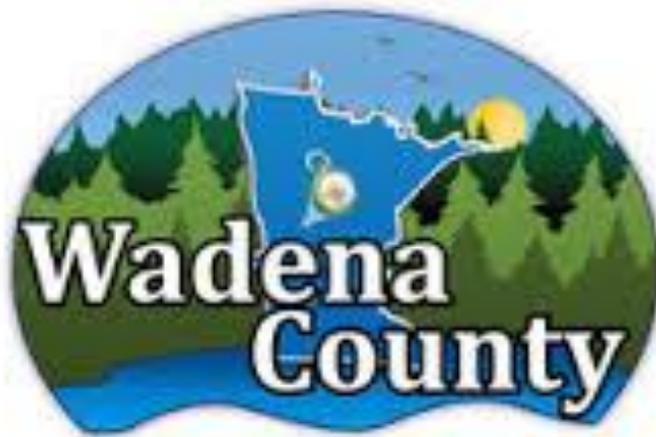

WADENA COUNTY
ORGANIZATIONAL STUDY
-FINAL REPORT-



JANUARY 16, 2019

PREPARED BY GARY WEIERS
MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT



DDA

Human Resources, Inc.
a David Drown Associates Company

Background Information

On August 21, 2018, the Wadena County Board of Commissioners approved an organizational study proposal submitted by DDA Human Resources, Inc. The Board sought assistance to help determine the most efficient and customer friendly organizational structure.

A committee was appointed by the County Board to act as a liaison to the consultant. This committee met prior to the study beginning to review the scope and process that would take place. It was originally planned to have the committee meet again to review the preliminary findings, but at the consultant's request, the preliminary report was shared directly with the County Board and the committee at the same time. The members of the committee are listed in Addendum A.

Assessment Process Summary

The study consisted of an examination of how Wadena County is organized, financial documents, a review of previous organizational study information, facility review and tour, organizational information gathered from other counties and interviews with nearly 40 individuals in the organization. Those interviewed included all Commissioners, all Department Heads, some supervisory staff, and randomly selected direct service staff from most departments. The list of those interviewed is attached as Addendum B.

The interviews focused on Wadena 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.

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 four elected Department Heads including the Attorney, Sheriff, Auditor/Treasurer and Recorder. One unique organizational characteristic is that the County Coordinator position is a part-time position. In early 2018, the County Engineer was assigned the task of serving as the County Coordinator for 40% of his time and continue the County Engineer position at 60% time. As per the job description adopted by the County Board, the County Coordinator does supervise the appointed department heads. Attached as Addendum D is the current table of organization.

Like most counties, Wadena County has modified the traditional organizational structure a bit. The County now has a combined elected Auditor/Treasurer. Many counties have moved to having the Auditor/Treasurer and Recorder become appointed positions. Since 1973, Minnesota Statutes section 375A.10 has allowed appointment of the Auditor, Treasurer and Recorder 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 that are mostly in the City of Wadena, MN. The main service locations are the Courthouse, Courthouse Annex, Human Services Building, Public Health Office and the Highway Facility. All but the Highway Facility are within a few blocks of each other and the Highway Facility is only 1.5 miles from the Courthouse. The Courthouse

Annex is a new building, the Public Health office was remodeled in 2018 and the Human Services Facility was recently updated as well. The Courthouse has not undergone substantial renovation for a very long time.

Observations

The information gathering process led to the following organizational observations:

1. It is clear that Wadena County has many committed and professional employees who are motivated to provide quality services to the people of Wadena County. This organizational trait helps the organization overcome obstacles and keep the focus on providing good services to the citizenry of Wadena County.
2. Like the staff, the County Board is attempting to provide the best quality services while minimizing the impact on the tax levy. Effectively balancing these sometimes-competing forces is challenging.
3. The transition to the County Coordinator position is working. There have already been positive organizational ramifications from this position. Many of those interviewed specifically indicated that having the Coordinator in place is helping move the organization forward. There are two primary impediments to this position being even more successful; the first is the part time nature of the position and the second is that the Board has not fully empowered the position to carry out organizational objectives.
4. 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.
5. It appears that the public is generally satisfied with the services received. This observation is based on comments received from Commissioners and staff and was not formally assessed as part of the process. No survey or other input was gathered directly from the public.
6. The County has a committed and experienced group of Department Heads who know their jobs and roles very well.
7. It appears that Department Heads are working together effectively in cases where cross department efforts are needed. What has not taken place are proactive efforts aimed at improving efficiency across departments. Current efforts have been reactionary.
8. Employees feel that they have the resources and equipment needed to do their jobs successfully.
9. The County website is a good venue for providing information to the public. It is easy to navigate and to find what one is looking for. It does not provide the full array of online service transactions, but that is challenging for a small organization. Updating and maintaining information on the website is challenging and there is some old and dated information that remains visible.
10. There are some people who would like to see significant enhancement to interdepartmental services and improved relationships among departments. Conversely there are others who feel that things are working just fine as is.
11. The County lacks a clear and defined mission and vision that helps keep everyone pulling in the same direction. For a long time, departments have functioned quite independent of one another and in many instances people do not feel part of a larger County team.

