long-term document management plan for each department. This should include timelines for accomplishing the various tasks needed for this to be done. This plan needs to recognize things cannot be accomplished overnight but moving more aggressively toward modern data retention practices is highly encouraged. It is suggested that the County review practices from other counties and start with scanning new information. In addition, attention should be paid to data retention guidelines when priorities for scanning documents are established. For example, if an existing paper document is to be destroyed in six months, there is no point in scanning those documents. These plans should be developed within six months and approved by the Board upon completion.
5. Consider adding additional information to the online building permit application so that other departments may benefit from submitted permit information. This simple enhancement can save time for other departments.
6. Unless prohibited by law, provide access to the online building permit information to the Assessor's office and potentially other employees who have a need to know.
7. Relocate the postage machine to a location where all authorized employees can directly access it. The current arrangement is disruptive and unnecessary.
8. Consider moving the issuance of marriage licenses to the License Center. This seems to be a logical point for people who are looking for licenses. Consideration of moving other licensing type functions is also suggested. This would take place upon moving to the new facility.
9. Move the issuance of passports to the license center upon moving to the new facility. The location and office structure will be well suited to add that service.
10. It is recommended the County Recorder develop a plan to modernize operations using best practices gathered from other counties. Some of the practices in the department can be improved upon without compromising accuracy. It is suggested this plan be presented to the Board for consideration.

Budget Process

1. Continue to enhance budget practices. With support from the Auditor's office, the Administrator has made significant strides in making budget process improvements. The County is encouraged to continue to improve budget process and presentation.
2. Options for budgeting county levy dollars in each departmental budget should be explored. In some cases, county levy is budgeted as a line item and also accounted for when revenues and expenditures are finalized. This is difficult to track and

monitor. It is suggested levy dollars only be accounted for after revenues and expenditures are tallied in all departments.

3. It is recommended that the County develop a plan to cease using fund balance for operations unless that fund balance exceeds the State Auditors suggested guidelines. Use of fund balance for capital investments or emergencies is warranted in some cases, but continued dependence on fund balance use for operations is not advised.

Leadership Development

1. Continue to encourage leadership development in the organization. The County Administrator has made this a priority and those efforts should continue. The next step is for those leadership development efforts to be required by departments as well.
2. Commence having countywide leadership meetings with all management employees in the County. This approach helps continue to bring people together, so they feel part of the team.

Innovation

1. Solicit quotes for the development of a new website from vendors who specialize in public sector websites. The County should insure that the sites can be easily updated and managed with existing staff after implementation. There is no need for a significant ongoing vendor relationship.
 - a. The new website should focus on providing online venues for conducting business with the County. Other counties have increased this ability and selecting a vendor with significant public-sector experience will enhance these possibilities.
2. Develop a communications plan for the use of the new website, Facebook and other social media. The social media aspects of this recommendation are considered a lower priority than the website redevelopment and improvement.
3. Develop policies and procedures that allow for remote working on a larger scale than what is presently being done. At present, remote access is limited and there are no guiding principles. Full-time or part-time remote working employees can pay dividends. Counties that have developed sound policies and procedures have seen increases in productivity from those remote employees. As a result, remote employees can be expected to complete more work because of the flexibility and quiet of a home office. This is not meant to suggest this option applies to all positions. In the development of sound policies, it should be clearly articulated how this can be done and how work is monitored.

Technology

1. In the next six months, develop a technology plan that addresses equipment upgrades and allocation of staff for tech support. At present, the use of technology is not mission driven and is not coherently tied together and therefore it appears to be reactionary. Having a comprehensive IT vision helps the entire organization move forward and not simply react to emerging issues. This plan needs to be developed in consultation with County Departments to help correctly ascertain priorities.
 - a. The County could also consider contracting with an IT consultant to help establish this plan but that would likely be costly.

2. Implement a simple online ticketing system in IT so work orders can be easily tracked and monitored by IT staff and the requester. This helps with communication gaps between IT and their internal clients.

Summary of Recommended Organizational Changes

Implementing the changes recommended in this report would alter the table of organization and modify the placement of services within the organization. This section summarizes those structural changes and includes a reference to the changed organizational chart. The new organizational structure is attached as Addendum F.

The previously listed recommendations that impact organizational structure or service location include the following:

1. Hire a high-level Facilities Director position. After construction, it will be important to have someone highly qualified to carry out these responsibilities or the County will end up paying vendors to do functions at a much higher cost. This position can also assist the County with a strategic vision for facilities and grounds.
 - a. Doing this may allow the County to reduce some part time staff in this department but that is not a certainty at this point.
2. Immediately combine the Auditor and Treasurer into one department (office). As per Minnesota Statute, the incumbents remain in office until the end of their terms and then the positions are merged into one position. In anticipation of combined offices, a review of all business practices should be completed to identify and address process improvements. This should include cross over with Records staff where business practices intersect. Since all three offices will occupy the same space, working across department lines will be possible.
3. Move payroll to the Human Resources Department. This will streamline processes and provide employees with a one stop shop for all HR and payroll related items. Working directly with the Auditors office remains important and that relationship needs to be valued and supported by all. This will also free up some time in the Auditors office because they will not provide backup to payroll. This change helps to support the 1 FTE reduction in the Auditor/Treasurers/Records Department (office).
4. Move the GIS service to the Highway Department and place the GIS staff person under the supervision of the County Engineer. GIS provides services to a host of different departments and coordination is critical. The Highway Department is well positioned to provide leadership for this service. Some would argue that GIS should be located in the IT Department but that is not the best option. The work is far different than the mission of IT and therefore that location is not ideal. Continue to fund this service using existing revenue sources.
5. Move the County Surveyor to the Highway Department and place the Surveyor under the supervision of the County Engineer. The position is currently misplaced in the Land Department and can better serve the needs of the County in the Highway Department.
 - a. Keep the survey tech positions under the supervision of the Surveyor and therefore move them to the Highway Department as well.
 - b. Continue to fund this service using existing revenue sources.
6. Immediately reduce the Economic Development position to a .5 FTE position. There are greater organizational priorities for resource investment at this time and much of

this position can still be accomplished in a part-time role. This position should not be a department head position and it should be placed in the Land Department, under the supervision of the Land Commissioner, as much of the job pertains to timber related activities.

7. Consider moving the issuance of marriage licenses and passports to the License Center. This seems to be a logical point for people who are looking for these services. Consideration of moving other licensing type functions is also suggested. This would take place upon moving to the new facility.

Financial Impact

Item	Estimated (Savings)	Notes
Reduce Economic Development Position by 50%	(\$45,000) +/-	Salary and Benefits
Reduce Auditor/Treasurers Office by 1 FTE	(\$70,000) +/-	Salary and Benefits
Total Savings	(\$115,000) +/-	

Item	Estimated Cost	Notes
New Facilities Manager	\$95,000 +/-	This includes salary and benefits. This position may result in savings for vendor payments and a possible reduction in part time staff.
New Website	\$15,000 +/-	
Training Budget Increases	\$25,000 +/-	
Strategic Plan	\$3,000 +/-	
Total Costs	\$138,000 +/-	

Implementation

As with any plan, success or failure ultimately comes down to implementation. It is recommended the County develop an implementation plan that follows a multi-year implementation strategy. Obviously, the driving force behind implementation is the County Board acting on recommendations in this report. The Board will need to determine priorities and those items that are highest priority should be done first.

Once the Board has weighed in, each recommendation should be assigned a timeline for accomplishment and who is responsible to oversee implementation. For implementation of some recommendations, the County may wish to assign someone as a project manager who can insure things are moving forward. This cannot simply be added to the Administrator to implement all the recommendations.

Implementation of many of these recommendations will have an impact on the workforce that is both positive and negative. Some who struggle with change will have difficulty while others will soar. The Board will have to determine a course and then stay the course. This is not to say changes can't be made, but not every complaint about a change should cause

alteration of the plan. Potential changes to the plan should be thoughtfully considered prior to being made.

Another factor compounding implementation is a belief that change should occur only after certain retirements take place. If the County takes that approach, change will be slow to occur. In addition, if change is put off many years, new reasons to delay will emerge prior to the changes being made.

Conclusion

Aitkin County has much to be proud of. The County is fortunate to have many dedicated, hardworking and committed employees. The County Board is committed to meeting the needs of the citizens while balancing the impact on property taxes. The new Administrator is providing excellent leadership and departments are continuing to improve working relationships. The public appears to be well served.

However, there are many areas that can be improved and made more efficient. Many departmental structures, work processes and procedures have been in place for a long time and have not been analyzed to determine effectiveness. For a variety of factors, organizational changes have been implemented slowly or not at all. These issues have caused some organizational stagnation and a resistance to change the status quo.

The organization is poised to make significant organizational changes that will increase efficiency, and in many cases, service quality. The status quo will not be an effective model in the future and the time is right to make the necessary changes that will better position the organization to move forward.

Addendum A: Task Force Members

- Commissioner Mark Wedel
- Commissioner Bill Pratt
- County Administrator Jessica Seibert
- County Auditor Kirk Peysar
- Human Resources Director Bobbie Danielson

Addendum B: List of Persons Interviewed

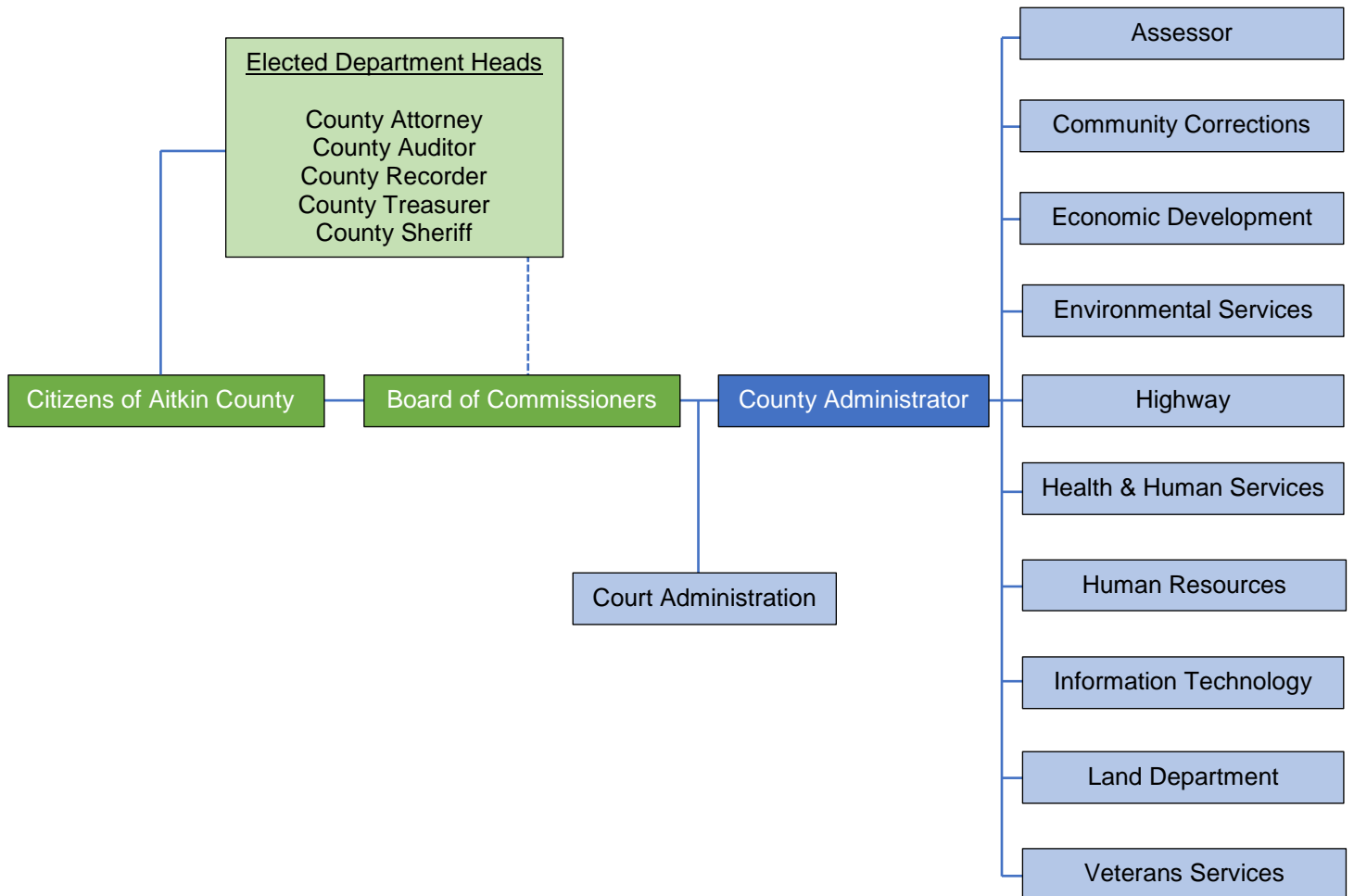
Name	Position	Division
Bobbie Danielson	HR Director	Human Resources
Laurie Westerlund	Commissioner	County Board
Roxy Hoppe	Chief Deputy Recorder	Recorder's Office
Courtney Dowell	Education Manager	LLCC
Wendie Carlson	Business Manager	LLCC
Dan Haasken	GIS Coordinator	GIS/Surveyor
Ross Wagner	Economic Development & Forest Industry Coordinator	Economic Development
Sally Huhta	Account Technician	Auditor's Office
Terry Neff	Environmental Services Director	Environmental Services/Planning & Zoning
Jim Hicks	Sr. Certified Appraiser	Assessor's Office
Jessica Seibert	County Administrator	Administration
Crystal Defoe	Utility Maintenance Custodian	Maintenance
Kalea Fischer	Office Assistant V	Environmental Services/Planning & Zoning
Carter Johnson	Chief Mechanic	Highway Department
Anne Marcotte	Commissioner (Board Chair)	County Board
Bill Pratt	Commissioner	County Board
Mike Dangers	County Assessor	Assessor's Office
Jim Ratz	County Attorney	Attorney's Office
Julie Hughes	Chief Deputy Treasurer	Treasurer's Office
Jon Knutson	Financial Assistant	Auditor's Office
LaRae Fischer	Senior License Technician	License Center
Scott Turner	Sheriff	Sheriff's Office
Eric Cervantez	Senior Engineering Technician	Highway Department
Jon Cline	Deputy Sheriff	Sheriff's Office
Janet Tougas	Career Corrections Agent	Community Corrections
Steve Bennett	IT Director	IT
Mick Moriarty	County Recorder	Recorder's Office
Nicole Visnovec	HR Specialist	Human Resources
Lori Tibbetts	Assistant County Assessor	Assessor's Office
Tom Parkin	Forester	Land Department
Mark Wedel	Commissioner	County Board
Kami Genz	Community Corrections Director	Community Corrections
Randy Blunt	Heavy Equipment Operator	Highway Department
Lisa Rakotz	Senior Assistant County Attorney	Attorney's Office
Michele Motherway	Office Manager	Attorney's Office
Chris Sutch	Network Administrator	IT
Scott Kellerman	Highway Maintenance Supervisor	Highway Department
Mike Quale	Assistant County Engineer	Highway Department
Sarah Olsen	Accountant/Office Manager	Highway Department

Mark Jacobs	Land Commissioner	Land Department/LLCC
Steve Cook	Investigator	Sheriff's Office
Rich Courtemanche	Assistant Land Commissioner	Land Department
Randy Quale	County Surveyor	GIS/Surveyor
Tom Bingham	Building and Grounds Supervisor	Maintenance
Jessica Stuber-Benzie	Naturalist/Program Coordinator	LLCC
Jen Rikala	Eligibility Worker	Health & Human Services
John Drahota	Undersheriff	Sheriff's Office
Karla White	Jail Administrator	Sheriff's Office
Patrice Erickson	Dispatch Supervisor	Sheriff's Office
Ben Mowers	Dispatcher	Sheriff's Office
Nikki Knutson	Deputy Auditor/Payroll Technician	Auditor's Office
Sarah Winge	Assistant County Attorney III	Attorney's Office
Ruth Sundermeyer	Child Support Supervisor	Health & Human Services
Jessi Schultz	Social Services Supervisor	Health & Human Services
Kim Larson	Social Services Supervisor	Health & Human Services
Erin Melz	Public Health Supervisor	Health & Human Services
Jessica Goble	Financial Assistance Supervisor	Health & Human Services
Michelle Leitinger	Environmental Health Specialist	Environmental Services
Cynthia Bennett	HHS Director	Health & Human Services
Kirk Peysar	County Auditor	Auditor's Office
Lori Grams	County Treasurer	Treasurer's Office
Becky Roden	Deputy Treasurer	Treasurer's Office
Emily Trotter	Child Support Officer	Health & Human Services
Penny Harms	VSO	Veterans Services
Naomi Larson	Public Health Nurse	Health & Human Services
Sue Bingham	Administrative Assistant	Administration
Tara Snyder	Deputy Recorder	Recorder's Office
Pete Gansen	Assistant Zoning Administrator	Environmental Services
Becca Person	Social Worker	Health & Human Services
Don Niemi	Commissioner	County Board
John Welle	County Engineer	Highway Department

Addendum C: Individual Meeting Questions

1. Do you know what is expected of you in your job?
2. Do your staff know what is expected of them in their jobs?
3. Is it clear who you should go to with questions about policy or procedures?
4. Do you have the resources and equipment you need to do your job successfully?
5. Describe the current organizational culture that exists in Aitkin County.
6. Describe what is working particularly well with the current Aitkin County organizational structure.
7. What is not working well with the organizational structure?
8. Do you have any suggestions for improving the structure?
9. Do you have any suggestions for improving efficiency in your department or the County as a whole?
10. Describe how department heads and staff work across departments.
11. Describe the effectiveness of the current organizational structure.
12. Describe how workload is balanced between County departments.
13. What services are provided in your department that are not mandated by state or federal law?
14. What are the obstacles to making changes to the organizational structure?
15. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Addendum D: Current Table of Organization



INFORMATION BRIEF

Research Department

Minnesota House of Representatives

600 State Office Building

St. Paul, MN 55155

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Updated: January 2018

County Offices: Combining or Making Appointed

This information brief describes the general law governing how certain county government offices may be changed from elected to appointed positions and how certain offices may be combined. It also summarizes what options counties have implemented and whether they have used general or special law.

