



KITTITAS COUNTY EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT ANALYSIS

MAY 2023

Report and Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

The Kittitas County Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) adopted Resolution 2022-173 establishing the County Executive Management Advisory Committee (CEMAC) for the purpose of:

“Making a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners as to the form, function, and future organizational structure of Kittitas County Government.”

In turn, the BoCC entered into a Personal Services Agreement with the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC) in September 2022, to develop a proposed structure for the county functions and operations overseen by the BoCC. Included in this analysis is the potential creation of the position of County Administrator.

In conducting its work, WSAC has worked closely with the BoCC appointed the County Executive Management Advisory Committee (CEMAC). Our charge, per the scope of this work, is to provide the BoCC with proposals for the following:

- Roles and authorities of a County Administrator position to provide supervision for the county functions and operations overseen by the BoCC;
- Organizational chart for the for the county functions and operations overseen by the BoCC;
- Strategic financial management and budget planning structure with oversight of process under the County Administrator; and
- Position description for County Administrator position.

County Executive Management Advisory Committee

WSAC initiated its work in September 2022, with the first meeting of CEMAC on Wednesday, October 26, 2022. CEMAC met monthly through April 2023. CEMAC members, as appointed by the BoCC, included:

- Gary Berndt
- Roberta Soltz
- Heidi Behrends Cerniwey
- Phil Backlund
- Chelsey Loefers, Director, Kittitas County Department of Public Health
- Mark Cook, Director, Kittitas County Public Works
- Brian Carlson, Kittitas County Budget and Finance Director
- The Honorable Greg Zempel, Kittitas County Prosecuting Attorney
- The Honorable Mike Hougardy, Kittitas County Assessor
- The Honorable Cory Wright, Kittitas County Commissioner, District #1

WSAC Executive Director Eric Johnson facilitated the activities of CEMAC.

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PRINCIPLES FOR BUILDING KITTITAS COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Important to forming an administrative and management structure for the county functions and operations overseen by the BoCC is framing the problem and developing processes to be followed by CEMAC. Briefly, the process CEMAC followed included the following:

- Discussion, input and guidance from CEMAC members;
- Information gathered from staff and elected official interviews; and
- Presentations and discussions with eight counties – those with and without a County Manager/Administrator.

The Impetus for Change

The BoCC has discussed the possibility of a County Administrator for a number of years. Those discussions identified experienced problems with the current organizational structure that impede the BoCC from achieving its governance priorities. Discussions with BoCC members, staff, and other elected officials revealed that there are several current and developing factors that have led to the motivation for change:

- Increased opportunities for the BoCC to represent Kittitas County and engage with individuals, local, state, and federal elected officials, organizations, agencies, groups, and institutions external to Kittitas County;
- More time for the BoCC to focus on strategic planning and direction, policy development and oversight of planning, implementation commitment, and execution;
- Creation of an organizational structure that allows the BoCC to focus on developing and guiding the mission, and not be entangled in operational implementation, personnel matters, and other day-to-day department level activities;
- Establishment of a structure that allows more time for the BoCC to intentionally improve the quality and frequency of communication between the BoCC, citizens, the community, and independently elected officials;
- Secure professional leadership to systematically improve operational processes to gain efficiencies, increase effectiveness, and eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy – with appropriate delegated responsibilities and span of control; and
- Reduction in the number of direct reports to the BoCC.

ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE CRITERIA

CEMAC reviewed the principles for change noted above during its first meeting and used them as the foundation during seven subsequent monthly meetings. During the process, CEMAC met with elected and appointed officials from eight counties. Comments and observations were sought on both the idea of creating a County Administrator position as well as the current and potential organizational function for those activities overseen by the BoCC. CEMAC followed its process over eight-months of meetings and developed its rationale and findings. Using the impetus for change sectors, CEMAC developed a set of criteria and goals for meeting the change challenges. The following characteristics emerged as a mechanism to develop recommended organizational structures.