12. There are a few 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. The recent change made to the IT Department may help improve the delivery of services, but attention should be given to long term organizational needs.
13. Management of the human resource is the foundation of any successful organization. Wadena County is making some 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. Some areas of concern include the following:
 - a. Personnel policies are not current and do not presently reflect best practices for County government.
 - b. Many staff interviewed do not trust the answers received from the HR Department pertaining to employee performance, benefits and related matters.
 - c. There are concerns about confidentiality of information shared with the HR Department. Confidentiality of human resource information is paramount to successful departmental functioning for any organization.
 - d. The development of HR as an integral part of the leadership team is not where it should be for an organization of this size and scope.
 - e. It is likely that new county staff do not feel entirely welcome because the onboarding process is fragmented, inconsistent and varies by department.
 - f. Performance reviews are not being uniformly and consistently done throughout the organization.
 - g. Performance expectations differ by department as do responses to performance issues by staff.
14. 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. The County has recently taken steps to improve this function, so this issue should be resolved in the near future.
15. The County Board does not video record or live broadcast their meetings. This practice is not effective because information cannot be clearly and timely shared. Relying on the media, meeting minutes or word of mouth to spread information is not effective and does not encourage transparency.
16. Many employees feel disconnected from the County Board and County Coordinator. There are also doubts about how much is known by the Board 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 for some employees.
17. Communication by Department Heads to employees varies greatly by department. Actions taken by the Board and communicated with department heads are not being effectively communicated in some departments. This is further impacted by the lack of live or recorded video where direct information could be received.
18. There are many departmental silos that exist and working across departments is not proactive. The number of departments and highly specialized roles and responsibilities is a genuine obstacle to the customer experience in Wadena County. The primary area where this is an issue is in departments who are part of land related activities: Assessor, Auditor/Treasurer, Planning and Zoning and Recorder.

- a. In some cases, customers are quickly shifted to from one department to another 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 service areas increases efficiency and enhances customer service.
19. 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. Some say, "if it aint broke, don't fix it." Technically, a single bottom plow pulled by a team of horses still works to plow a field and "it aint broke." It is unlikely however, that many farmers would use this method to plow a field today. Therefore, saying that change should not happen simply because something is working is not the best guide to use for making strategic decisions.
20. There has been a significant disruption to financial processes by issues experienced regarding services provided by the Auditor/Treasurers office. This has impacted every County department and many County operations. The Board took strong actions to try and remedy the situation, but those efforts have not completely resolved the issues. With the recent change to this elected position, it will be important for the Board and other staff to support and encourage the rebuilding of relationships and the enhancement of business practices.
21. 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.
22. County facilities are rather haphazardly developed and utilized, and there has been a lack of a long-term vision for how and where services should be provided.
23. The County Board is very reliant on the County Attorney for policy input and direction. This goes beyond seeking legal advice on specific issues that come before the Board. In a recent Board meeting, a County Commissioner commented that the County Attorney provided input a few times before the Commissioner was recognized to speak on an issue. This situation is not in and of itself, problematic. If the Board wishes to receive policy input from the County Attorney, this can continue unabated. This practice, however, is certainly not the norm for County governments.
24. There is significant conflict between the Human Services Department and the County Attorney's office. This conflict has existed for a considerable period of time and is not conducive to good service delivery. These departments must work together effectively to insure quality services are provided to vulnerable adults and children. There is no evidence to suggest any harm has come to any children or adults because of this negative relationship. However, this level of dysfunction can create the environment where bad things can happen. There is a lot of finger pointing on both sides of this issue, and any steps that have been taken to improve and enhance this relationship have been inadequate. Recognized best practices for child and adult protection call for a multidisciplinary team effort to ensure safety and good outcomes

for vulnerable persons. The situation in Wadena County is far from the best practice for these services.