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How many counties have implemented changes in county offices?	4

What county offices can be changed from elective to appointive under general law and how?

Under [Minnesota Statutes, section 382.01](#), each county must have an elected county auditor, treasurer, sheriff, recorder, attorney, and coroner. But since 1973, [Minnesota Statutes, section 375A.10](#), has allowed a county to appoint an auditor, treasurer, sheriff, or recorder, if the offices have not been abolished by the adoption of other options.

These options may be adopted only after the voters in the county approve it in a referendum. [Minn. Stat. § 375A.12](#). The referendum may be initiated by:

- a resolution by the county board,
- a petition signed by voters equal in number to 5 percent of the electors voting at the last election for the office of governor, or
- a recommendation of a county government study commission. If a study commission has been established under [Minnesota Statutes, section 375A.13](#), a referendum on an option may not be initiated by a resolution of the county board or a petition of voters until after the commission has completed its study.

If an office is made appointive, the board of county commissioners makes the appointment to the office. The statutorily required duties, functions, and responsibilities of the office are then vested in and performed by the board of county commissioners through a board-appointed department head. The board can initiate and direct any reorganization, consolidation, reallocation, or delegation of duties, functions, or responsibilities for the purpose of promoting efficiency in county government; the board may also make any other necessary administrative changes including abolishing or terminating the office or the transfer of personnel, without diminishing, prohibiting, or avoiding those specific statutorily required duties to be performed by those officials. [Minn. Stat. § 375A.10](#), subd. 3.

The officer elected to the office at the time of the adoption of this option serves as the head of any department created by the board of county commissioners to perform the functions formerly performed by the office until the term of office expires. [Minn. Stat. § 375A.10](#), subd. 3.

What county offices can be combined and how?

1. Auditor and Treasurer

The offices of the county auditor and treasurer may be combined. [Minn. Stat. § 375A.10](#), subd. 2, cl. (c). If the combined office is to be appointive, a referendum must be held under section [375A.12](#). If the combined office is to remain elective, the proposed change generally is not subject to a referendum and if a referendum is not held, the resolution providing for the change must be adopted by 80 percent of the county board members. However, the county board may still require a referendum on the change. In addition, a referendum may be required if a petition is signed by a number of voters equal to 10 percent of those voting in the county at the last

general election. The county auditor must receive the petition for a referendum within 30 days after the second publication of the board resolution that orders the combination.

The persons last elected as auditor and treasurer before the resolution has been adopted serve in those offices until the completion of the terms to which they were elected.

The statutorily required duties, functions, and responsibilities of the county auditor and the county treasurer are then vested in and performed by the auditor-treasurer.

2. Assessor and Auditor, Treasurer, or Auditor-Treasurer

A number of counties have combined the office of assessor with that of auditor, treasurer, or auditor-treasurer. Because of concerns with the compatibility of these offices, the law now explicitly provides for combining the offices. Whenever the assessor's office is combined with another, the person holding the office still must meet the qualifications required for assessor.

Compatible offices. The office of county assessor is compatible with the office of auditor, treasurer, or auditor-treasurer if those offices are appointed positions. A combined assessor-auditor must not serve on the board of appeal and equalization. The county board must not delegate any authority, power, or responsibility under the tax abatement process to the combined office.

An elected county auditor, treasurer, or auditor-treasurer may also serve as the county assessor if the auditor, treasurer, or auditor-treasurer office will be an appointed position within five years. The five-year period covers the time it might take from the referendum to make the auditor, treasurer, or auditor-treasurer an appointed office until the current elected officeholder's term expires.

Incompatible offices. A county assessor must not serve in the listed elected positions: county attorney, county board member, elected auditor, elected treasurer, elected auditor-treasurer, town board supervisor for a town in the same county, or mayor or city council member for a city in the same county. Similarly, a city assessor must not also serve as a mayor or city council member for the same city, and a town assessor must not serve as a town board supervisor for the same town.

Except for an elective office that will become appointive, an assessor who accepts an office that is incompatible with the office of assessor is deemed to have resigned from the assessor position on the day of taking the incompatible office.

[Minn. Stat. § 273.061](#), subds. 1a, 1b, 1c.

Can a county change a position that has been combined or made appointed back to an elected position?

Yes, but not until at least three years have passed. After three years, any office that has been combined or made appointed under [chapter 375A](#) may be changed back following the same procedures. [Minn. Stat. § 375A.12](#), subd. 6. However, if the change was made pursuant to special law, then special law is needed to change back. Since 2011, special laws to authorize changing offices to appointed positions have also included a provision to provide for reverting to electing the offices that is substantially the same as the general law.

How many counties have implemented changes in county offices?

As of 2017, nearly all counties have implemented changes in their county offices, whether under general or special law.¹

Use of the General Law

Combining the Elected Auditor and Treasurer Offices. The following 46 counties appear to have used general law authority to combine the offices of elected auditor and treasurer: Becker, Beltrami, Brown, Carlton, Chisago, Clay, Clearwater, Cook,² Cottonwood, Crow Wing, Douglas, Faribault, Fillmore, Freeborn,³ Isanti, Jackson, Kanabec, Kittson, Koochiching, Lake of the Woods, LeSueur, Lyon, Marshall, McLeod, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Mower, Norman, Otter Tail, Pennington, Pine, Pope, Redwood, Renville, Rice, Sherburne, Stearns, Stevens, Todd, Traverse, Wabasha, Wadena,⁴ Waseca, Wilkin, Winona, and Wright.

Sibley County's auditor and treasurer will be combined offices as of January 1, 2019, pursuant to a referendum vote favoring the combination.

Several of these counties have since obtained special legislation to change the elected auditor-treasurer office to an appointed position, subject to a reverse referendum, but not all have implemented the special legislation.

¹ The information in this section is based on a phone survey of all counties in 2016, 2016 election results, and the 2017-2018 *Minnesota Legislative Manual* (known as the "Blue Book," published by the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State).

² Cook County held a referendum on the proposal in 1976 and the part to combine the offices passed, but the part to make the combined office appointive failed.

³ Freeborn County combined the offices of auditor and treasurer in 1982 following a referendum on the question.

⁴ Wadena County was authorized by [Laws 1994, chapter 394](#), to combine the offices of auditor and treasurer, subject to local approval of the special legislation. Wadena County did not file the local approval as required, and the authority under special law has expired. However, the offices are combined, presumably under general law in [Minnesota Statutes, chapter 375A](#).

Other offices. In Dodge County, the auditor-treasurer position became an appointed position in 2007, following approval by the voters at the 2004 general election. The recorder's office became an appointed office following voter approval at the 2012 primary election.

In Douglas, Fillmore, and Kanabec counties, voters at the 2016 general election rejected making the offices of auditor-treasurer and recorder appointed positions.

In Mille Lacs County, the auditor and treasurer positions were combined following a referendum in 1980. A 1974 referendum to combine the offices and make the combined office appointive failed. The recorder position became an appointed position at the beginning of 2007, following approval by the voters at the 2004 general election.

In Swift County, the voters approved changing the offices of recorder and auditor to appointed positions at the November 2012 general election.

To date, no county has opted to make the sheriff an appointed position.

Special Laws

The table below shows that more than half of the counties have special laws that authorized those counties to combine or make appointive certain county offices. Even though a county has gotten special law authority, it has not always resulted in implementing the change.⁵

Once an office is made an appointed position, the county board may reorganize, reallocate, delegate, or otherwise change how the required functions of the office are performed. This means that in some counties, the specific office or title may not exist but the functions are still performed.

Before 2001, some special laws provided for a reverse referendum, but not all. Since 2001, special legislation has contained substantially the same conditions. A special law:

- (1) requires local approval by the governing body for the law to take effect;
- (2) requires the county board to adopt the resolution providing for the change by at least 80 percent vote of the board;
- (3) provides for a reverse referendum; and
- (4) provides for the elected officeholder, if any, to continue to hold the office until the term expires.

Since 2011, an additional provision that spells out how the county may revert to making offices elective after having made them appointive under the special law is included in any special law.⁶

⁵ A special law is a law that applies to only a part of a class—for example, one county as opposed to all counties. For more information on special laws, see the information brief [Special Legislation](#), October 2016.

⁶ See [Laws 2011, chapter 99](#), for example.

In 2001, 2006, 2009, 2013, 2015, and 2017 legislation was debated, but not enacted, that would have made it easier under general law to change certain county offices from elective to appointive positions.⁷

Special Laws Enacted					
County	Appointed Auditor	Appointed Treasurer	Appointed Recorder	Elected Auditor-Treasurer	Appointed Auditor-Treasurer
Anoka ⁸	1989 ch. 243	1989 ch. 243	1989 ch. 243		
Beltrami			2007 ch. 26		
Benton ⁹			1997 ch. 91; 2017, ch. 92, art. 3, § 2	1997 ch. 91	1997 ch. 91
Big Stone ¹⁰				1992 ch. 421	
Blue Earth	1990 ch. 431	1990 ch. 431	1990 ch. 431		
Carlton			2002 ch. 263		
Carver	2006 ch. 173	2006 ch. 173	2006 ch. 173		
Cass ¹¹			2001 ch. 105		2001 ch. 105
Chippewa				1992 ch. 421	
Chisago ¹²			1998 ch. 302		
Clay ¹³			2014 ch. 146 § 3		2014 ch. 146 § 3
Crow Wing ¹⁴			2015 ch. 38		2015 ch. 38

⁷ See H.F. 1290/S.F. 510 (2001); H.F. 2946/S.F. 2805 (2006); H.F. 1278/S.F.1125 (2009); H.F. 800/S.F. 966 (2013); H.F. 1179/S.F. 675 (2015); H.F. 1696/S.F. 1426 (2017) (limited to county recorders).

⁸ In [Laws 2005, chapter 28](#), these provisions were codified in [Minnesota Statutes, sections 383E.03](#) to 383E.06.

⁹ In Benton County, a referendum pursuant to a petition was held following the 1997 special law's enactment. The part that combined the offices of auditor and treasurer passed, but the part to make the office of recorder and the combined office of auditor-treasurer appointive failed. In 2017, the county was again authorized to make the office of recorder appointive, subject to reverse referendum.

¹⁰ Big Stone County never approved the local law as required. A petition for a referendum was filed and the referendum failed. Thus, the option was not implemented and the authority to implement it under special law has expired.

¹¹ Cass County approved the law but has not yet made the recorder an appointive position. The 2017-2018 *Minnesota Legislative Manual* shows that the elected recorder's term expires 2019. The auditor-treasurer's position was made appointive effective May 1, 2005.

¹² The 2017-2018 *Minnesota Legislative Manual* shows the recorder with a term ending in 2019, which indicates it is an elected position.

¹³ The 2017-2018 *Minnesota Legislative Manual* shows the recorder with a term ending in 2019, which indicates it is an elected position.

¹⁴ The 2017-2018 *Minnesota Legislative Manual* shows the offices with terms ending in 2019, which indicates they are elected positions.

Special Laws Enacted					
County	Appointed Auditor	Appointed Treasurer	Appointed Recorder	Elected Auditor-Treasurer	Appointed Auditor-Treasurer
Dakota ¹⁵			1991 ch. 338	1991 ch. 338	1998 ch. 308
Freeborn ¹⁶			1994 ch. 393		1994 ch. 393
Goodhue			2001 ch. 184		2001 ch. 184
Hennepin ¹⁷			1967 ch. 599		1967 ch. 599
Hubbard	2001 ch. 105	2001 ch. 105	2001 ch. 105		
Itasca				1993 ch.127	
Jackson ¹⁸					2014 ch. 146 § 1
Kandiyohi			2014 ch. 146 § 4	1992 ch. 421	2014 ch. 146 § 4
Kittson			2011 ch. 99		2011 ch. 99
Koochiching ¹⁹			1994 ch. 387		
Lac qui Parle			2005 ch. 75 § 2		2005 ch. 75 § 2
Lake ²⁰			2014 ch. 146 § 2	1974 ch. 227	2014 ch. 146 § 2
Lyon			2014 ch. 146 § 5		2014 ch. 146 § 5
Marshall ²¹			2011 ch. 99; 2017 ch. 92, art. 3, § 5		2011 ch. 99
Martin				1991 ch. 81	
Morrison			2017 ch. 92, art. 3, § 1		
Murray				1993 ch. 200	
Nicollet					2008 ch. 160

¹⁵ Dakota County's law is now codified in [Minnesota Statutes, section 383D.09](#).

¹⁶ Freeborn County was authorized to make the county recorder and combined office of auditor-treasurer appointive offices. [Laws 1994, ch. 393](#). Although local approval was completed for the special legislation, the options were not implemented after a referendum was held pursuant to a petition and failed.

¹⁷ Hennepin County's special law is codified at [Minnesota Statutes, section 383B.025](#). The special law did not provide for a reverse referendum.

¹⁸ The auditor-treasurer position is still an elected position with the term ending 2019.

¹⁹ Koochiching County was authorized to make the office of county recorder appointive, and although the special legislation was approved by the county board, the option was not implemented after the referendum held pursuant to a petition failed.

²⁰ The positions are currently elected.

²¹ Marshall County, after holding a public hearing on the matter, voted not to implement the special law and did not complete approval of it. The special law has now expired and will not take effect. In 2017, the county was again authorized to make the recorder's office appointive, subject to reverse referendum.

Special Laws Enacted					
County	Appointed Auditor	Appointed Treasurer	Appointed Recorder	Elected Auditor-Treasurer	Appointed Auditor-Treasurer
Nobles ²²			2005 ch. 75 § 3	1993 ch. 200	2005 ch. 75 § 3
Olmsted			1992 ch. 474	1990 ch. 438	1998 ch. 307
Pine ²³			2002 ch. 263		2017 ch. 92, art. 3, § 3
Pipestone ²⁴				1993 ch. 200	
Polk			2002 ch. 258	1993 ch. 127	2002 ch. 258
Pope ²⁵			2005 ch. 75 § 1		2005 ch. 75 § 1
Ramsey ²⁶	1971 ch. 611	1971 ch. 611	1971 ch. 611		
Rice			2017 ch. 92, art. 3, § 6		2017 ch. 92, art. 3, § 6
Rock			2003 ch. 43	1993 ch. 200	2008 ch. 209
St. Louis ²⁷			1986 ch. 366 § 3	1969 ch. 591	
Scott ²⁸	1997 ch. 90	1997 ch. 90	1997 ch. 90		
Stearns			2017 ch. 92, art. 3, § 4		
Steele			2002 ch. 256		
Wadena ²⁹				1994 ch. 394	
Washington			1997 ch. 153		1997 ch. 153
Wright			2001 ch. 180		

²² Nobles County did not file the certificate of local approval of the 2005 law with the secretary of state and the law did not take effect.

²³ Pine County may also combine the duties of the appointed recorder and the county assessor into one department, as long as the person appointed has the qualifications required in statute for assessors.

²⁴ Pipestone County was authorized to combine the offices of auditor and treasurer, and although the county board approved the local law, the option was not implemented after the referendum held pursuant to a petition failed.

²⁵ When a petition for a referendum was filed, the Pope County board rescinded its resolution. The law was not approved and has expired. A referendum held November 6, 2012, on whether to make the offices of recorder and auditor-treasurer appointed, failed.

²⁶ Ramsey County's special law is codified at [Minnesota Statutes, section 383A.20](#).

²⁷ St. Louis County's special law is codified at [Minnesota Statutes, section 383C.136](#). In 1969, the treasurer's position was abolished and functions given to the auditor. In 1986, the recorder's position was made an appointed position. The special law did not provide for a reverse referendum.