Provide Professional Public Administration Leadership and Management

- Provide professional, consistent, administrative, and operational leadership to county department heads.
- Provide professional guidance that coordinates and oversees the varied challenges of managing complex situations, organizations, structures, people, resources, and a complex organization with cross-department and cross-jurisdiction issues.
- Create a clear separation of the dual BoCC authorities of day-to-day managers from the role of policy maker, legislator, community, regional, and state leader.
- Develop a system and structure to assure systematic and intentional improvement in the management of the County.
- Establish clearly articulated objectives to which budget resources are allocated and flexed to meet strategic objectives.

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Create an Organizational Structure to Increase Efficiency and Effectiveness

- Allow the BoCC to focus on broad policy objectives and initiatives and not get immersed in administrative details.
- Remove the BoCC from engaging in minutia that wastes its time and delays department and organization decision-making and action.
- Create a more consistent, predictable, standardized, and stable BoCC decision-making process.
- Increase efficiency through delegated decision-making to or through the County Administrator.
- Establish organizational system and culture to drive decision-making to appropriate levels.
- Eliminate/reduce administrative redundancies.
- Assure work is done at appropriate levels/"altitudes."
- Delegate appropriate authority and span of control for responsibilities and decision-making.
- Create a user-friendly atmosphere for our customers. Improve efficiency and responsiveness to constituents.
- Establish expedited decision-making processes. The BoCC strictly complies with the Open Public Meeting Act. A County Administrator position and appropriate processes can assure decisions are consistent with BoCC policies, OPMA, goals, and objectives in an expeditious manner.
- Allow BoCC meetings to be more focused on policy, legislative, oversight, and executive level decisions rather than administrative and management subtleties.

Assist in Providing Strategic Direction

Develop an organizational structure to aide in providing the BoCC the time and structure to focus more on the

strategic direction, goals, objectives, and key results for the County. A County Administrator could lead and coordinate the executive leadership of the County that operates the functions and activities overseen by the BoCC. The BoCC will provide the ongoing strategic and policy direction, stay engaged in understanding operational progress, and regularly receive reports and briefings on department actions and activities.

Intentional Communications

Create a structure that enhances and improves communications within the organization – internal communications – to ensure appropriate dissemination and receipt of information to elected officials, department directors, county staff, and the BoCC.

Support External Opportunities for the Board

The organizational structure must allow BoCC members time and flexibility to be more engaged and involved in attending and representing Kittitas County on local, State, and Federal boards, groups, coalitions, and associations and less focused on day-to-day supervisory activities.

Improve Personnel Management

- Create a more cohesive and functioning Management Team.
- Establish and ensure a consistent and effective onboarding process for Department Director and Management Team members.
- Develop professional and intentional mentoring and leadership to the County Management Team.
- Create stability and consistency in organization oversight, management, and personnel.
- Improve retention and recruitment.

CHARACTERISTICS OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR POSITION

Authority

Defining the authorities provided to the County Administrator and the adherence and compliance by the BoCC of the assigned responsibilities and delegated authorities to the County Administrator is seen as one of the single most significant issues to be addressed. There must be a "clear and consistent" policy for delegated authorities to the County Administrator and staff. Included

in this is the scope of the delegated authorities, to include:

- Personnel (to include hiring, onboarding, discipline, day-to-day supervision, and termination);
- Budget management;
- Expenditure limits;
- Contract authorities; and
- Scope of decisions.

Skills and Competencies of a County Administrator

- General understanding of government.
- County government experience preferred, but not required.
- Politically astute, but not political.
- An understanding of County/government budget and finance principles, bidding, and procurement processes and laws.
- Strong communication skills.
- Understands human resource management, personnel, labor agreements/negotiations, growing staff, and leaders.
- Key descriptors: Stable, calm, predictable, consistent, genuine, unifying, respectful, inspirational, visionary, ethical, creative, open to new ideas, positive, integrity, fair, principled, good listener, confident, lead change, competent, pragmatic, calm, balanced, thoughtful, and methodical leader.
- Creating a culture of performance and excellence.
- Balanced and meets competing demands.
- Ability to work with all types of personalities and people.
- Create collaborative working teams and relationships with departments, offices, and community members.
- Can articulate reasoning and defend and effectively implement decisions made by the BoCC.
- Experience in managing diverse organizations and executive leadership.
- Understands process improvement techniques and quality management systems.