25. The County has commissioned several studies that have largely been shelved. It is unclear why previous studies have not been given due consideration, but this practice is not efficient and negatively impacts the organizational culture and confidence placed in the Board.
26. The County Coordinator position lacks adequate support for assembling board packets, taking minutes and other similar tasks. As a result, the highest paid employee is doing some things that can and should be done by others.
27. The Board liaison model in use is no longer needed. Like other counties, this model was put in place in the absence of central administration. Since central administration now exists in Wadena County, this system can cause conflict among Commissioners and lead to a perception of favoritism.
28. Janitorial services are being provided by contractors in some buildings and by staff in others. This is not likely the most efficient way for this service to be provided.

Elected and Appointed Offices Commentary

As stated earlier, Wadena County has an elected Auditor/Treasurer and Recorder. Many counties (including Wadena County) have attempted to have these positions become appointed positions. 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 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 \$25 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. It is telling that no structure like this exists in the private sector or other local governments.

Recommendations

Upon analysis of all the information, the following recommendations are put forth for consideration by the Wadena 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 plan within six months. Those departmental plans should be presented to the Board for consideration and approval.

Management

1. Convert the 40% Coordinator position to a full time County Administrator. The County has a \$25 million budget and is functioning without a full time chief administrative officer. In the public and private sector, there are not many examples of organizations this size that lack central leadership. Attached as Addendum F is the statutory citation regarding a County Administrator position.
 - a. Currently the Board is in the position of having to set policy and in some cases, implement policy. This is inherently problematic. By design, Boards should make policy and staff carry out those policies. In addition, having a single individual ultimately responsible for carrying out the wishes of the Board is organizationally important and enhances productivity and accountability.
2. Hire a full-time administrative support person to work under the supervision of the County Administrator. This person will have broad responsibilities including:
 - a. Assembling board packets
 - b. Taking minutes
 - c. Videotaping board meetings
 - d. Website manager
 - i. Updating the website and keeping departments on top of their pages is critically important. This is not an IT function but an administrative function.
 - e. Develop and manage a County Intranet site that can be used to enhance employee communication.

County Board

1. Eliminate the Board liaison system. The County Board and department head liaison system does not provide a centralized and wholistic approach to managing operations. This model tends to set up and perpetuate a silo mentality in the County. This is not because of any Commissioner deficiencies; the model rarely works effectively in an organization this size.
2. It is recommended the Board conduct monthly work session meetings where more casual discussions take place regarding services and emerging issues. These meetings would allow for more in-depth discussion of topics before being asked to

vote. Examining other counties that utilize this practice will help the Board establish the process and over time, it will reflect the culture of Wadena County.

3. When remodeling the Courthouse, it is highly recommended the Board meeting room be updated to allow for video recording of meetings. The County should consider live streaming or at least having video available on local cable access channels and the County website. Wadena County already has the technology in place for posting video to the County website.

Land Services Department

1. Create a Land Services Department that encompasses several current departments. This Department will be a blend of current departments led by elected officials and appointed officials. This recommendation is not made to take away any statutory responsibilities from elected officials. It is intended to blend services in a manner that enhances efficiency and improves service delivery to the citizens. Included in this new department are:
 - a. Assessor
 - b. Auditor/Treasurer
 - c. Planning and Zoning
 - d. Recorder
2. Prior to creating this new Department, each job responsibility should be studied to determine where overlap exists and where efficiencies can be maximized. Duties for each position should be based on logical and efficient service delivery and not historical methods of providing the service. The public can be better served by not being shuffled from one department to another for services.
3. Convert one of the clerical positions in the Assessor's office to be the main receptionist for the new department. This person would also be responsible for answering phones for the County.
 - a. This position would be a higher-level position that can effectively handle some calls or visitors and answer a variety of questions posed from callers or visitors. It is recommended this person be highly trained and supported in this role.
4. By being in one Department, these services can bring together significant talent and experience that will create a highly functional service delivery system.
5. Consider the utilization of available Recorders office funds to enhance and modernize technological systems throughout the new Department.
6. The Department Director position should be filled internally as to not increase the size of the staff for the new Department.
7. The Board should continue their efforts in seeking approval for an appointed Auditor/Treasurer and Recorder.
8. The newly created Land Services Department should occupy the majority of the space in a remodeled lower level of the Courthouse. The next section of this report elaborates on how this space can be utilized.
9. In the event the Board does not choose to create a single Land Services Department, colocation of these offices is still highly recommended. The customer does not care what office is providing the service. They simply want and deserve to receive services in the least number of stops.