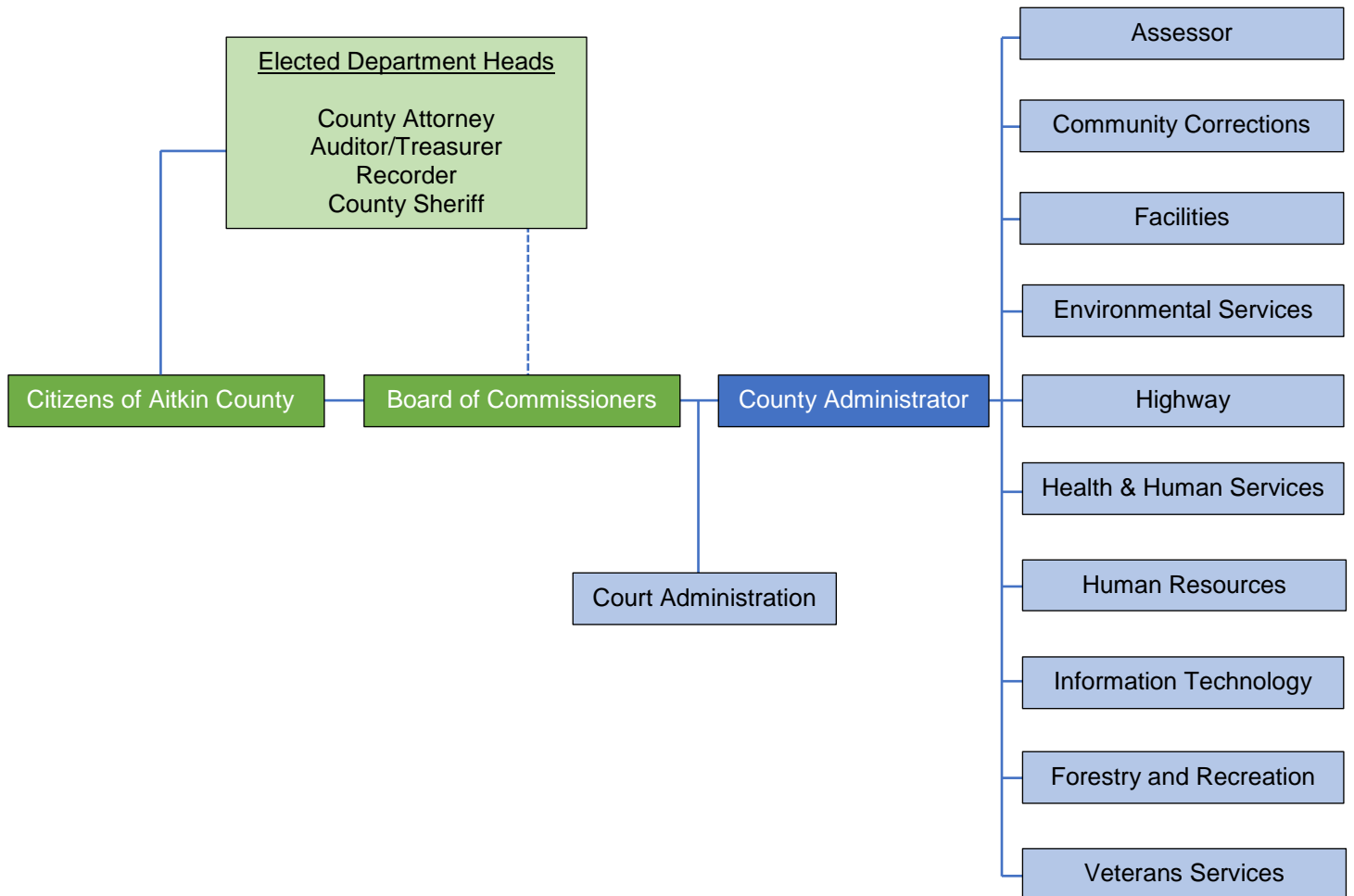
²⁸ [Laws 2000, chapter 259](#), allowed Scott County to generally reorganize and transfer the duties of the appointive positions to the county administrator.

²⁹ Wadena County did not file the local approval as required, and the authority under special law has expired. However, the offices are combined, presumably under general law in [Minnesota Statutes, chapter 375A](#).

Special Laws Enacted					
County	Appointed Auditor	Appointed Treasurer	Appointed Recorder	Elected Auditor-Treasurer	Appointed Auditor-Treasurer
Yellow Medicine			2008 ch. 161		2008 ch. 161

For more information about local governments, visit the government operations area of our website, www.house.mn/hrd/.

Addendum F: Proposed Table of Organization



Minnesota Counties' Organizational Structure Trends for District 1-5

Ronick Kimnong

Metropolitan State University

MINNESOTA COUNTIES ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE TRENDS FOR DISTRICT 1-5

The organizational structure plan project for Minnesota Counties in district 1-5 (based on the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC)) was initiated by Aitkin County administrator, Jessica Seibert. The purpose of the project is to have a better understanding of the current trends of the organizational structure plans of counties in Minnesota, along with learning from other counties' experiences of their organizational structure plans. Due to time constraint, only Minnesota Counties in district 1-5 were asked to participate in this project (only three counties in AMC district 1-5 were not contacted, as there is no contact information for the county administrators or county coordinators).

A total of eight questions were asked for the survey and were posted on Survey Monkey from October 5th to November 13th. The questions focused on the current organizational structure, challenges counties experienced, and future organization structure plans changes. The eight questions asked in Survey Monkey were:

1. What is the name of your county?
2. What AMC (Association of Minnesota Counties) District are you in? (District 1-5)
3. Please provide the website link to your county organizational structure chart. If your organizational structure chart is not available online, you may email Ronick the chart at sl9379tm@metrostate.edu and type in "email" in the comment box below.
4. How long has the current organizational structure been in place in your county? (Organizational structure is defined as the departments, departmental duties, and leadership/reporting structure of those departments) (Less than 5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, More than 15 years)
5. How would you rate the effectiveness of the current organizational structure in your county? (Not Effective, Somewhat Effective, Effective, Very Effective)
6. What areas would you like to see improved in the organizational structure of your county? (examples: better cross-departmental communication, streamlined hiring practices, downsizing/upsizing departments or positions)
7. What obstacle(s) do you think might prevent an organizational structure change from happening? (Examples: budget, public support, employee/department head support)
8. In the future, does your county anticipate any organizational structure changes? (No, Within one year, Probably two to five years, Over six years or more, Don't know)

Results

Out of the 40 counties that were asked to participate in this survey, 26 counties replied to the survey and 15 counties provided organizational structure charts.

Counties that participated in this survey include:

District 1: Carlton, Cook, Koochiching, Pine

District 2: Beltrami, Cass, Hubbard

District 3: Marshall, Pennington, Polk

District 4: Clay, Pope, Traverse, Stevens, Wadena, Stevens

District 5: Benton, Chisago, Crow Wing, Isanti, Kanabec, Meeker, Morrison, Sherburne, Stearns, Wright

Due to the varying participation in each AMC district (some districts have three counties participating, while others have six or ten), the analysis will be based on the questions answered and not based on each district response. Also, the results of the survey can conclude that population of the counties does not have any impact on the effectiveness, frequency of change to the organizational structure plan, or how long the plan has been in place; therefore, population of the counties will not be used to analyze the trends.

Statistic results for question 4 (How long has the current organizational structure been in place in your county?):

- < 5 years (11 counties): Benton, Cass, Chisago, Cook, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Pine, Meeker, Morrison, Sherburne, Wadena
- 6-10 years (3 counties): Koochiching, Polk, Stevens
- 11-15 years (3 counties): Clay, Kanabec, Traverse
- > 15 years (9 counties): Beltrami, Carlton, Isanti, Marshall, Pennington, Pope, Stearns, Wilkin, Wright

Results for question 5 (How would you rate the effectiveness of the current organizational structure in your county?):

- Not Effective (1 county): Wright
- Somewhat Effective (9 counties): Chisago, Isanti, Koochiching, Meeker, Morrison, Sherburne, Traverse, Wadena, Wilkin
- Effective (9 counties): Benton, Carlton, Clay, Cook, Kanabec, Pennington, Pope, Stearns
- Very Effective (7 counties): Beltrami, Cass, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Marshall, Pine, Polk

Question 8 results (In the future, does your county anticipate any organizational structure changes?):

- No (6 counties): Cook, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Koochiching, Pine, Polk
- Within one year (3 counties): Stearns, Wadena, Wright
- Within two to five years (9 counties): Benton, Beltrami, Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Meeker, Morrison, Sherburne, Stevens
- Six or more years: (0 county)
- Don't know (8 counties): Carlton, Cass, Clay, Marshall, Pennington, Pope, Traverse, Wilkin

Analyzing and Cross-Analyzing the Results from Questions 4, 5, and 8

Analyzing based on age of the organizational structure plans:

- Eleven counties reported that their organizational structure plans (OSP) have been updated less than five years ago, only six counties reported that their OSP are effective or very effective. Counties that reported that their OSP are effective or very effective have no plans or doesn't know when they will update their OSP.
- Four counties that reported that their OSP were updated in less than five years are somewhat effective and those counties have plans to update their OSP within one year or within two to five years.
- Counties that reported that their OSP were updated six to ten years ago have no plans on updating their OSP and all counties have reported varying degrees of effectiveness of the current OSP (somewhat effective, effective, and very effective).
- Only three counties reported that their OSP were updated 11 to 15 years ago and all have reported that the OSP are either somewhat effective or effective.
- Six out of the nine counties that reported that their OSP are over 15 years old rated their OSP as effective (four counties) or very effective; and only two counties that reported their OSP as effective or very effective anticipate updating their OSP within one year or two to five years.
- Five out of nine counties with OSP over 15 years old don't know when they will update their organizational structure plans.

Analyzing based on effectiveness of the organizational structure plans:

- Only one county reported their OSP is ineffective and plans to update it within a year.
- Six out of nine counties rated their OSP as somewhat effective, even though their OSP were updated less than 5 years ago. Six counties also indicated they have plans to update their OSP within one year or two to five years.
- Four out of nine counties that rated their OSP as effective also reported that their OSP are over 15 years old and only one county anticipated to make changes to their organizational structure within the next year.
- There is one county that anticipate on making changes to the OSP within two to five years, even though the county rated their organizational structure plan as very effective. The other six counties that reported that their OSP are very effective have no plans or are not sure of when they will update their plans.

Analyzing based on anticipating changes to the organizational structure plans:

- Six counties reported that they have no plans on updating their OSP. About 83% of the counties reported that they have no plans on making changes to their OSP and that their current OSP are effective or very effective.
- Within the nine counties that reported plans of organizational structure change within two to five years, five counties stated that their OSP were updated less than five years ago.

(Please review comparison charts below for details of the counties' responses).

Questions 6 and 7 Results:

Questions six and seven of the survey allowed counties to express their general thoughts on what areas of the county needs to be improve and the challenges they are experiencing. Since questions six and seven were open-ended questions, counties had the opportunities to provide multiple answers along with their reasonings. The following charts highlighted the counties responses:

Question 6 results (What areas would you like to see improved in the organizational structure of your county?)

Areas would like to see improve	Number of counties responded
Consolidating departments	10
Better cross-departmental communication	6
Cross departmental training (to offer better support	3
Improved coordination of services	3
Improve on consumer services (getting feedback/addressing needs of the consumer)	2
Streamlined hiring practices	2
Changes to the board's role	2
Improve the state's understanding of the organizational structure	1
Resource allocation	1
Support for departments	1
Support for the organizational structure plan	1
Better facilities	1
Better supervision	1

Question 7 results (What obstacle(s) do you think might prevent an organizational structure change from happening?):

Obstacles preventing organizational structure	Number of counties responded
Insufficient budget	6
Lack of resilience from departments (refused to accept change or make changes to the current standard or procedures)	5
Employee support	4
Board's approval/support	3
Department head support	3
State statue/government mandate	3
Support from state legislature	2
Public support	2
Lack of training for employees	1

(There were a few counties that did not answer questions six or seven)

Organizational Structure Chart Trends:

A total of 15 counties provided their organizational structure chart via email or website links. Organizational structure plans that are over 11 years old are less likely to consolidate departments compared to newly updated organizational structure plans. Organizational structure plans that are over 15 years old have departments that are stand alone.

Counties that have newer organizational structure plans (under 10 years old) are more likely to consolidate their departments. The following are some of the examples of the consolidations of departments, the county administrators/coordinators of these counties have reported that these consolidations are somewhat effective to very effective:

Administration

- Administration: County Board Support, HR, IT, and U of M Extension
- Administrative Services: Finance Director (Account Receivable, Account Payable, Payroll, Annual Audit, License Center and Vitals), HR, IT, Facility Manager
- Auditor/Treasurer: Assessing/Recording, Auditor/Treasurer, HHS Fiscal, Zoning/Solid Waste, Land/Forestry
- Administrative Services: Finance and Election, IT, Facilities, Library, Extension, HRA

Health and Human Services:

- Health & Human Services: Public Health, Financial Assistance, Adult Mental Health, Children's Mental Health, Child Protection, Child Support Enforcement, Veterans Services
- Health and Human Services: Social Services, Public Health, Veterans
- Human Services: Public Health, Social Services
- Community Services: Customer Services, Health and Social Services, Community Corrections

Land and Public Services:

- Property and Public Services: County Assessors, Planning and Zoning (Building Inspection, Solid Waste), Recorder, Tax Payer (Tax Forfeit, Ditch Assessments, Elections, Property Taxes, Property Ownership)
- Land Services: Recorder, Assessor
- Land Services: Environmental Services, Assessing Services Division, Customer Service Division

Public Works:

- Public Works: Parks, Highway (GIS, Ditch Inspector, Weed Inspector, Demolition, County Surveyor)
- Public Works: County Surveyor, Fleet Management, Highway Maintenance, Highway Construction, Building Maintenance
- Highway Engineer/ Public Works: Land Commissioner, Administrator, Land Surveyor
- Transportation Services: Highway Maintenance Division, Airport, Public Works

Future Project

Question six and seven of the survey were unstructured; thus, it was slightly difficult to categorize the information. For example, in questions six, one county responded:

"The board has authority over all the department directors and this makes it difficult for administration to manage those dept budgets."

This statement was categorized under "changes to the board's role" as other counties have expressed concerns over the board members' authority over the decisions of other leaders at the counties. Therefore, I think it will be beneficial in the future if questions six and seven are more structured and have boxes county administrators can check.

Another recommendation of change for future survey is for question three. There are some counties that does not have an organizational structure chart; thus, I think it is important to ask the question if the county have an organizational structure chart and if they think and organizational structure chart is needed if the county answers "no."

Question 4 Comparison Chart (How long has the current organizational structure been in place in your county?):

Less than 5 years

Counties	Effectiveness of current organizational structure	Anticipation of changes made to the current organizational structure
Benton	Effective	2-5 years
Cass	Very Effective	Don't know
Chisago	Somewhat Effective	2-5 years
Cook	Effective	No
Crow Wing	Very Effective	No
Hubbard	Very Effective	No
Pine	Very Effective	No
Morrison	Somewhat Effective	2-5 years
Pine	Very Effective	No
Sherburne	Somewhat Effective	2-5 years
Wadena	Somewhat Effective	Within one year

6-10 years (2 counties):

Counties	Effectiveness of current organizational structure	Anticipation of changes made to the current organizational structure
Koochiching	Somewhat Effective	No
Polk	Very Effective	No
Stevens	Effective	No

11-15 years (3 counties):

Counties	Effectiveness of current organizational structure	Anticipation of changes made to the current organizational structure
Clay	Effective	Don't know
Kanabec	Effective	2-5 years
Traverse	Somewhat Effective	Don't know

Over 15 years (10 counties):

Counties	Effectiveness of current organizational structure	Anticipation of changes made to the current organizational structure
Beltrami	Very Effective	2-5 years
Carlton	Effective	Don't know
Isanti	Somewhat Effective	2-5 years
Marshall	Very Effective	Don't know
Pennington	Effective	Don't know
Pope	Effective	Don't know
Stearns	Effective	Within one year
Wilkin	Somewhat Effective	Don't know
Wright	Not Effective	Within one year

Question 5 Comparison Chart (How would you rate the effectiveness of the current organizational structure in your county?):

Not effective

County	Organizational structure been in place	Anticipation of changes made to the current organizational structure
Wright	>15 years	Within one year

Somewhat effective

Counties	Organizational structure been in place	Anticipation of changes made to the current organizational structure
Chisago	< 5 years	Within 2-5 years
Isanti	< 5 years	< 5 years
Koochiching	6-10 years	No
Meeker	< 5 years	Within 2-5 years
Morrison	< 5 years	< 5 years
Sherburne	< 5 years	Within 2-5 years
Traverse	11-15 years	Don't know
Wadena	< 5 years	Within one year
Wilkin	>15 years	Don't know

Effective

Counties	Organizational structure been in place	Anticipation of changes made to the current organizational structure
Benton	< 5 years	Within 2-5 years
Carlton	>15 years	Don't know
Clay	11-15 years	Don't know
Cook	< 5 years	No
Kanabec	11-15 years	Within 2-5 years
Pennington	>15 years	Don't know
Pope	>15 years	Don't know
Stearns	>15 years	Within one year

Very Effective

Counties	Organizational structure been in place	Anticipation of changes made to the current organizational structure
Beltrami	>15 years	Within 2-5 years
Cass	< 5 years	Don't know
Crow Wing	< 5 years	No
Hubbard	< 5 years	No
Marshall	>15 years	Don't know
Pine	< 5 years	No
Polk	6-10 years	No

Questions 8 Comparison Chart (What areas would you like to see improved in the organizational structure of your county):

No

Counties	Effectiveness of current organizational structure	Organizational structure been in place
Cook	Effective	< 5 years
Crow Wing	Very Effective	< 5 years
Hubbard	Very Effective	< 5 years
Koochiching	Somewhat Effective	6-10 years
Pine	Very Effective	< 5 years
Polk	Very Effective	6-10 years

Within one year

Counties	Effectiveness of current organizational structure	Organizational structure been in place
Stearns	Effective	>15 years
Wadena	Somewhat Effective	<5 years
Wright	Not Effective	>15 years

Within two to five years

Counties	Effectiveness of current organizational structure	Organizational structure been in place
Benton	Effective	<5 years
Beltrami	Very Effective	>15 years
Chisago	Somewhat Effective	<5 years
Isanti	Somewhat Effective	>15 years
Kanabec	Effective	11-15 years
Meeker	Somewhat Effective	<5 years
Morrison	Somewhat Effective	<5 years
Sherburne	Somewhat Effective	<5 years
Stevens	Effective	6-10 years