Strategic Direction and Accountability

- Plans and thinks strategically and tactically.
- Assists in developing a County Strategic Plan.
- Build accountability for County service delivery.
- Develop accountability measurements regarding desired and expected outcomes.

Concerns, Considerations, and Challenges to Creating this Position

A number of questions, concerns, thoughts, and challenges were articulated throughout interviews, meetings, and CEMAC discussions. They are important to remember as they form the environment for establishing and implementing any new organizational structure. Understanding and implementing any change has challenges that must be recognized and addressed. Creating an understandable transition and implementation plan and communicating it effectively will be necessary.

- An underlying theme is the perceived increased cost to the County to create the County Administrator position, along with any additional administrative support, office space, and operational expenses.
- There is a crisis of space in the Courthouse Complex. Where will you put the County Administrator and support staff?
- The BoCC has administrative staffing, beyond Department Directors. What does the initial organizational chart look like for all staff that reports to the BoCC?
- Several noted that the community and staff may question whether the County Commissioner position is still a full-time position if a County Administrator structure is implemented.
- Who will develop a Communication Strategy and Plan; Transition Plan; and Implementation Plan and Schedule?
- Management Team – There are significant improvements in communication and organizational work with the creation of a management team facilitation. How this work can continue to grow, and its relationship to any new structure is a necessary component that must be worked through.
- Does the BoCC need to create a County Administrator position? Can the BoCC achieve the objectives, address the findings, eliminate deficiencies, and increase efficiencies and effectiveness if the BoCC just performs its job?
- The position creates another level of bureaucracy separating the BoCC from the public and its responsibility to supervise its staff.
- How will the County Administrator position interact with independently elected officials, the judiciary, and the BoCC?
- How will measurements/metrics be developed to show what is expected to be achieved by making this change? Who will be making this determination? How do we know it is working as intended? Need to identify whether the cost is worth the benefit.
- Assuring adherence to the “cultural shift” by all parties for a new administrative structure.
- Dealing with internal and external forces resisting this change – or any change.
- Developing trust and respect of Department Directors and Elected Officials.
- Developing a transition plan and potential reorganization of Board departments meeting the desired reduction in the number of direct reports.

CONCEPTUAL ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES CONSIDERED

Three organizational models were considered by CEMAC:

Status Quo – This alternative assumes no changes to the current organizational structure for the programs and services under the direct supervision of the BoCC.

Department Consolidation – This conceptual alternative consolidates the departments reporting to and managed directly by the BoCC. This solution provides a partial solution to the identified issues and findings.

County Administrator – This conceptual alternative creates a series of steps to include:

- a. The creation of a County Administrator position to administer, manage, and lead the departments, programs, and services under the scope of responsibilities of the BoCC. This position will report to the BoCC and serve at its pleasure;
- b. Develops a transition team preparing milestone events for BoCC consideration;
- c. Establishes budgetary function reporting to the County Administrator; and
- d. Consolidates the departments that will report to the County Administrator.

BUDGET AND FINANCE

Budget development, approval, and monitoring is one of the most important legislative functions performed by the BoCC. The annual budget document is more than a spending plan. It is the primary policy document for the County. How the County expends its finite resources is a statement of the BoCC's priorities and objectives. With this in mind, the BoCC asked CEMAC to review and propose a strategic financial management and budget planning structure with oversight of the County Administrator. The proposed finance and budget structure is believed to be relevant to all three conceptual organizational structures considered. In making their recommendation, CEMAC met with Kittitas County Auditor Bryan Elliot and Kittitas County Budget and Finance Director Brian Carlson to review potential collaborative solutions to assist the budget and finance work of the Auditor's Office and the BoCC.