Courthouse Remodel

1. It is recommended the north side of the Courthouse be remodeled to better align services and create a better customer experience. Attached as Addendum G is a visual representation of the remodeled space on the north side of the Courthouse on the lower level and main level of the facility.
 - a. Lower Level North Side
 - i. Auditor/Treasurer
 - ii. Assessor
 - iii. Planning and Zoning
 - iv. Recorder
 - v. Veterans Services
 - vi. County Administrator
 - vii. Human Resources
 - b. Main Level North Side
 - i. Deputies/EMS
 - ii. Attorney/client meeting rooms
 - iii. IT
 - iv. Flexible conference room with collapsible partition
 - v. Commissioners office space
 - vi. Storage
 - vii. Future use space
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. Clearly the County may wish to remodel more than the north side of the facility, but the scope of this project did not include areas outside of that area.

These four departments will share a single window even if not combined into a single office.

Human Resources

1. Enhance services of the Human Resources Department to better position the department as a strategic organizational partner.
2. Develop and maintain comprehensive best practice personnel policies that reflect current employment conditions.
3. At all times, protect confidential employment data as prescribed by Minnesota statute.
4. 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 this system. Newly hired employees should be included on this task force to shed light on the deficiencies.
5. 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.

6. The Human Resources Department should work with 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.
7. Keep payroll in this department. At present, it is illogical to move this to the Auditor/Treasurers office.
8. 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.
 - a. 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.
9. Analyze the options for a human resource information management system. The County should first explore options offered through Sourcewell before considering other options. Sourcewell is a tremendous strategic partner and may have no or low-cost options that can meet the need. Whatever option is chosen, it is important to keep in mind that implementing these systems is labor intensive and time consuming. The County may need to employ temporary staff while a system is being implemented.
10. Consider doing a Request for Proposals or Quotes for labor attorney services. This should cover all labor related activities and functions and should not overlap with County Attorney services. Paying two attorneys to provide advice on a single issue is not cost effective or good business.

Department Process

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.

Human Services

Some suggested that a merger of Public Health and Human Services is a logical step for the County. This is based on the belief that the departments provide similar services and therefore could benefit from being part of a single department. This belief is not without truth but does not rise to the level of requiring the merger of these two departments. However, there are changes that can and should be examined for the delivery of human services.

1. It is recommended that Wadena County actively pursue other county partners that would be interested in creating a regional joint powers human service delivery system.
 - a. It is likely that hiring qualified staff and keeping up with everchanging State laws and rules will be increasingly challenging for single county human service entities. Merging with other counties for human services is the most logical move for Wadena County.

- b. It is very important that the evaluation of potential partners be a thoughtful and deliberative process. Once a regional entity is formed, it will be extremely difficult to go back to a single county service model.
- c. The financial ramifications of doing this are difficult to project. Given the current staffing patterns, it is doubtful this option would result in a savings of levy dollars for Wadena County. There are certainly benefits to taking this approach, but banking on cost savings is not one of them. It is always possible that some cost savings could result, however, that should not be the reason for utilizing this service delivery model.

Human Services/County Attorney

Given the state of the working relationship between the County Attorney and Human Services, it is important to proactively find solutions that will improve this vital working relationship.

1. It is recommended that a mediation process be initiated immediately. The purpose of the mediation will be to help the Departments develop protocols for effectively working together and processing cases. It is recommended that the Bureau of Mediation Services be contacted as a resource for this service.
2. Additionally, both Departments must commit to working together in a professional and collaborative manner throughout the mediation process and beyond. These departments must have a professional working relationship in order to provide the best service to some of the most vulnerable people the County serves.
3. It is further recommended the Sheriff's Office be part of the protocol development process where needed. Child and Adult protection also involve law enforcement so participation by the Sheriff's Office should take place where applicable.

Process Improvement

1. 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. Business practices should be broken down and reconstructed in a way that maximizes efficiency and service quality. 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 the 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.
2. 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 that directly provide 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.

3. Evaluate the most cost-effective way for janitorial services on a county-wide basis. Using contractors for some buildings and staff for others is likely not the most cost-effective way for the service to be provided. The County is encouraged to do a cost benefit analysis for contracting versus staff provided services to determine the best way forward.
4. It is recommended the County examine the solid waste relationship with Ottertail County to insure the arrangement continues to meet the needs of Wadena County. This is not to suggest that the arrangement is flawed, only that it is time to review the agreement and seek any modifications that might be needed.

Organizational Structure

Addendum H shows the new County structure recommended in this report.

Leadership Development

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.

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 an alteration of the plan. Potential changes to the plan should be thoughtfully considered

prior to being made. The Board has been criticized for not implementing previous plans so progressively taking action to implement priorities from this plan will be important. There are many in the organization who doubt that anything will come from this study. It is up to the Board to determine priorities and insure action on those priorities.