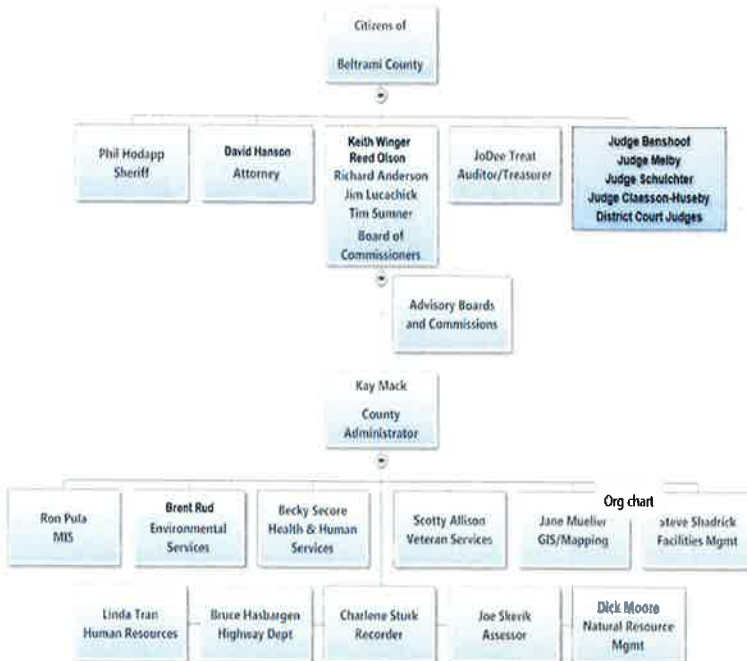
Probably six or more years- 0**Don't know**

Counties	Effectiveness of current organizational structure	Organizational structure been in place
Carlton	Effective	>15 years
Cass	Very Effective	<5 years
Clay	Effective	11-15 years
Marshall	Very Effective	>15 years
Pennington	Effective	>15 years
Pope	Effective	>15 years
Traverse	Somewhat Effective	11-15 years
Wilkin	Somewhat Effective	>15 years

Very Effective

Beltrami- Very Effective, Over 15 years

Many departments, appears to have no consolidation of departments



<http://www.co.beltrami.mn.us/Departments/Administration/Org%20Chart.jpg>

Crow Wing- Very Effective, within 5 years

6 depts:

Veteran's services

HR

Community Services: Customer Services, Health and Social Services, Community Corrections

Land Services: Environmental Services, Assessing Services Division, Customer Services Division

Transportation Services: Engineering, Highway

Administrative Services: Finance, IT, Facilities



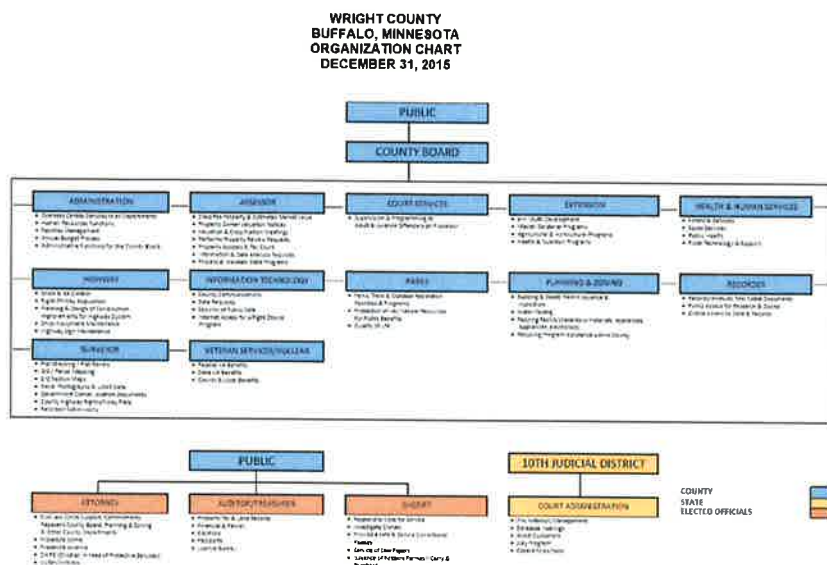
<https://www.crowwing.us/DocumentCenter/View/15044/2017-Comprehensive-Annual-Financial-Report-pg?bidId=%20%20Page%2018%20of%20the%20.pdf> (pg. 12)

Organizational Structure Chart

Not Effective

Wright- Not Effective, Organizational Structure updated over 15 years

-Many departments housed different programs/services



Meeker- Somewhat Effective, within 5 years

Five main departments:

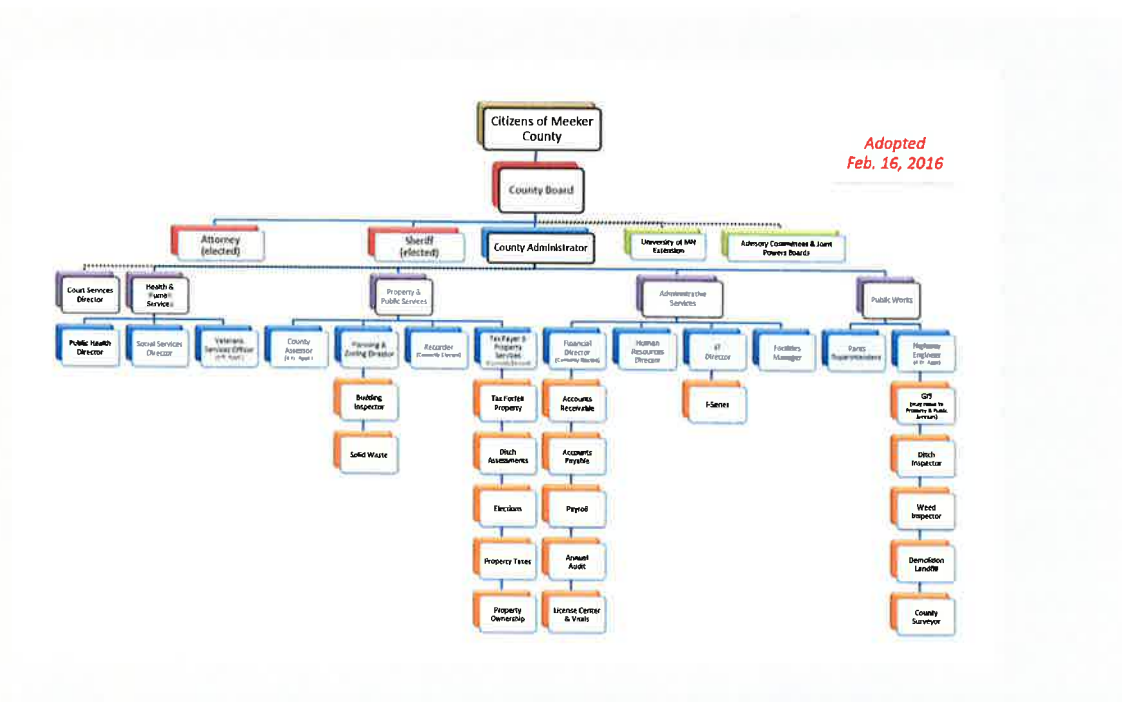
Court Services Director

Health and Human Services: Social Services, Public Health, Veterans

Property and Public Services: County Assessors, Planning and Zoning (Building Inspection, Solid Waste), Recorder, Tax Payer (Tax Forfeit, Ditch Assessments, Elections, Property Taxes, Property Ownership)

Administrative Services: Finance Director (Account Receivable, Account Payable, Payroll, Annual Audit, License Center and Vitals), HR, IT, Facility Manager

Public Works: Parks, Highway (GIS, Ditch Inspector, Weed Inspector, Demolition, County Surveyor)

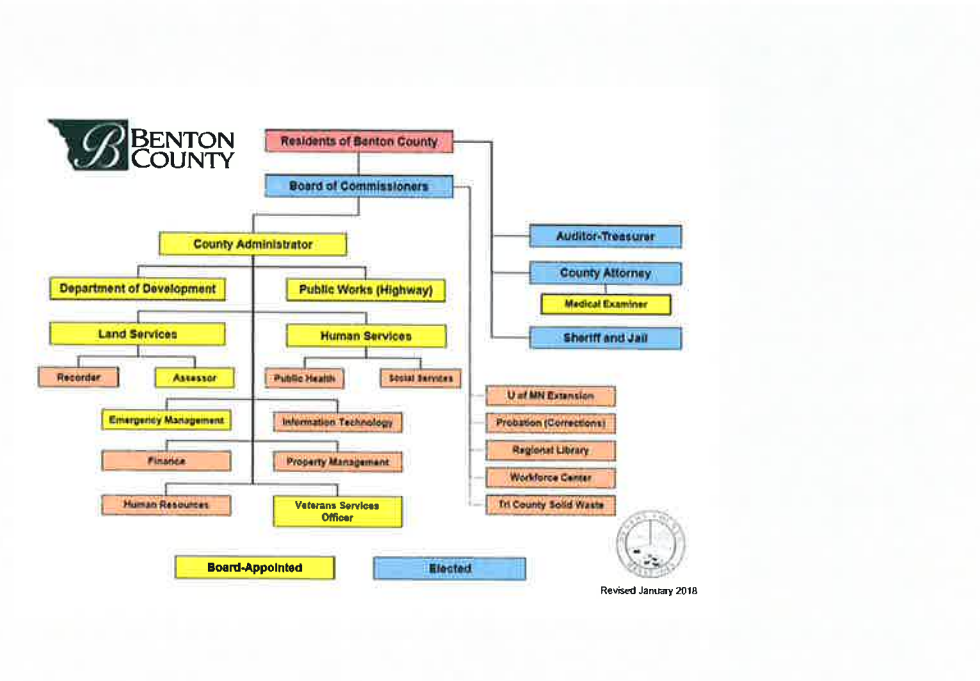


<https://www.co.meeker.mn.us/DocumentCenter/View/1436/Adopted-Meeker-County-Organizational-Chart?bidId=>

Effective

Benton- Effective, within 5 years

Several departments listed. Land Services housed recorder and assessor. Human services housed public health and social services

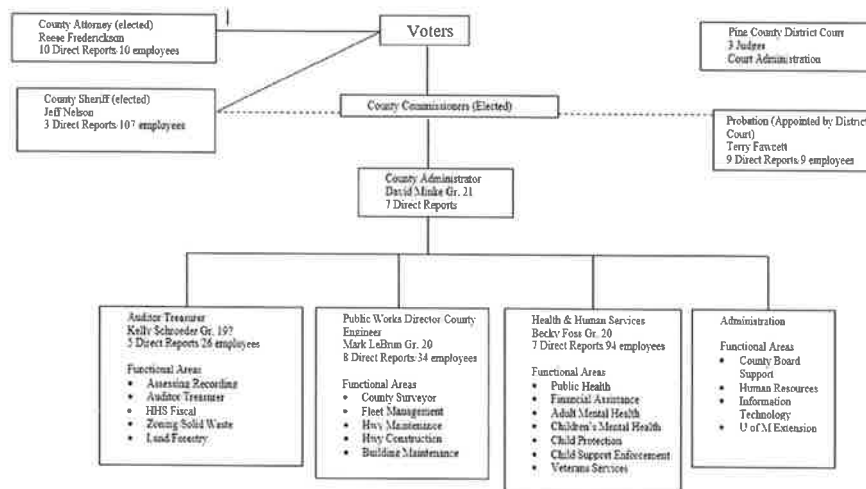


<https://www.co.benton.mn.us/DocumentCenter/View/2794/Benton-County-Organizational-Chart-PDF?bidId=>

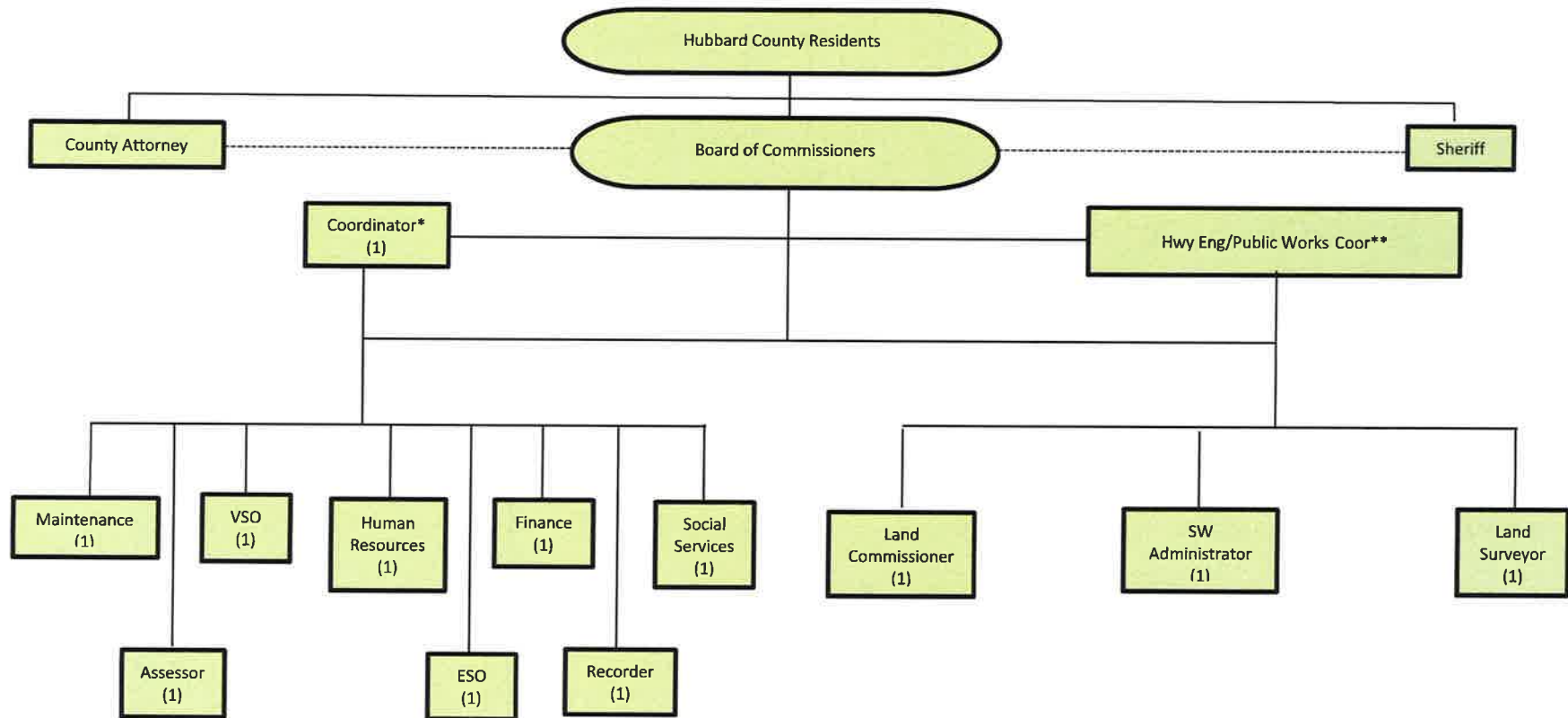
Pine- Effective and updated Organizational Structure within the last 5 years

Four big departments

1. Auditor/Treasurer- housed Assessing/Recording, Auditor/Treasurer, HHS Fiscal, Zoning/Solid Waste, Land/Forestry
2. Public Works- housed County Surveyor, Fleet Management, Highway Maintenance, Highway Construction, Building Maintenance
3. Health & Human Services- housed Public Health, Financial Assistance, Adult Mental Health, Children's Mental Health, Child Protection, Child Support Enforcement, Veterans Services
4. Administration- housed County Board Support, HR, IT, and U of M Extension



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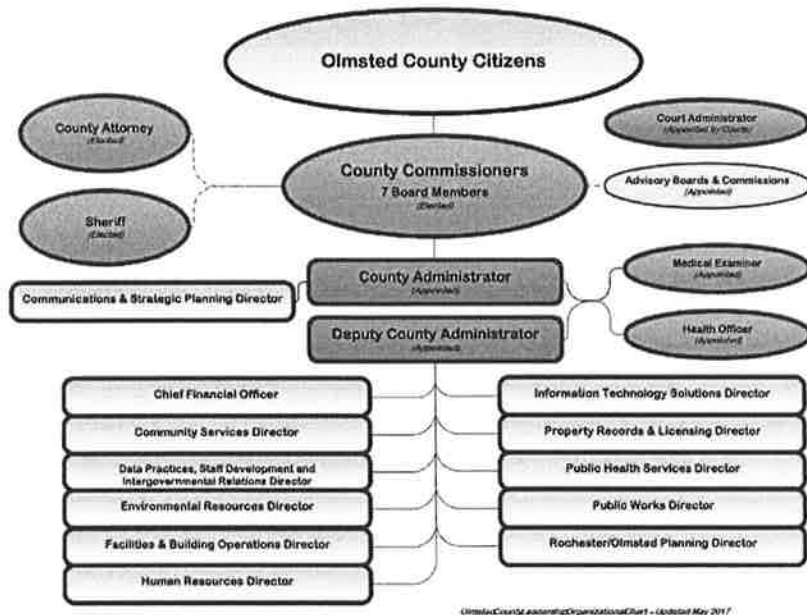