The nature and complexity of County financial operations span all departments and offices. It requires an ongoing proactive and central focus that culminates with the development and implementation of an annual budget to fund all County functions and services to the public. CEMAC recognizes the need to meet the growing complexities of governmental auditing requirements and the accounting needs of the County. – Beyond these technical financial requirements, the county needs to take a strategic approach to future County financial planning, budget performance, management, development and monitoring. CEMAC also wants to ensure that recommendations regarding "Budget and Finance" increase efficiency, effectiveness, and limit duplication in the delivery of County financial services.

Currently, most of the budget planning and development is done through the County Auditor's office. CEMAC recommends the development of an "Interdepartmental Finance Team Agreement" between the County Auditor's Office and the BoCC. Under this agreement, the Kittitas County Budget and Finance Director shall

retain management oversight of the Finance Team, and the County Administrator will direct the analytical and planning components on behalf of the BOCC, utilizing the Finance Team for technical support. This recommendation recognizes the importance of interoffice cooperation and building a strong, trusting relationship, reinforcing the County's budgeting and planning efforts, and creating additional avenues for professional development and advancement.

Conceptually, this Interdepartmental Agreement should stipulate and describe the retention of traditional accounting functions by the County Auditor's office and acknowledge the shared responsibility for budget development and adoption between the BOCC and Auditor's Offices, assigning their respective roles and identifying shared resources.

Specifically, the Auditor's Office shall retain responsibility for budget compilation, arranging for its formal adoption and subsequent amendments, maintenance of budget data in the County's ERP, and ensuring budgetary controls throughout the budget-year.

The BOCC, through its County Administrator, and in partnership with the Budget and Finance Director, assume primary responsibility for budget analysis, multi-year financial planning, and the integration, implementation, and reconciliation of financial- and strategic plans. To facilitate this role, BOCC will partner with the Budget and Finance Director and Auditor's accounting staff for technical assistance and creation of presentation materials.

This recommendation recognizes the importance of collaboration amongst County elected officials in advancing a modernized financial management system.

MATURATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

CEMAC voted to recommend that the BoCC move forward with creating a County Administrator position to manage and supervise the departments and functions beneath the BoCC. This was a near unanimous recommendation. One member dissented from the group's recommendation as he believes that the current status quo model does not limit the BoCC from achieving the issues identified within the "impetus for change" section of this report. All other CEMAC members indicated it was in the best interest of the county to establish a County Administrator position to supervise the administration and programs beneath the BoCC. This informed decision comes from listening to counties with and without a County Administrator, reviewing the findings from interviews with County staff and elected officials, participating in committee meetings, and their own lived experiences.

Transitioning to a new organizational structure is a maturation process. If other County experiences are the guide, perfection cannot be anticipated to be perfect from the beginning. Preparation, planning, communication, managing, and leading the transition is essential. The County will need to employ and deploy an adaptive management system to understand, evaluate, and modify as necessary how changes are being made, how they are working, and if the intended outcomes are being achieved.