Conclusion

Wadena County has many reasons to be satisfied with the services provided. The County is efficient and is always aware of the financial ramifications of decisions made by the Board. The County is fortunate to have many dedicated, hardworking and committed employees. In addition, the County Board is committed to meeting the needs of the citizens while balancing the impact on property taxes.

However, there are many areas that can be improved and enhanced. 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 not been effectively implemented. The time is right for the Board to seize the opportunity to make significant organizational changes that will improve service quality, increase employee engagement and position the County to meet future organizational needs.

Addendum A: Committee Members

- Jim Hofer
- Ryan Odden
- Cindy Peterson
- Curt Kreklau
- Deana Malone
- Tanya Leskey

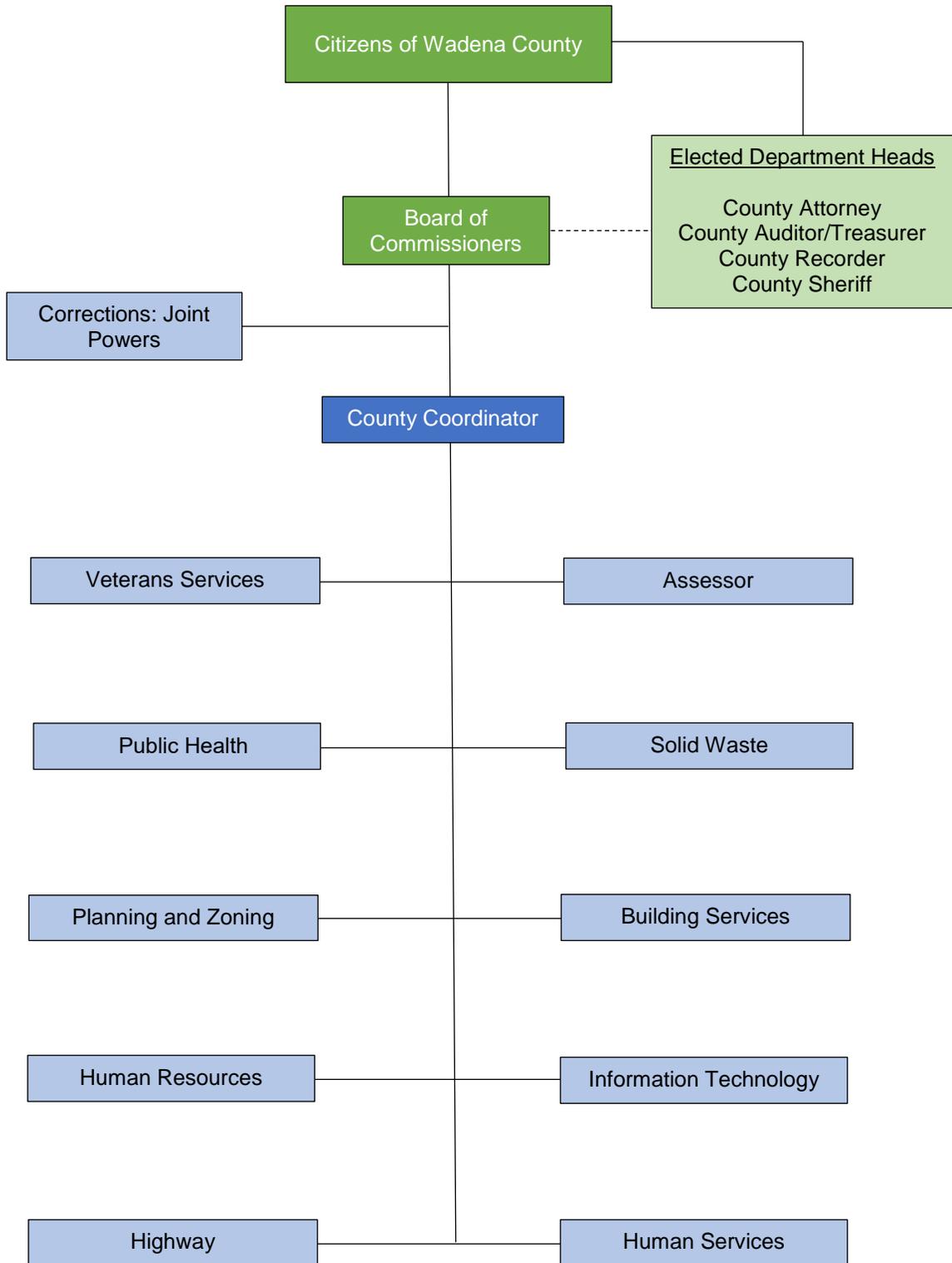
Addendum B: List of Persons Interviewed

Name	Position	Division
Sean Uselman	Building Services Director	Building Maintenance
Cindy Pederson	Public Health Director	Public Health
Kyra Ladd	County Attorney	Attorney
Sharilyn Rasmusson	Child Support Officer	Human Services
David Hillukka	Commissioner	Board
Rhonda Dittberner	Network Support Tech III	IT
Cheri Dodds	Social Services Supervisor	Human Services
Bunni Olson	Extension Office Manager	Extension
Tammy Ehrmantraut	Solid Waste Supervisor	Solid Waste
Brian Folden	Chief Deputy Assessor	Assessor
Lynda Peterson	Lead Eligibility Worker	Human Services
David Anderson	VSO	Veterans
Soledad Henriksen	County Recorder	Recorder
Sheldon Monson	Commissioner	Board
Lee Brekke	County Assessor	Assessor
Janet Kern	Payroll/Benefits Coordinator	Human Resources
Penny Polling	Public Health Accountant	Public Health
Joe Schoon	Chief Deputy	Sheriff
Mike Willie	Social Services Supervisor	Human Services
Erica Keppers	Nursing Supervisor	Public Health
George Behl	Transit Coordinator	Highway
Amie Gendron	Administrative Services Supervisor	Human Services
Curt Kreklau	HR/IT Director	Human Resources
Judy Taves	Auditor/Treasurer	Auditor/Treasurer
Chuck Horsager	Commissioner	Board
Jim Hofer	Commissioner	Board
Glen Motzko	Parks Maintenance Operator	Planning/Zoning, GIS, Parks and Passport
Mike Carr	Sheriff	Sheriff
Deana Malone	Planning and Zoning Administrator	Planning/Zoning, GIS, Parks and Passport
Gina Dahms	GIS	Planning/Zoning, GIS, Parks and Passport
Heather Olson	Highway Accountant	Highway
Ryan Odden	Coordinator/Engineer	Coordinator/Highway
Joy Weyer	Elections Coordinator	Auditor/Treasurer
Jason Miller	Highway Maintenance Foreman	Highway
Quentin Ness	Lead Maintenance Worker	Highway
Tanya Leskey	Human Services Director	Human Services
Bill Stearns	Commissioner	Board
Tyler Wheeler	EMS	Sheriff
KariLee Pietz	Child Protection Supervisor	Human Services

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 the department and County as a whole.
6. Describe what is working particularly well with the current organizational structure in Wadena County.
7. What is not working well with the organizational structure for the County and your department?
8. Do you have any suggestions for improving the structure for the County and your department?