Note: * for duties outlined in job description only

** for duties outlined in job description only

----- reflects budgetary review only

Organization Chart

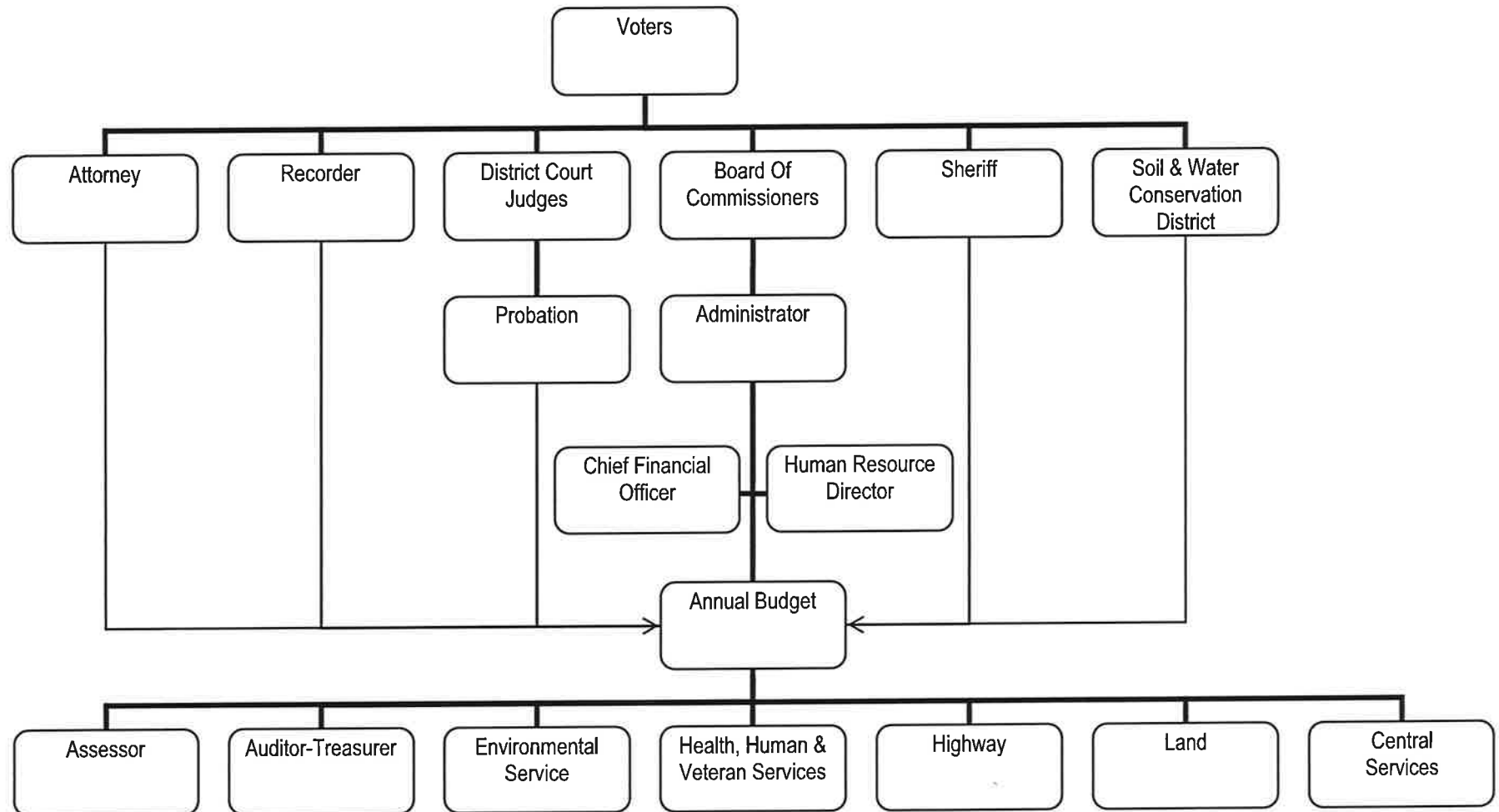


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Table of Organization

Our mission is to deliver quality public services to the citizens in an effective, professional and efficient manner.