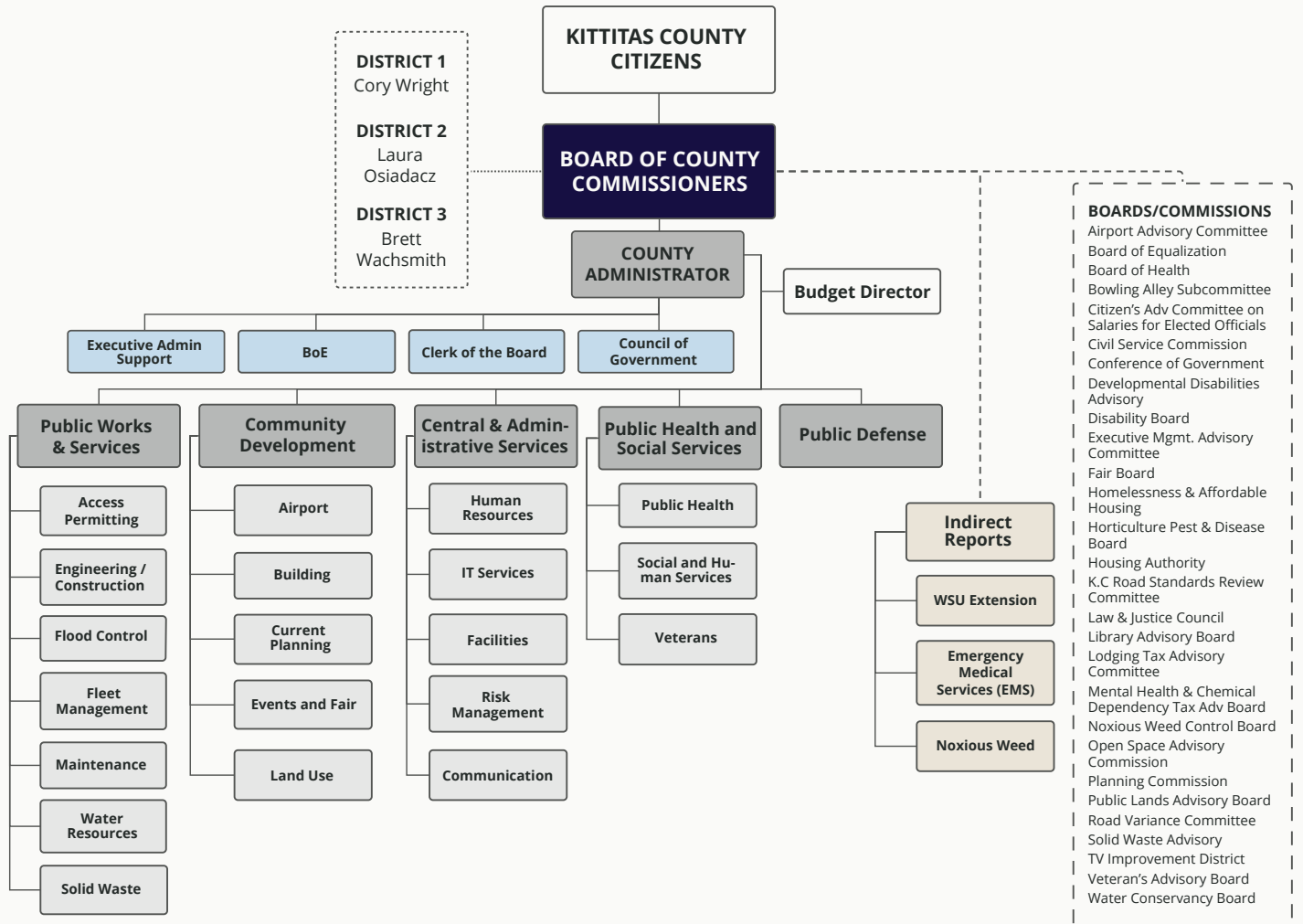
It will be critical to create a system to identify and implement the adaptations, modifications, or changes that must occur to achieve an effective and efficient operation of the programs and services under the direct supervision of the BoCC.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BoCC

Stated succinctly, CEMAC recommends the following:

1. Status quo is not an acceptable option.
2. The best end state is establishing a County Administrator position.
3. It is important to create clarity and separation between the BoCC's legislative, policy, and leadership roles and their day to day management and departmental supervisory functions.
4. Additional re-structuring of the organizational functions managed by the County Administrator will be necessary.
5. The BoCC should take the following actions as soon as possible:
 - a. Proceed with authorizing the creation of a County Administrator position.
 - b. Appoint persons to develop a transition plan, guided by the principles in this report, to implement a County Administrator structure to be presented to the BoCC by August 15, 2023.