9. Do you have any suggestions for improving efficiency in your department or the County as a whole?
10. Describe how workload is balanced between departments in the County.
11. Describe how the office space impacts how services are provided.
12. Describe the effectiveness of the supervisory structure in the department.
13. What are the obstacles to making changes in the County?
14. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Addendum D: Current Table of Organization



INFORMATION BRIEF
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Minnesota House of
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Updated: January 2018

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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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Can a county change a position that has been combined or made appointed back to an elected position?	4
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](#), subs. 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/.

375A.06 COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR.

Subdivision 1. **Appointment and qualification.** In any county which is not operating under either the elected county executive plan, the county manager plan, or the auditor-administrator plan, the office of county administrator may be established. The county board may appoint and employ the administrator upon such terms and conditions as it deems advisable and is authorized to appropriate funds and provide suitable office space for the office. The administrator shall be chosen solely on the basis of training, experience, and administrative qualifications and need not be a resident of the county at the time of appointment. The administrator shall be appointed for an indefinite period and may be removed by the county board at any time, but after the administrator has served as administrator for one year the administrator may demand written charges and a public hearing on the charges before the county board prior to the date when final removal takes effect. Pending such hearing and removal, the county board may suspend the administrator from office. The county board may designate some properly qualified person to perform the duties of the administrator during absence or disability. The county board shall set a salary and may provide for a termination allowance.

Subd. 2. **Other officers may be appointed.** The county board may appoint as county administrator any county officer or employee deemed to be qualified by reason of training, experience and administrative qualifications. If a county officer or employee is appointed county administrator, the officer or employee shall resign office and terminate its responsibilities before assuming the office of county administrator.

Subd. 3. **Abolishing office of administrator.** If the office of county administrator is abolished, any duties and responsibilities previously assigned to the county administrator shall be vested in the officer or department which had responsibility for the function previous to the transfer of the function to the county administrator.