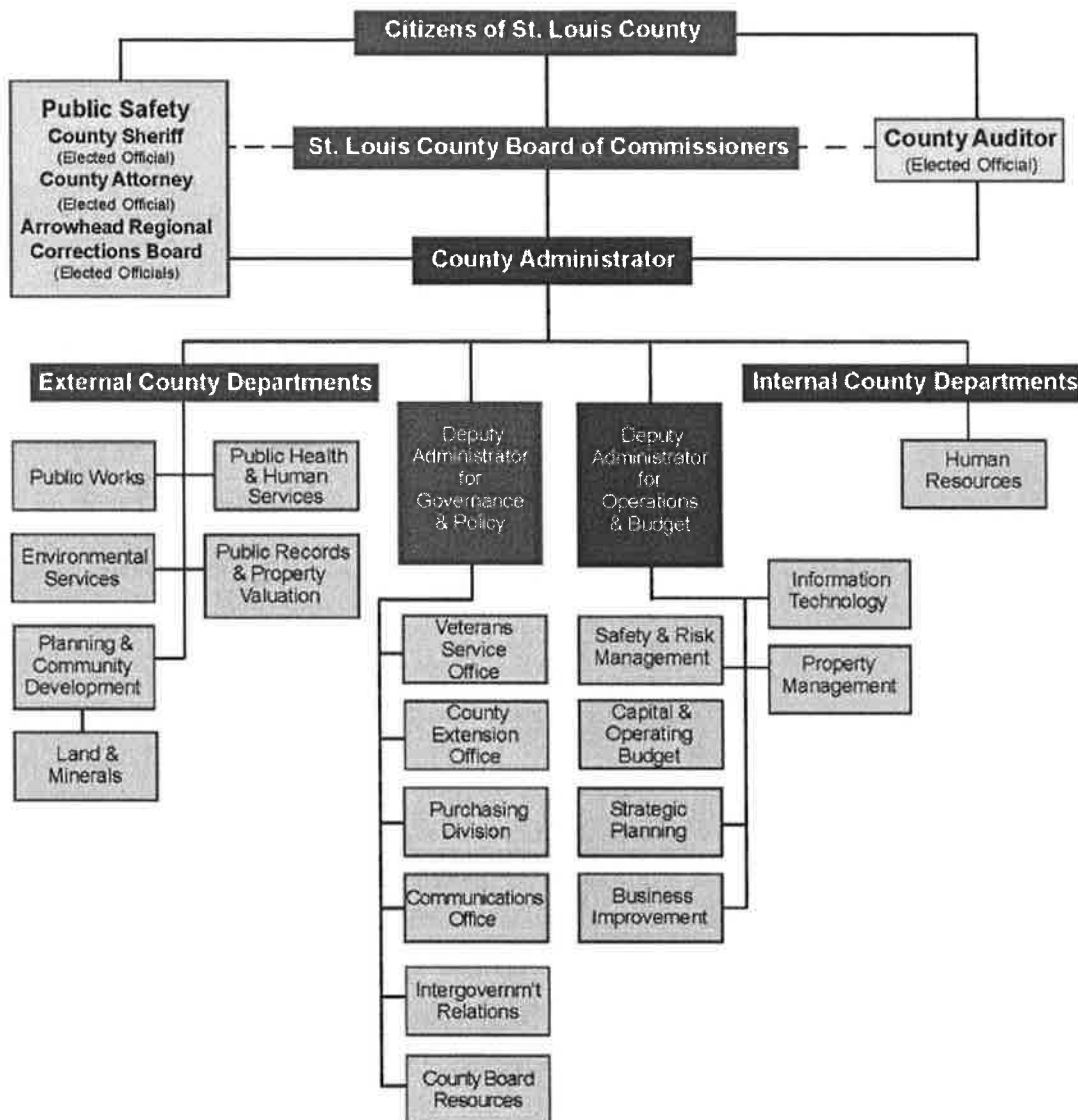
Web services: www.co.cass.mn.us



March 18, 2015

Saint Louis County Organization

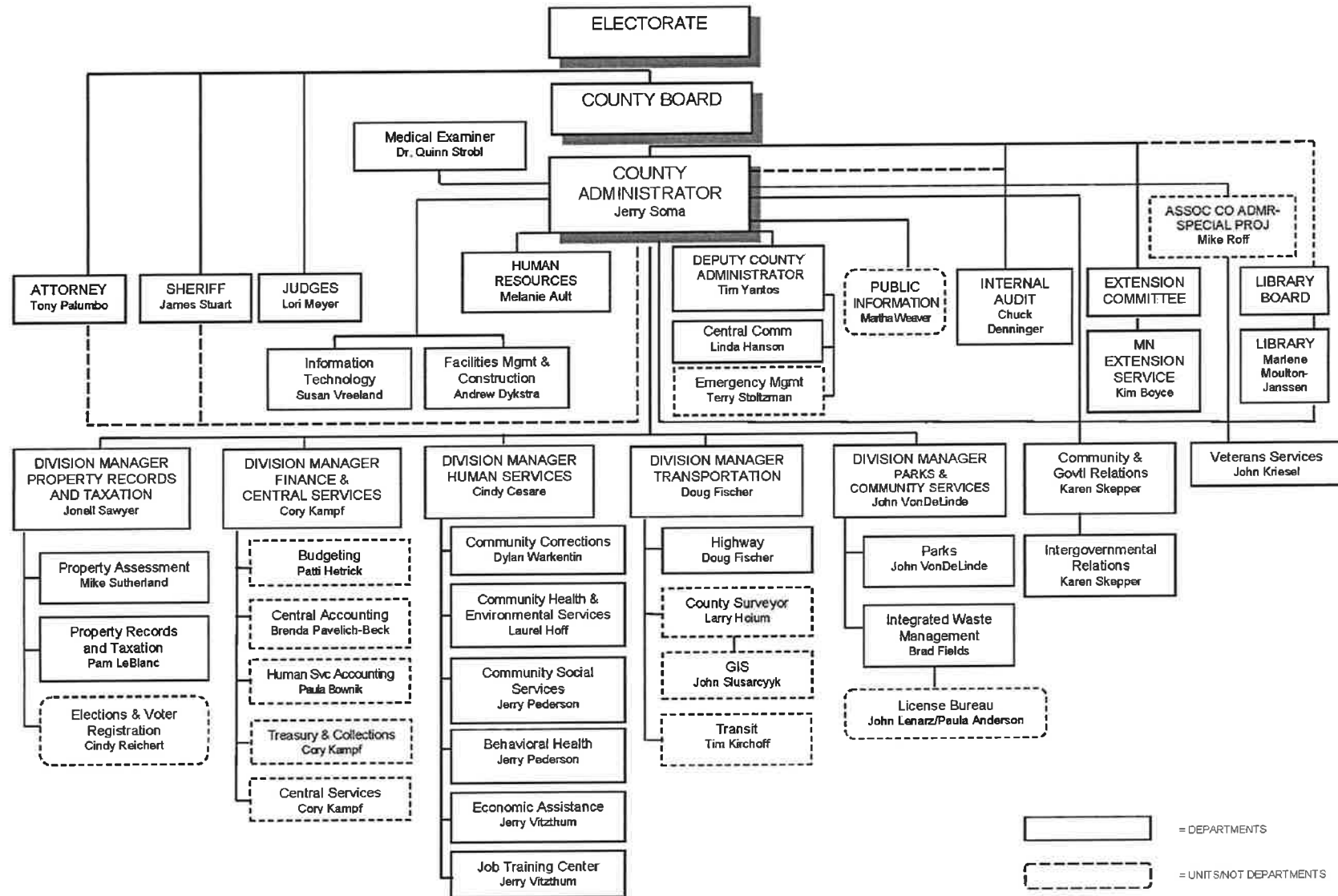
County Structure



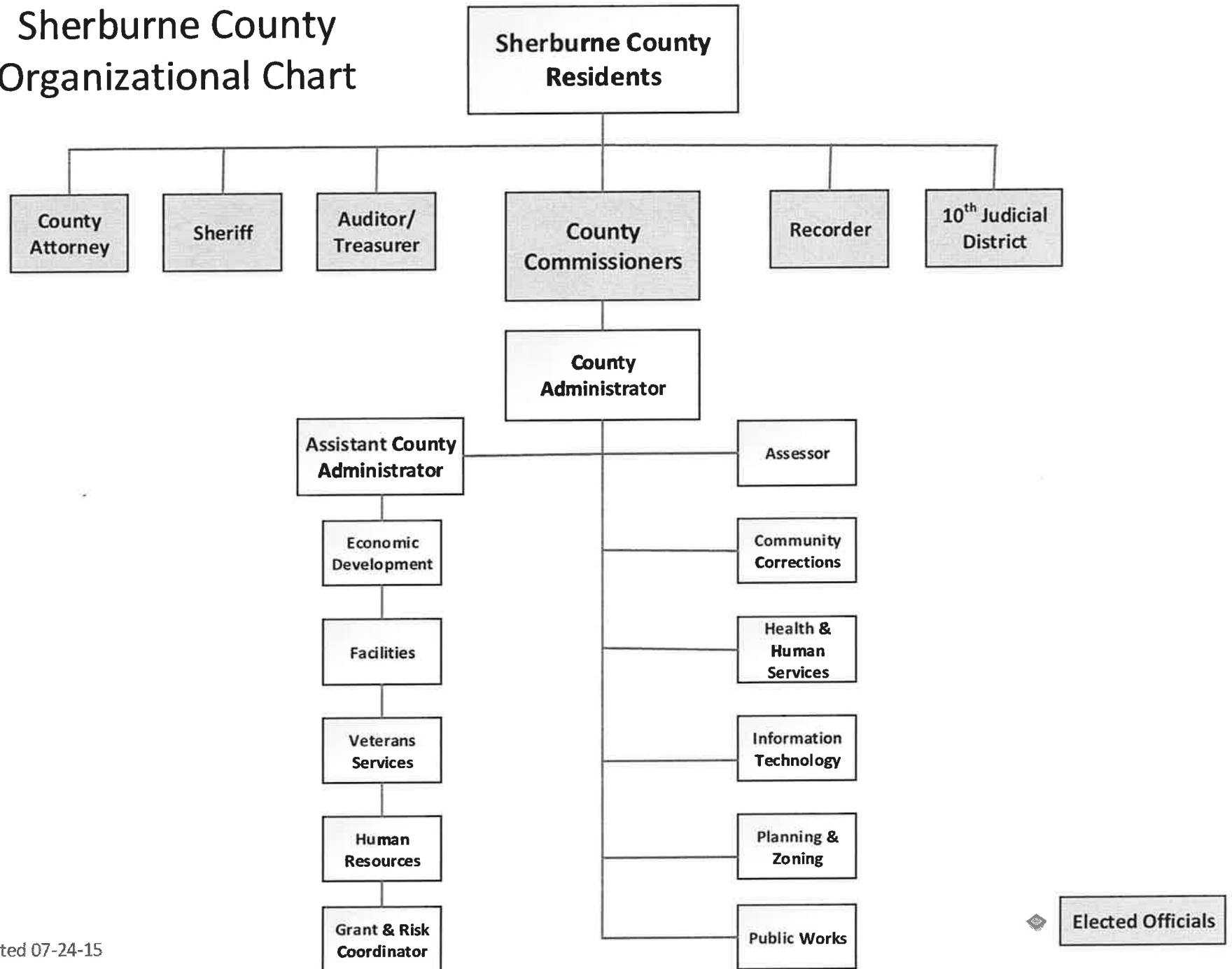
Updated January 2014

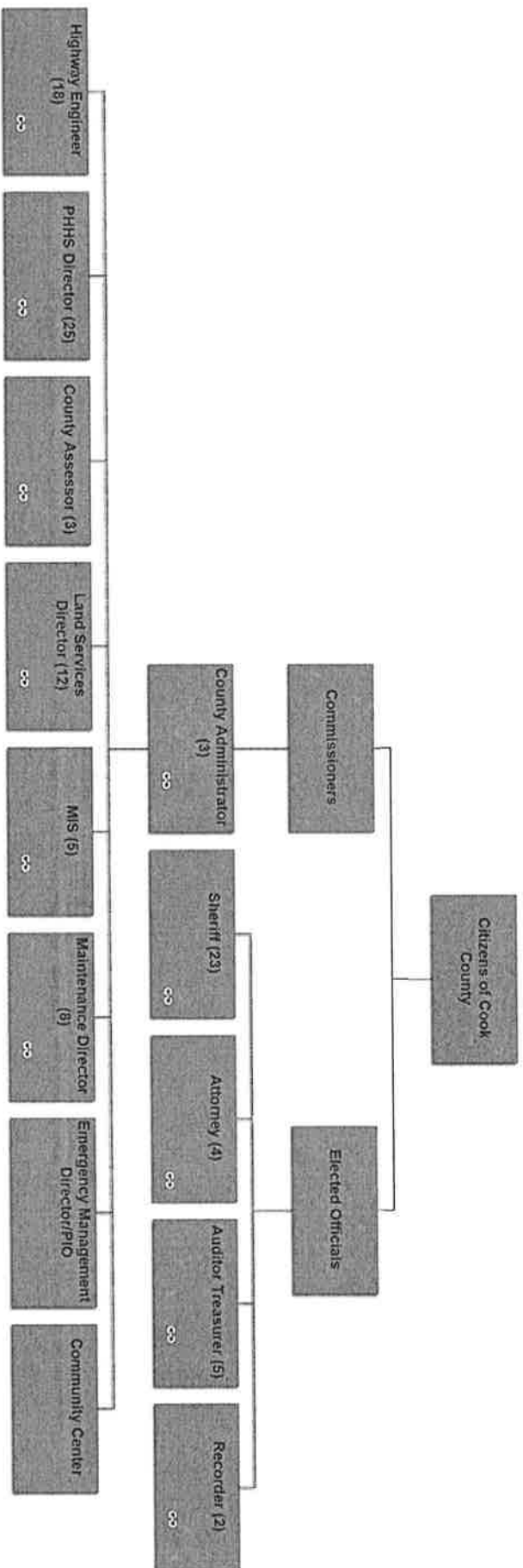


Anoka County 2015 Budget Organizational Chart



Sherburne County Organizational Chart







218-299-XXXX

Elected

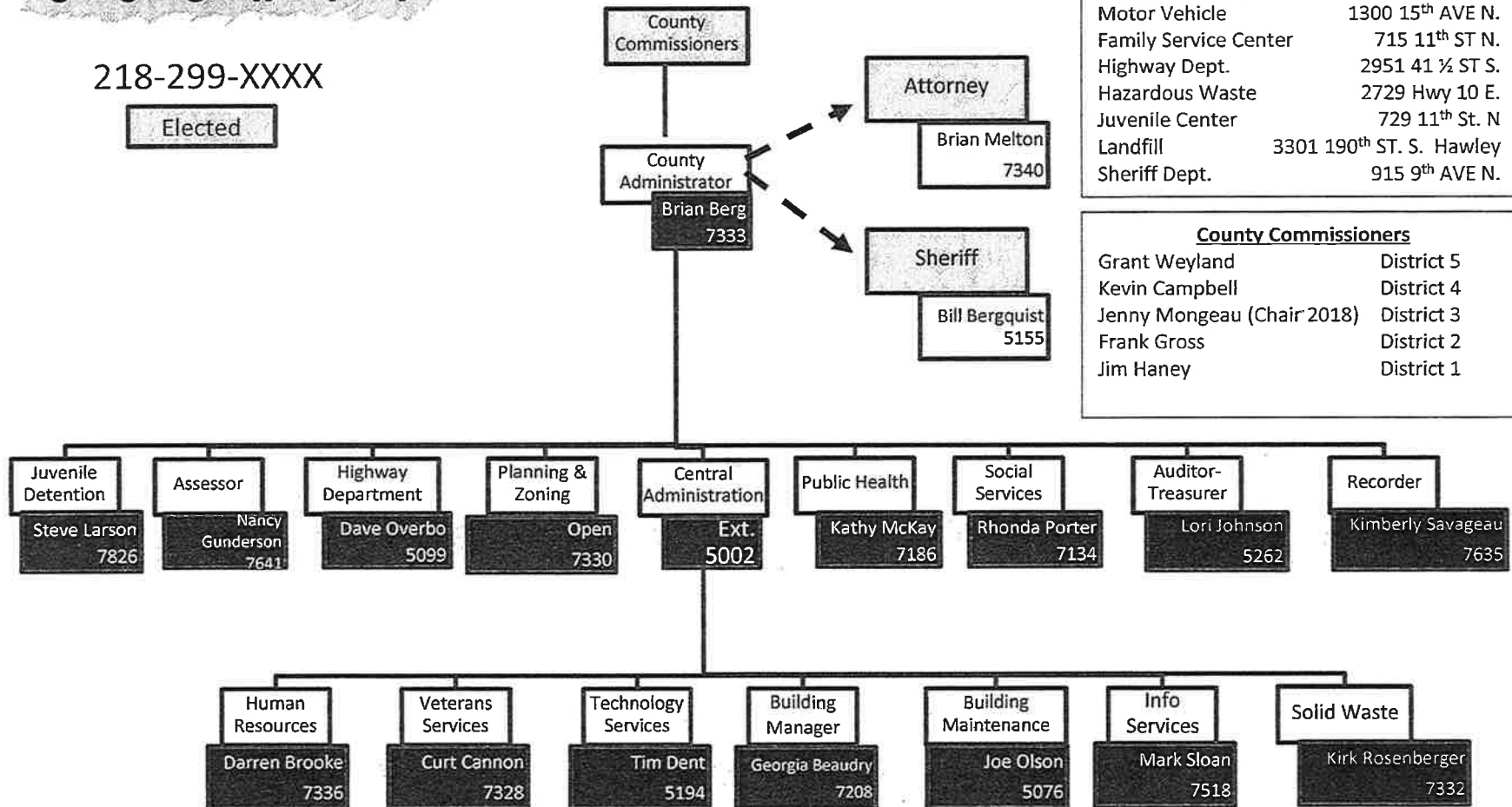
Elected Officials

Addresses

County Courthouse	807 11 th ST. N
Motor Vehicle	1300 15 th AVE N.
Family Service Center	715 11 th ST N.
Highway Dept.	2951 41 ½ ST S.
Hazardous Waste	2729 Hwy 10 E.
Juvenile Center	729 11 th St. N
Landfill	3301 190 th ST. S. Hawley
Sheriff Dept.	915 9 th AVE N.

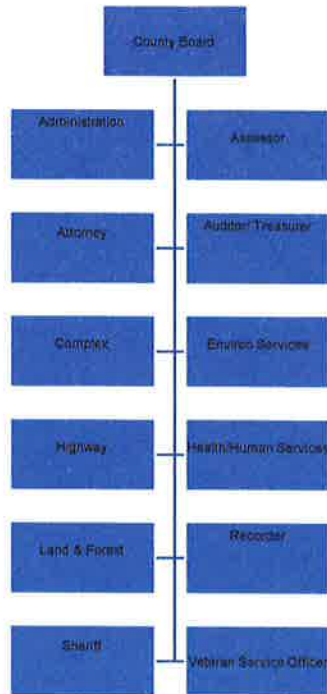
County Commissioners

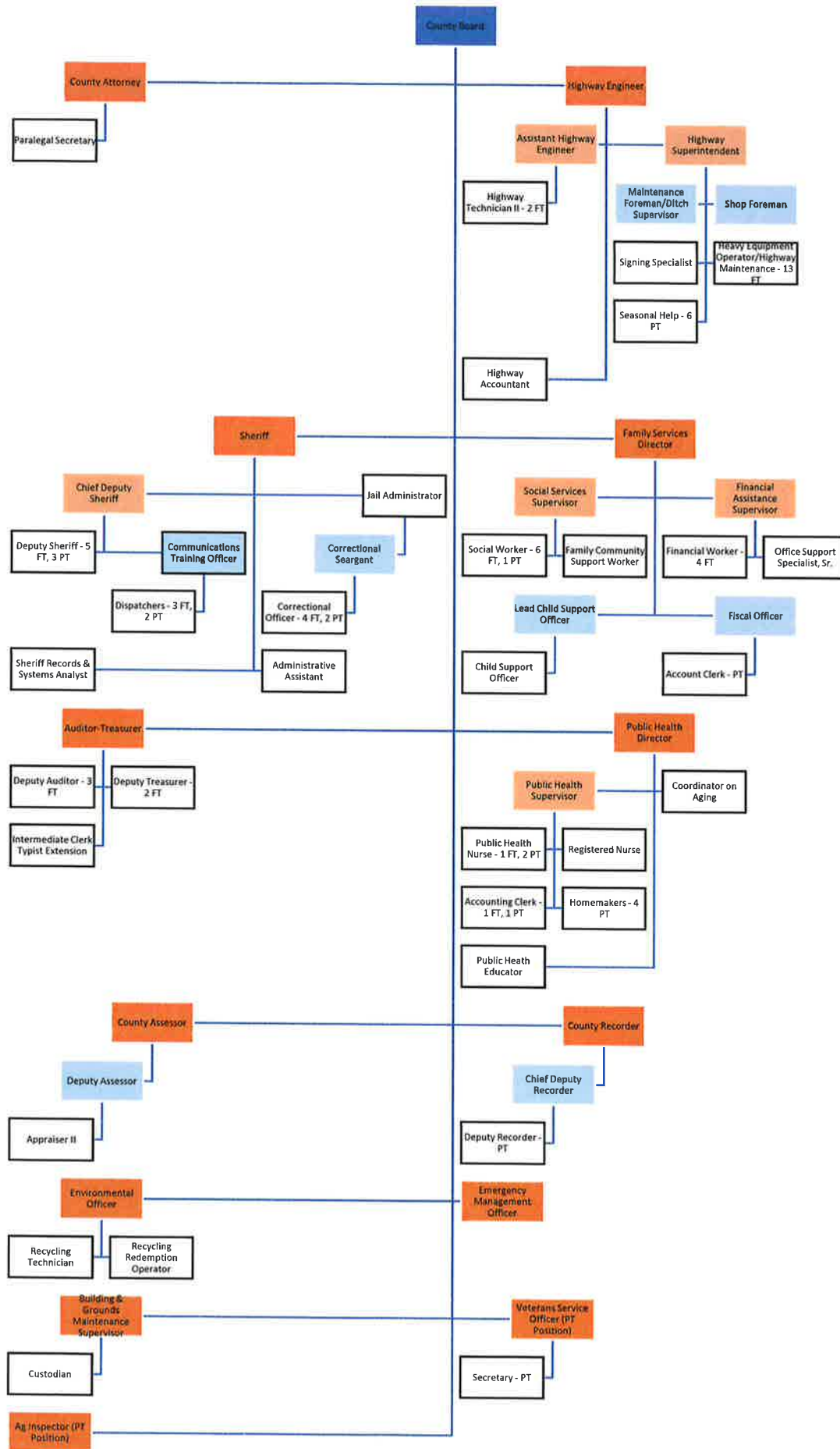
Grant Weyland	District 5
Kevin Campbell	District 4
Jenny Mongeau (Chair 2018)	District 3
Frank Gross	District 2
Jim Haney	District 1



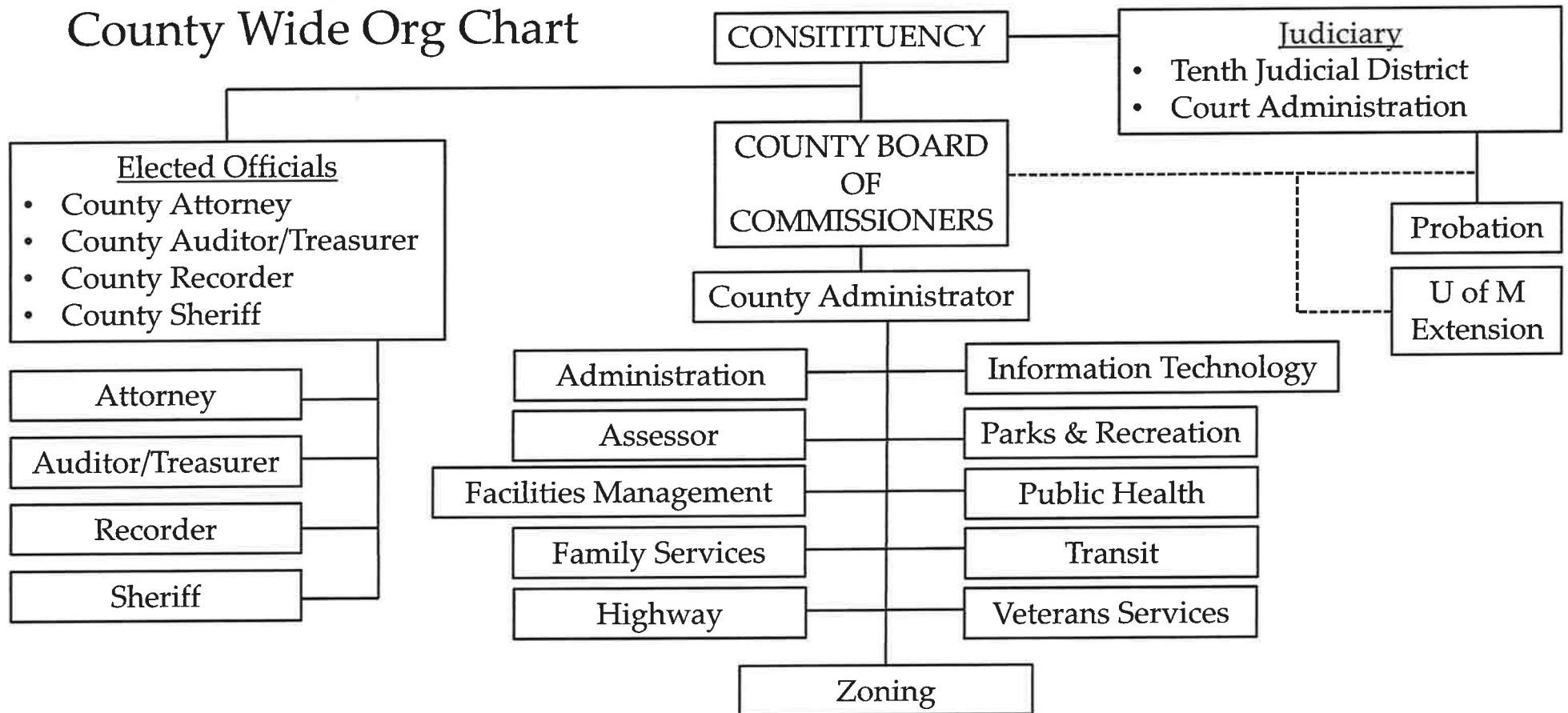
Koochiching- Somewhat Effective, updated Organizational Structure plan 6-10 years ago