CONCEPTUAL COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OPTION



CONCEPTUAL JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE: County Administrator

REVIEWED / MODIFIED:

REPORTS TO: Board of County Commissioners

DEPARTMENT: Executive

JOB SUMMARY: Under the direction of the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC), the County Administrator plans, organizes, administers, and coordinates the management of those County programs and services overseen by the BoCC.

SUPERVISORY DUTIES: Oversees Department Directors and Executive Department

CATEGORY: **OCCUPATION CODE:**

UNION AFFILIATION: **HOURS/WEEK:**

FLSA STATUS: **DRS ELIGIBILITY:**

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) Support and Coordination

- Assists in developing and implementing the strategic agenda of the BoCC.
- Coordinates the BOCC legislative process through oversight of agenda development, briefings, staff meetings, etc. with the BOCC.
- Acts as the BoCC's liaison to all elected officials.
- Analyzes the impact of state and federal legislation on County government operations and advises the BoCC as appropriate.
- Assists the BoCC in developing the County's budget in close coordination with the Budget and Finance Director.
- Advises the BoCC on organizational structure and the best use of personnel and resources to accomplish goals and objectives.
- Serves as liaison between BoCC and its departments, as well as communicates, coordinates, and collaborates with governmental entities at the local, state, and federal levels and the public on behalf of the BoCC.
- Represents Department Directors' and other staffs' views to the BoCC on selected personnel and other critical issues.
- Serves on boards, panels, and commissions as directed by the BoCC as its representative.

Executive Functions

- Under the direction of the BoCC, the County Administrator plans, organizes, and coordinates the management of the executive and administrative functions of programs and services overseen by the BoCC.
- Possesses the authority to appoint, evaluate, discipline, and terminate Department Directors.
- Provides mentorship for all Department Directors and other direct reports.
- Works directly with all County Directors and/or managers on high-risk matters and actions such as those involving risk management, personnel, expenditures, and contracts.
- Acts as the responsible party for BoCC Department actions.
- Models a culture of continuous improvement and excellence.
- Addresses citizens' issues as required.
- Serves as chief financial negotiator for all labor contract negotiations.

CONCEPTUAL JOB DESCRIPTION (continued)

- Anticipates future requirements/needs of County government across a broad range of programs and develops long-range plans/programs to meet these requirements.
- Performs other duties as assigned by the BoCC.

This job description summarizes the primary functions and expectations for this position. Additional department-related duties may be assigned as required.

DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- A strong working knowledge of County and City government operational structure and decision-making processes.
- Excellent oral, written, and interpersonal communication skills. They will have the ability to collaborate and work with a wide diversity of individuals and groups on a regular basis.
- Ability to retain professional composure in tense situations and environments.
- Experience working with diverse individuals and groups to develop teams capable of achieving organizational goals and objectives.
- Bachelor's degree in political science, public administration, business administration, finance, or a related field.
- Ten years of progressive supervisory and management-level experience with most recent experience as a Department/Agency Director, City or County Manager, or similar executive/management-level position.
- Five years' experience preparing, coordinating, administering, and implementing a strategic budget process supporting a complex organization.
- Experience in developing and implementing organizational policies and procedures.
- Experience in dealing with elected/governing bodies of an organization.

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Master's degree in public administration, public policy, business administration, or related field.
- Five years of executive-level management experience in a governmental organization.

A criminal history and background check will be performed on qualified applicants. Convictions may preclude candidates from employment in certain circumstances. Factors such as relativity to the position, age and time of the offense, seriousness and nature of the violation, and rehabilitation will be considered.

WORKING CONDITIONS

The position requires the individual to handle multiple assignments/issues daily while performing the primary job responsibilities.

The position normally works in an office environment.

Regular and reliable attendance and punctuality are required.

Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform essential functions.

Prepared and Reviewed By:

Must be completed with all revisions of the job description.

Supervisor Name

Title

Date

HR Representative Name

Title

Date

Employee Acknowledgement

I understand the job duties and responsibilities contained in this job description and as described by the immediate supervisor.

Employee Printed Name

Signature

Date