Subd. 4. **Administrator, powers and duties.** The county administrator shall be the administrative head of the county and shall be responsible for the proper administration of the affairs of the county placed in the administrator's charge. The administrator shall exercise general supervision over all county institutions and agencies and, with the approval of the county board, coordinate the various activities of the county and unify the management of its affairs. If required by the county board, the administrator may act as the head of any department, the appointment of which is made by the county board, provided the administrator has the qualifications required by law. Responsibilities shall include, but are not limited to, the following duties:

- (a) hire qualified staff to assist the administrator in the performance of duties as approved by the board;
- (b) provide for the execution of all ordinances, resolutions and orders of the board and all laws of the state required to be enforced through the county board, by the administrator or by officers who are under the administrator's direction and supervision;
- (c) appoint, suspend, and remove with the approval of the county board all county personnel whose appointment, suspension or removal is a function of the county board under general law and make such appointments with the approval of the county board to additional offices, boards, committees and commissions both advisory and otherwise as the county board may direct;
- (d) provide for county purchases including purchases of service as directed by the county board and pursuant to purchasing regulations established by the board;
- (e) prepare and submit to the county board a proposed annual budget and long-range capital expenditure program for such period as the county board may direct, each of which shall include detailed estimates of revenue and expenditures and enforce the provisions of the budget when adopted by the county board;

(f) attend all meetings of the county board and recommend measures for adoption as the administrator deems advisable or expedient;

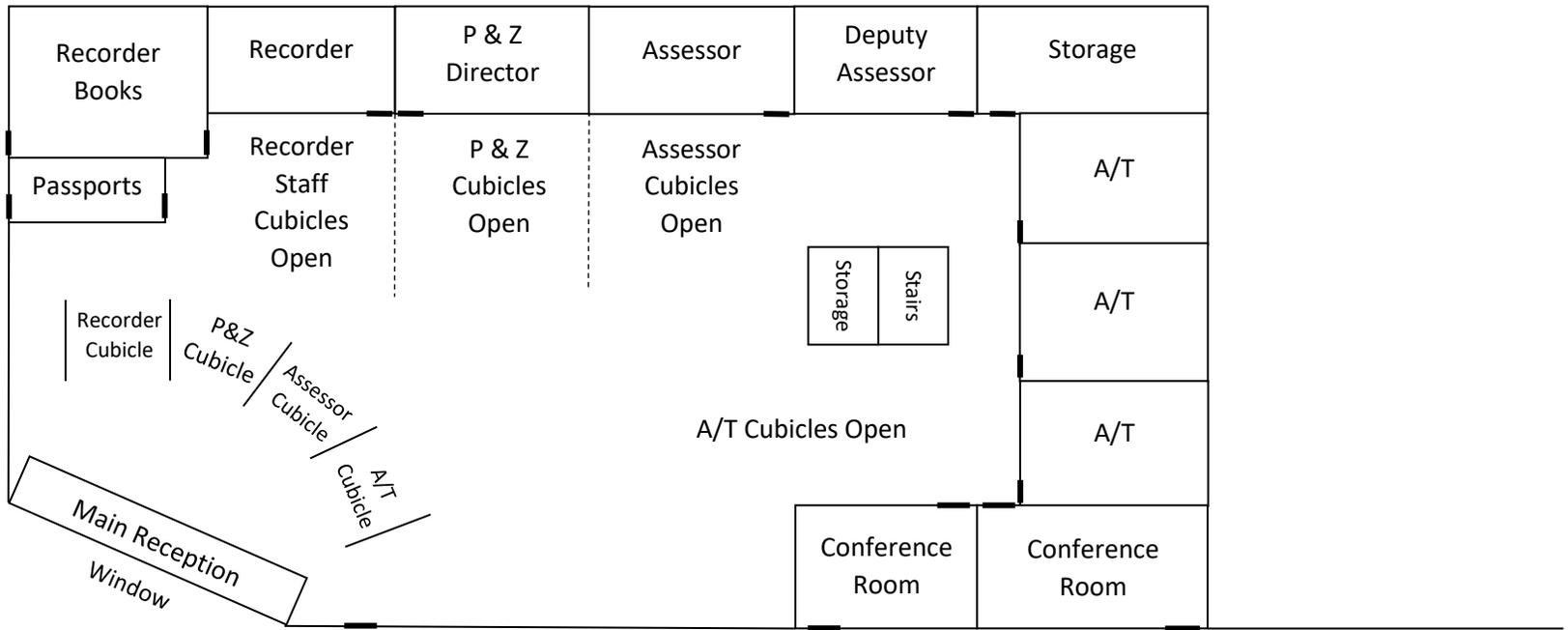
(g) examine the books and papers of officers and departments of the county as directed by the county board and report the findings to the county board, keep the county board fully advised as to the financial condition and needs of the county and make such other reports from time to time as required by the board or the administrator deems advisable.