Report 12 departments- no clear indication of consolidation

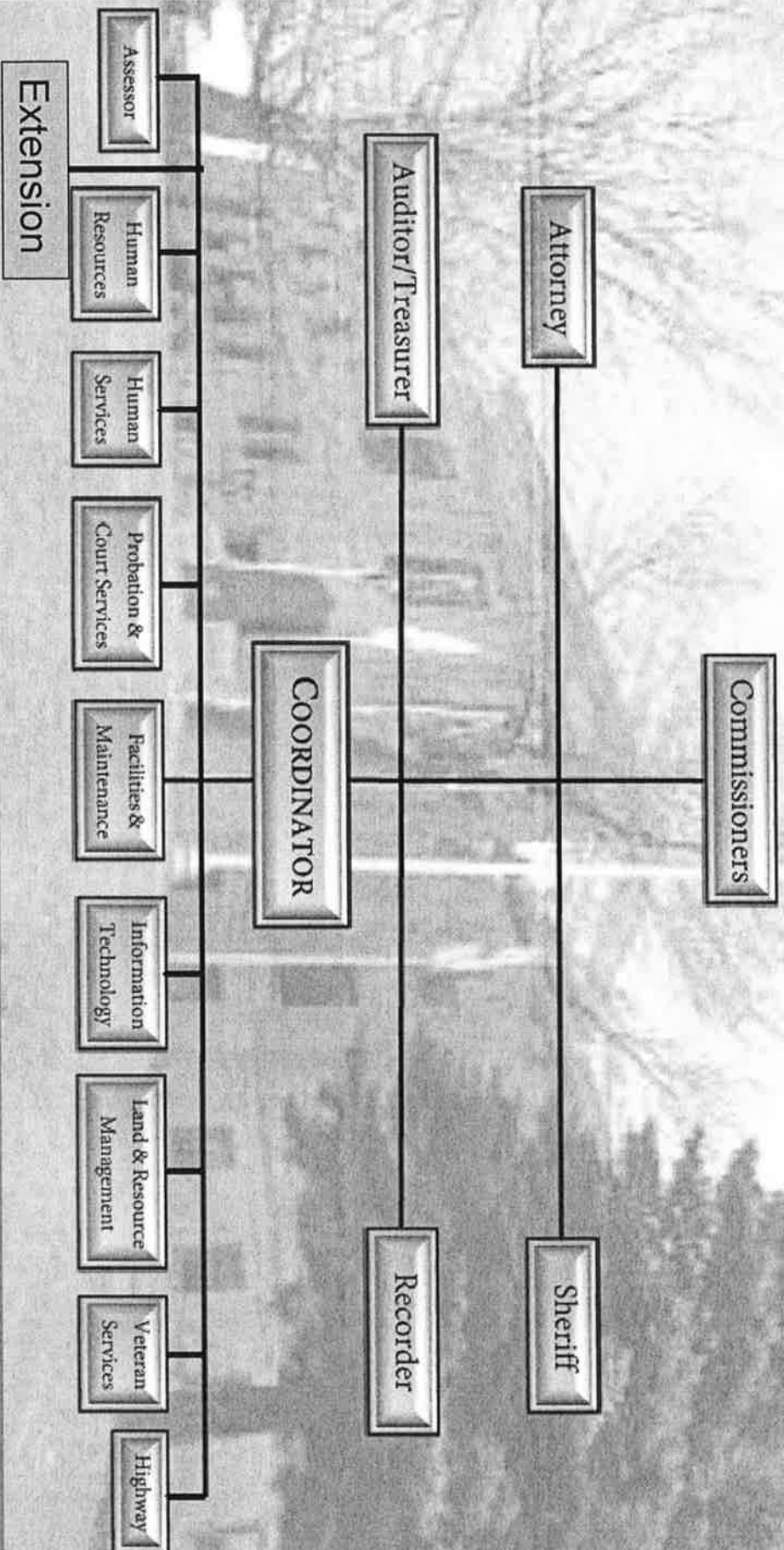


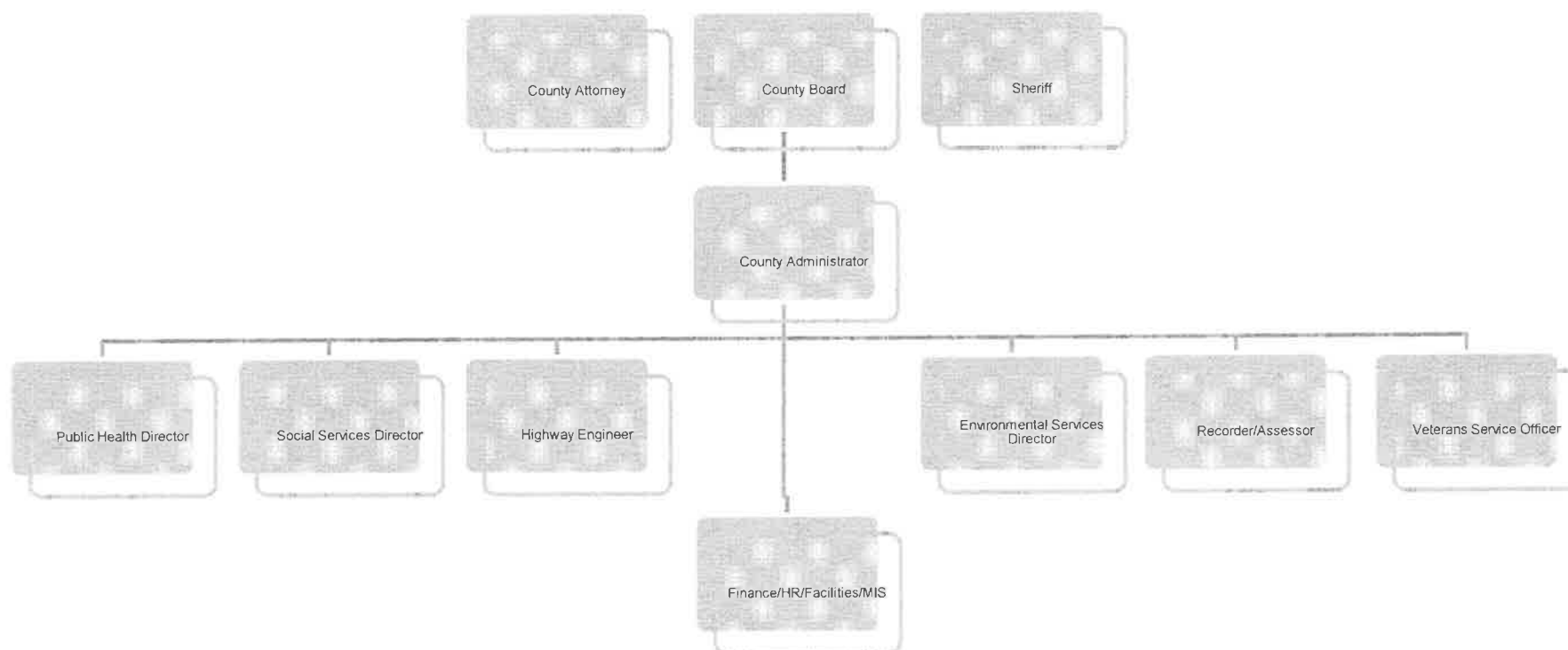


Isanti County – County Wide Org Chart



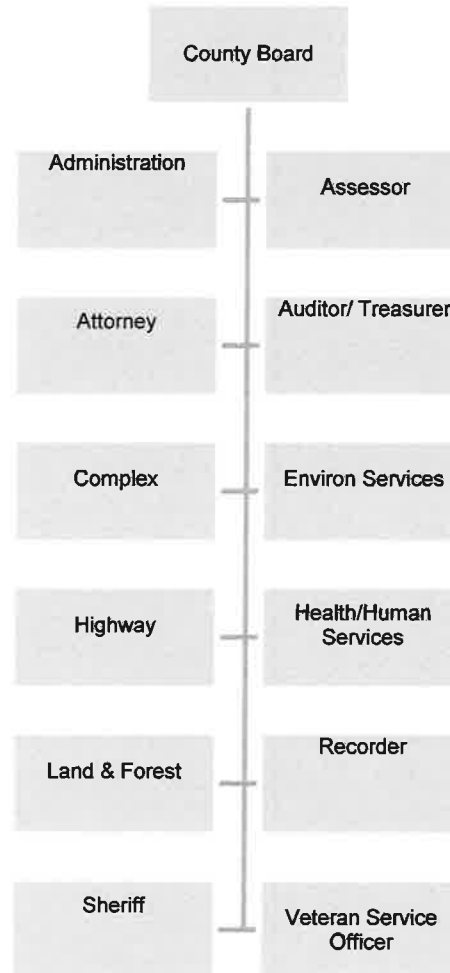
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



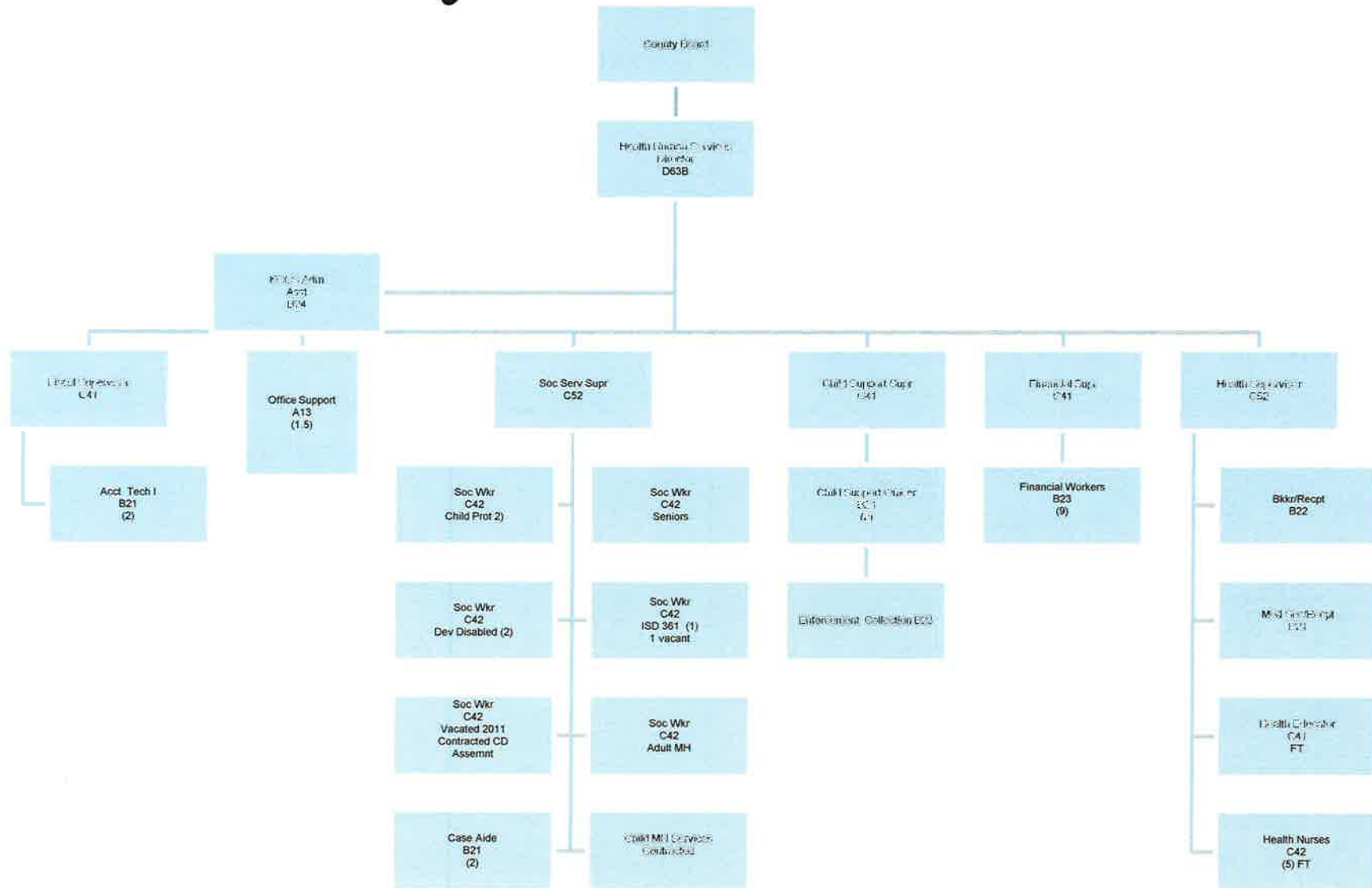


Koochiching County Summary

Jan /2016

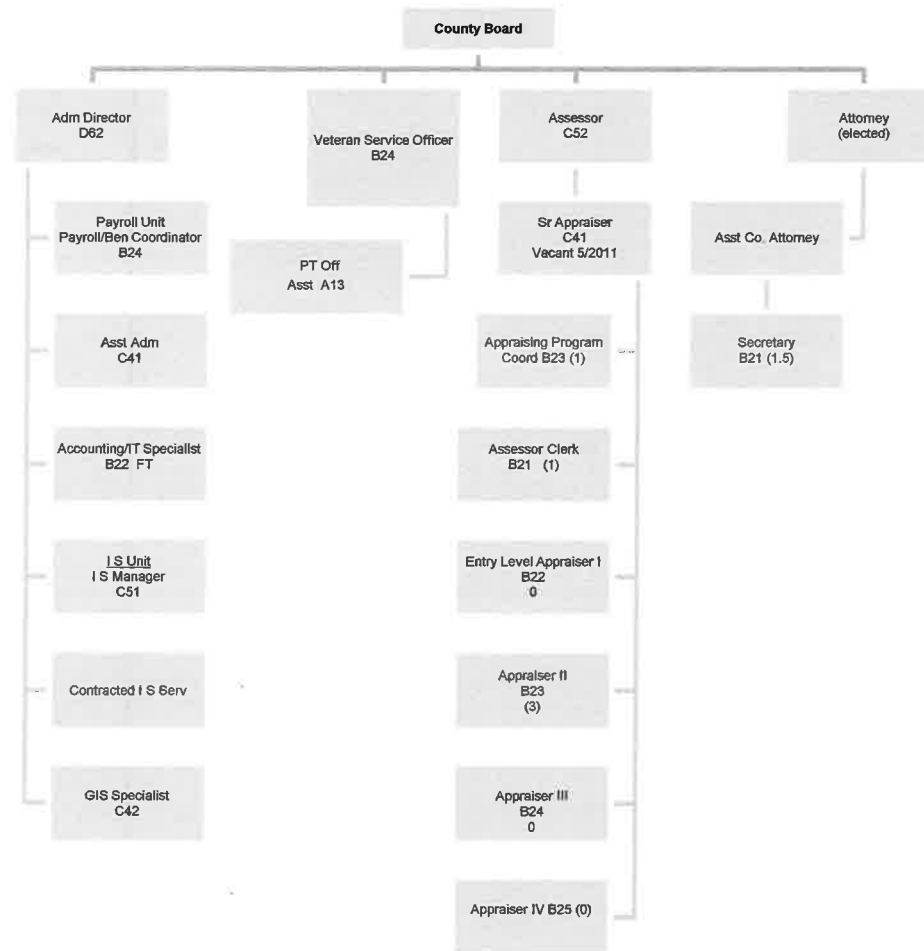


Koochiching County Community Service & Public Health



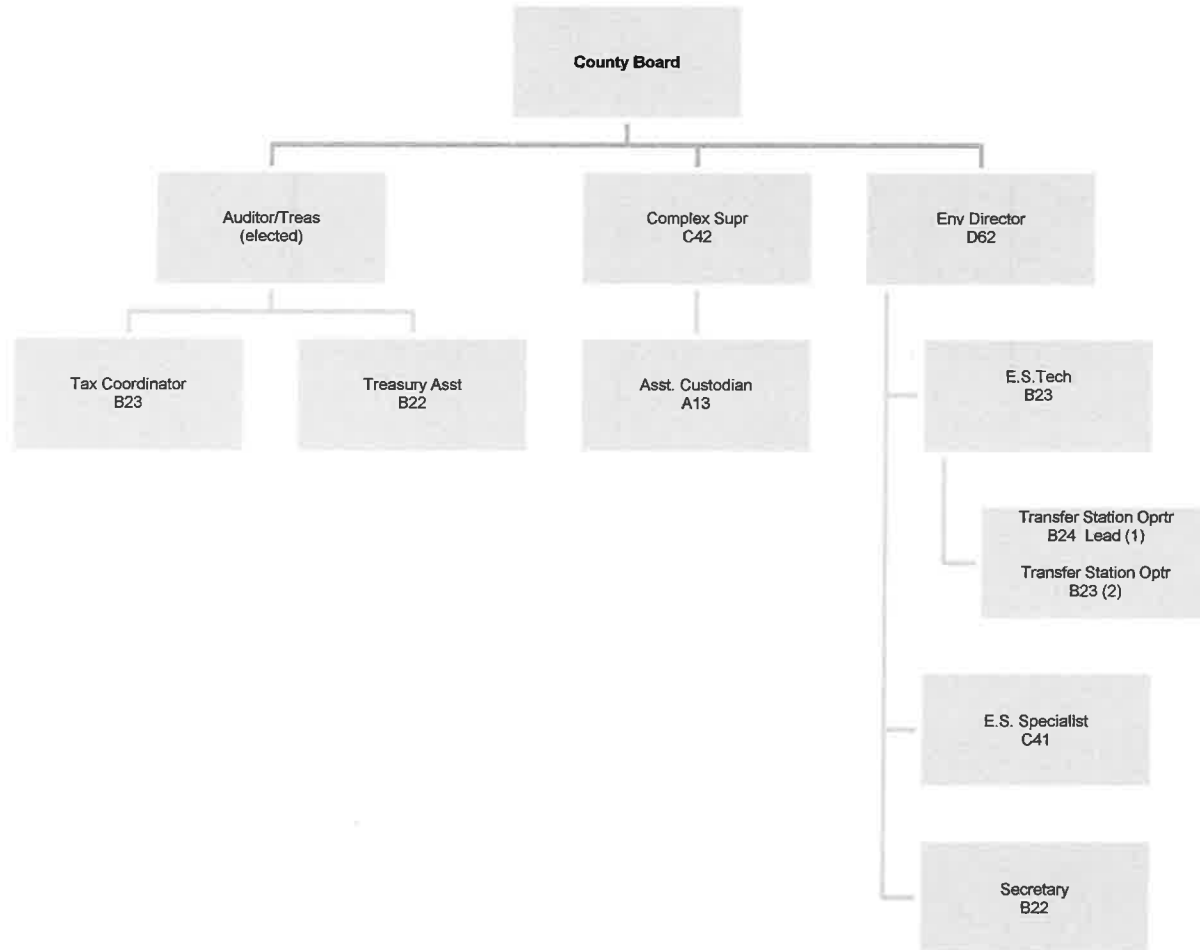
Koochiching County Chart

Administration, Assessor, & Attorney



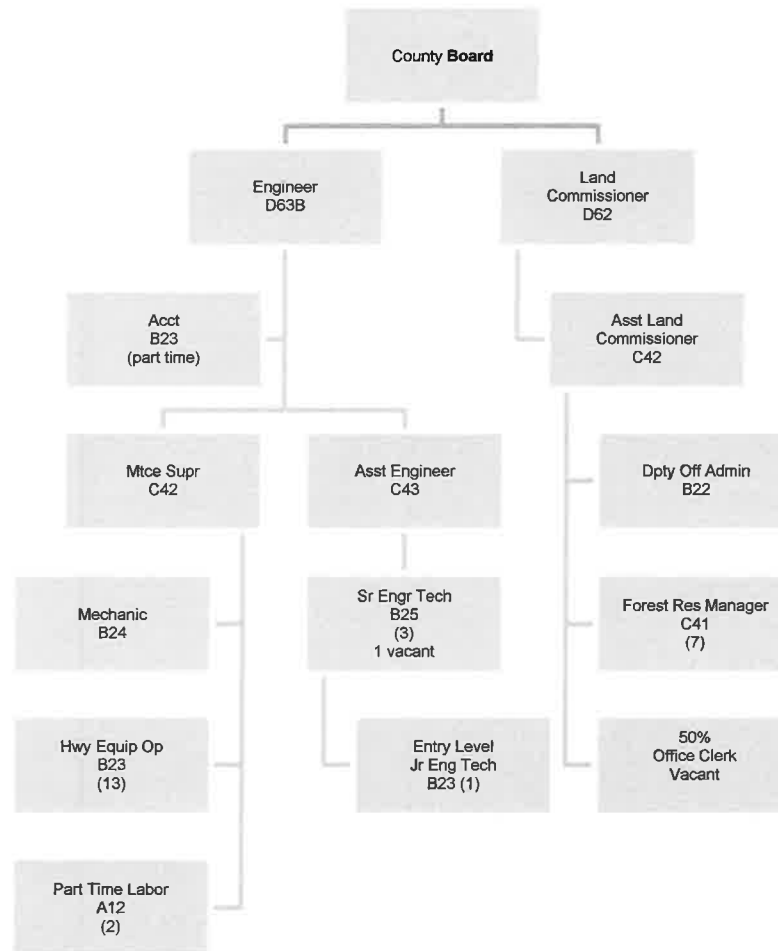
Koochiching County Chart

Auditor/Treasurer, Complex & Environmental Services



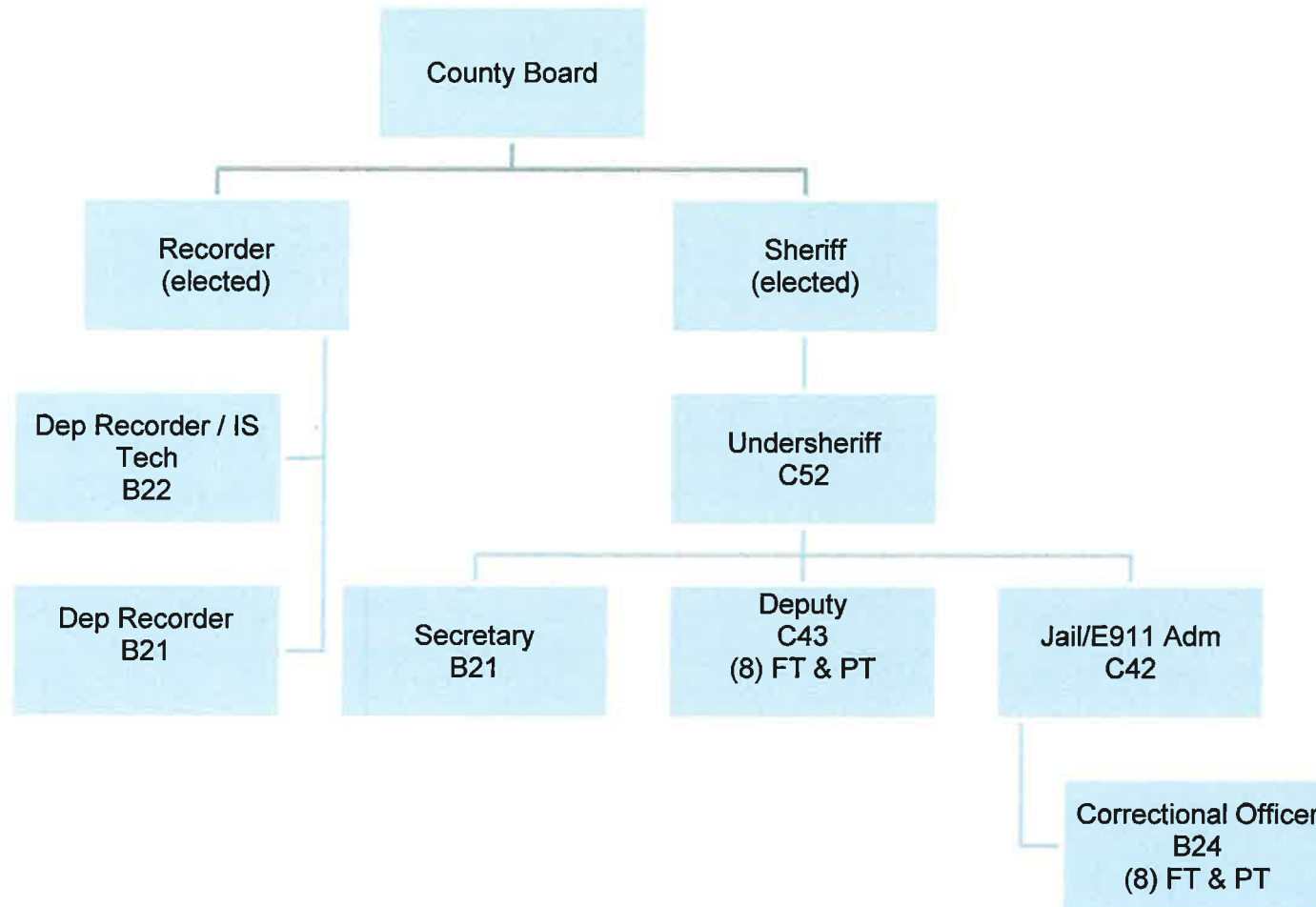
Koochiching County Chart

Highway and Land & Forest



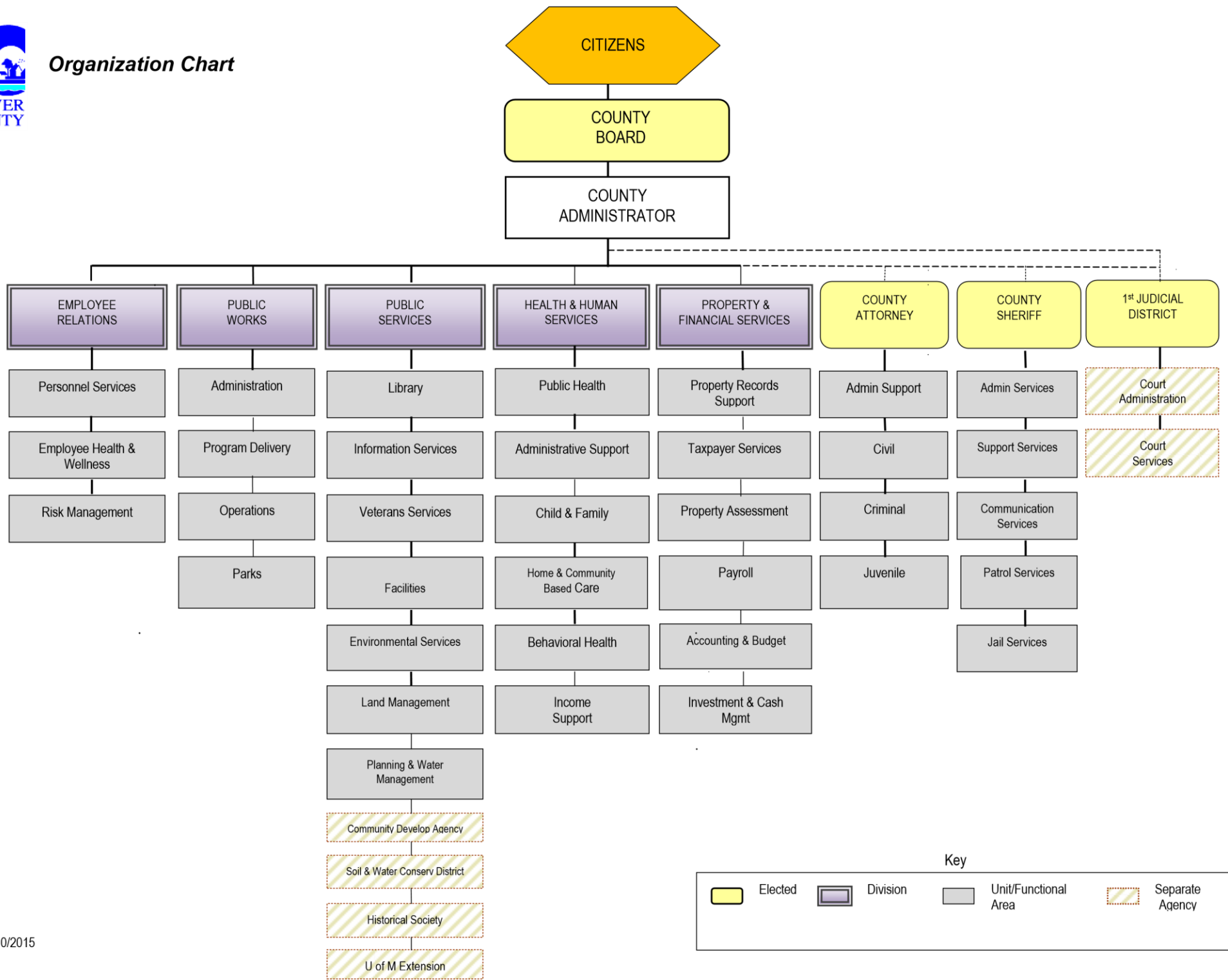
Koochiching County Chart

Recorder, Sheriff





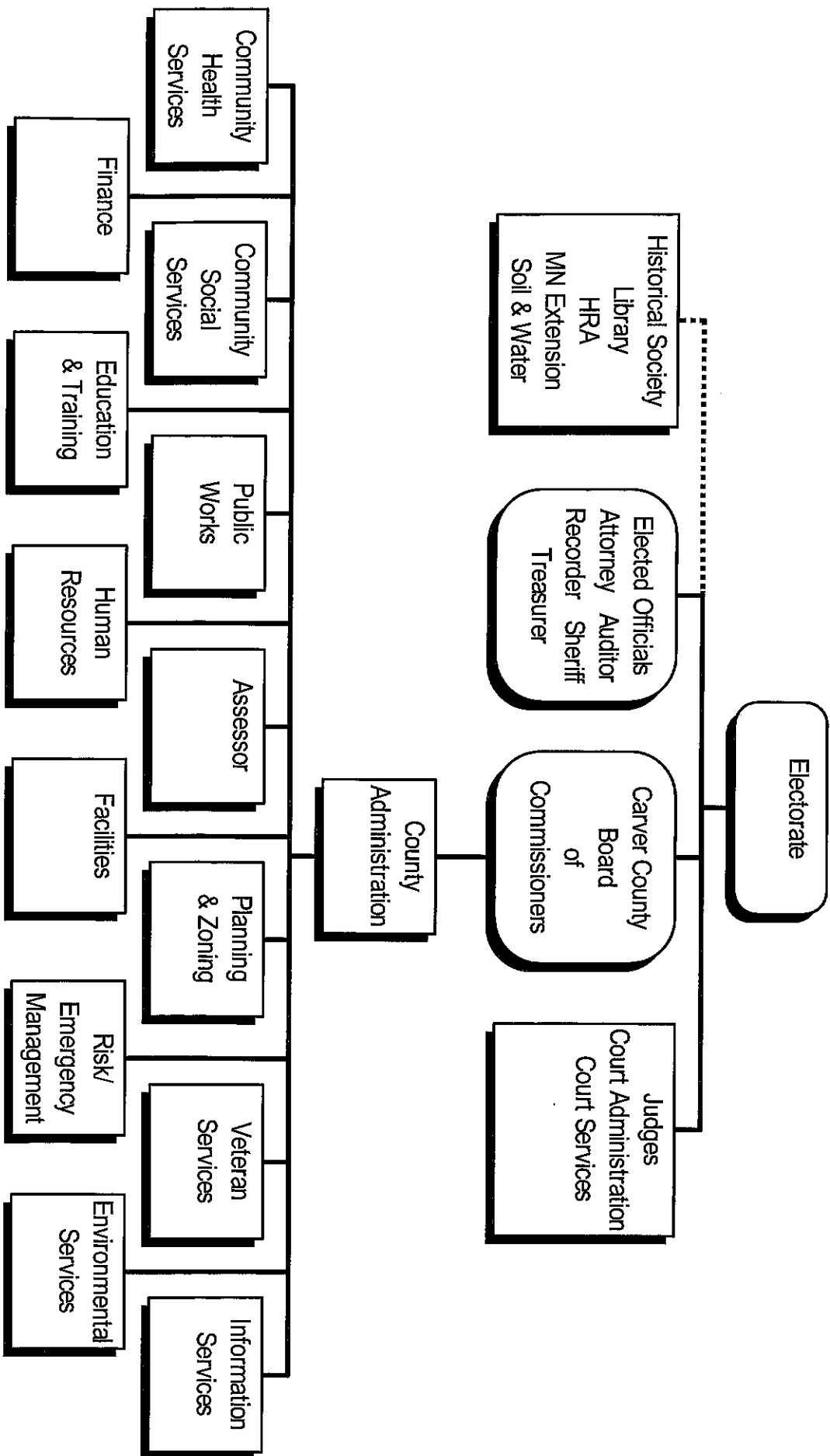
Organization Chart



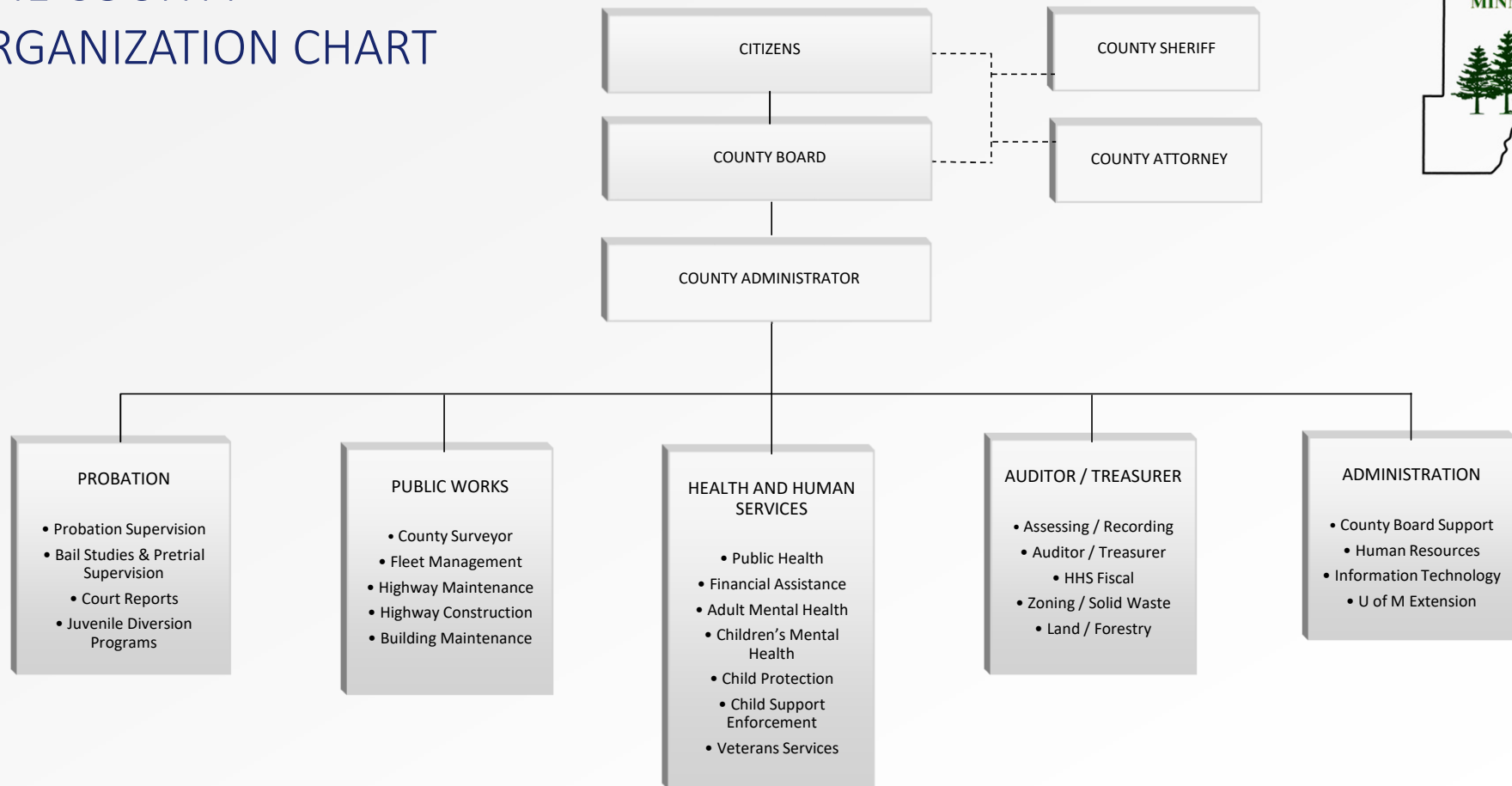
Carver County

Organizational Chart

1995

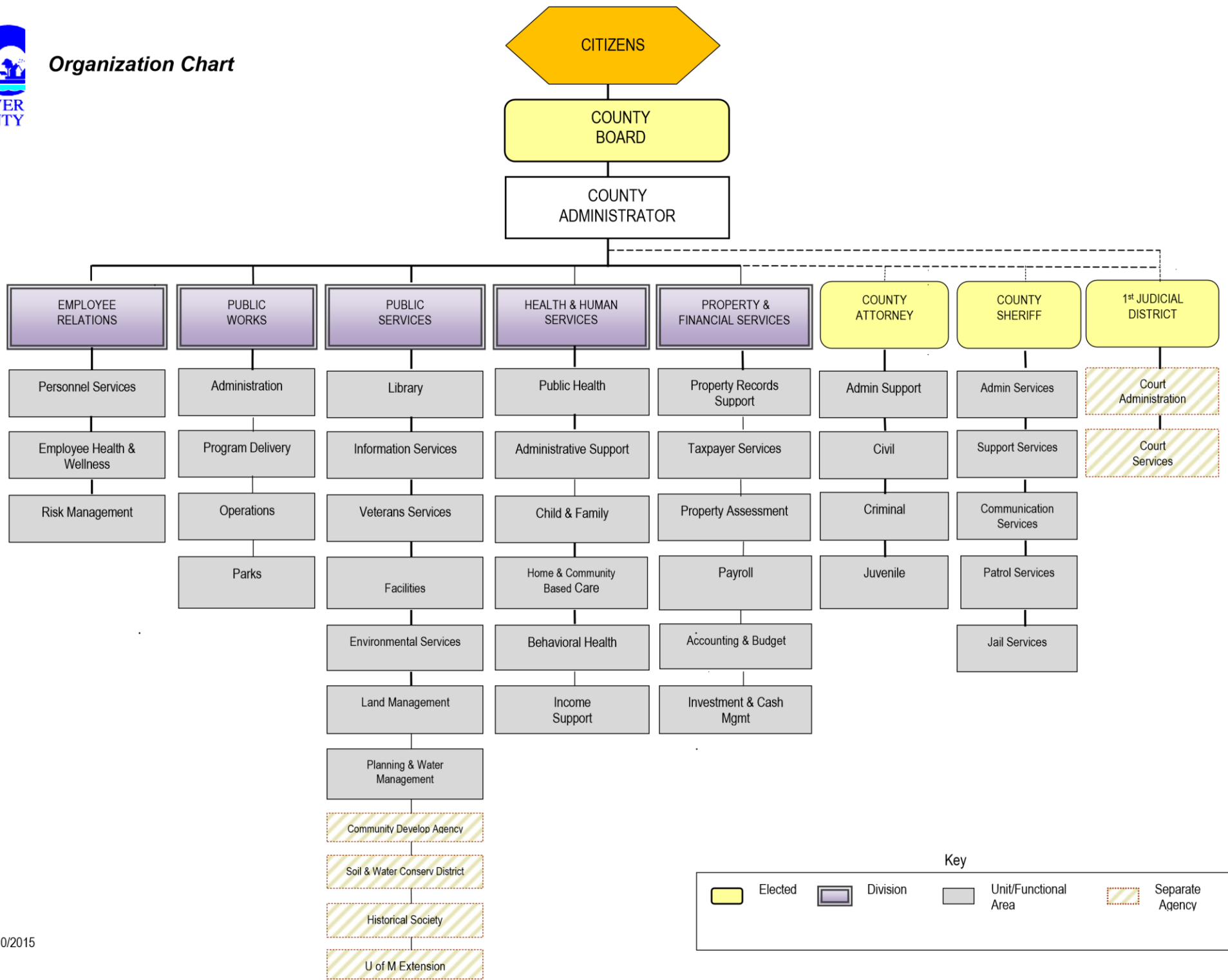


PINE COUNTY ORGANIZATION CHART





Organization Chart



Carver County

Organizational Chart

1995