Subd. 5. **Appointment without referendum.** Notwithstanding section 375A.12, a county board meeting the requirements of subdivision 1 may without referendum appoint a county administrator as provided in this section.

History: *1973 c 542 s 6; 1978 c 462 s 1; 1986 c 366 s 1; 1986 c 444*

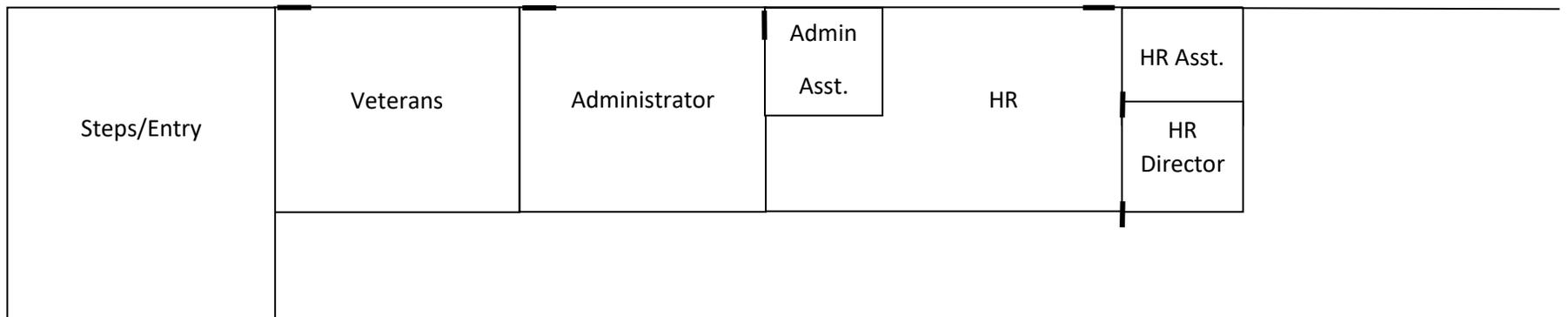
Addendum G: Proposed Courthouse Remodel: Northside

Lower Level

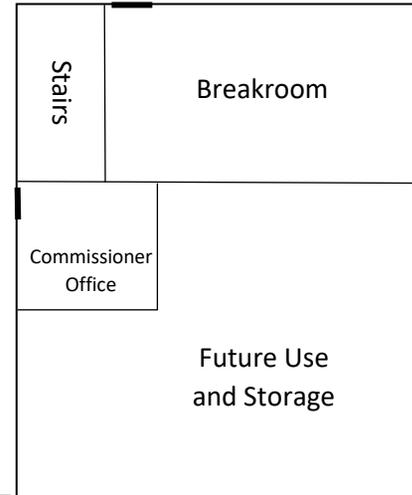
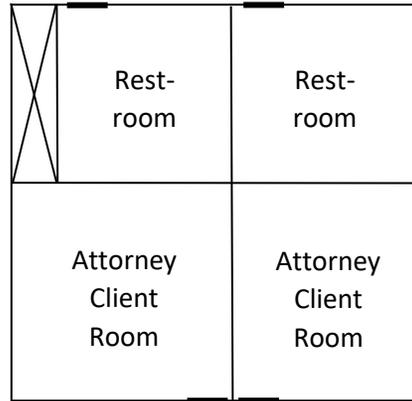
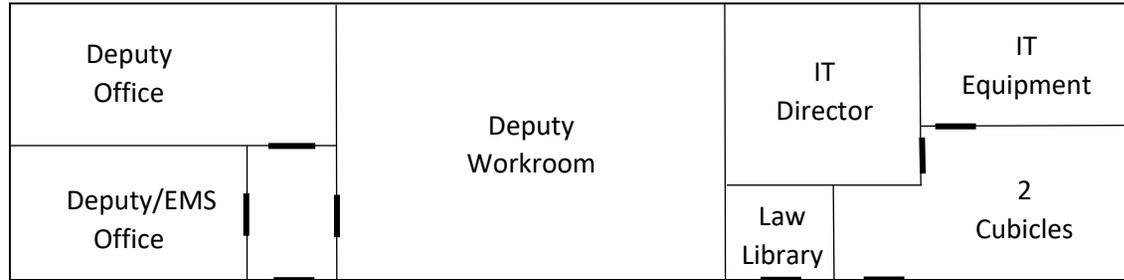


Corridor

Connection



Main Level



Addendum H: Revised Table of Organization

