

NYSAC Training for County Officials

Practical Guide to Leadership

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NYSAC
— NEW YORK STATE —
ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES



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Practical Guide to Leadership

Introduction

- County government in New York State is often invisible and misunderstood.
- This section is designed to help demystify the role and purpose of county government.
- With the assistance of veteran members, we have developed this practical advice.
- It includes descriptions of roles and responsibilities and statutory requirements for county officials and departments.
- NYSAC has been delivering for counties since 1925.
- Our mission is to foster excellence in county government and unite the voice of New York's county leaders.
- Your involvement in your association enables us to be a strong voice for county governments.

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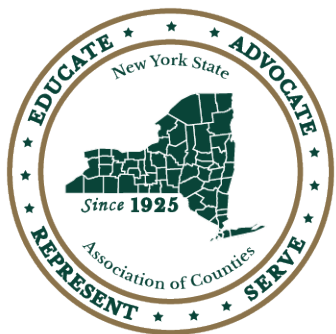
Ten Practical Suggestions on Effective Lawmaking

1. Attend Meetings of the Board
2. Get to Know Your Colleagues
3. Attend Committee Meetings
4. Attend Legislative Caucus Meetings
5. Develop Core Legislative Competencies and Capabilities
6. Attend New Member Orientation Programs
7. Learn The Rules
8. Stay Connected to Home Base
9. Continue Your Education
10. Use Your County Association



The Structure of the Board

1. The Board's Organizational Meeting
2. Role of the Board Chair
3. The Role of the Clerk of the Board
4. Legislative Counsel
5. The Legislative Caucus
6. Ethics and Other County Policies
7. The Board Composition



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The Role of the Board Chair

- Powers and duties prescribed in article 9 of the county law.
- Elected by the Board during the Organizational Meeting
- Presides over all meetings of the board, organizes and coordinates the activities of the board, and serves as its representative and spokesperson between meetings.
- Prepares agenda for each meeting, may delegate to a county manager or administrator, and will often include the legal counsel in review of agenda and resolutions.
- May attend all committee meetings as an ex-officio member.
- Often represents and serves as spokesperson for the Board.

The Role of the Clerk of the Board

- Key department, primary goal is to assist the county legislative body.
- Function is unique to each county, and the functions, powers will vary by county.
- Right hand to the Chair and chief assistant to committee chairs.
- Provides specialized knowledge to a group that devotes only part of its time to county business.
- Often seated next to the chair and county Attorney during legislative session.

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Legislative Counsel

- Provides legal advice to the Board on matters involving legislative operation, including resolutions, local laws, procedures and process.

The Legislative Caucus

- Defined as a group of lawmakers organized around and united by shared legislative interests.
- Typically refers to members of the same political party but can be ascribed to other groups.
- May meet to elect officers, or to discuss policy, strategy, or leadership.
- Caucus meetings may occur before or during meetings of the legislature/board of supervisors.

Ethics and Other County Policies

- Article 18 of the general municipal law addresses conflicts of interest of municipal officers and employees.
- Board members are often governed by a county ethics law and/or rules.
- There are also likely rules about travel, meals and reimbursements that you should be familiar with.
- County may have personnel policies that govern board members and employees.

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County Departmental Structure

Counties have transformed from simple administrative subdivisions of the State to important units of local government, performing a multitude of functions.

County Executive

- County-wide elected officer for counties with charters that have created the position.
- Supervise the day to day operations of all administrative units.

County Administrator/Manager

- Non-elected official appointed by the board, aids in day-to-day administration of the government.
- Coordinates work of standing committees of the board and all county departments.
- Sometimes serves as chief budget officer and human resources director.

County Treasurer/Comptroller

- Chief financial officer of the county and has responsibility for all financial affairs.
- Fiscal steward of all money belonging to the County
- Serves as Treasurer/Comptroller for the County Social Services District and as trustee for court.
- Tax collection, grants certificate of residence, distributes unpaid school tax monies, accounting for all county funds and records, reporting departmental balances.

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County Departmental Structure, cont...

District Attorney

- Prosecutes all offenses recognized by the county courts.
- Appears for preliminary hearings, presents cases to the grand jury, tries cases when a trial is demanded.
- Handles appeals from criminal proceedings in any court and advises town and village justices.
- Has authority to appoint assistant district attorneys and staff subject to appropriation.

Sheriff

- Elected constitutional officer charged with responsibility for the protection of the county's citizens.
- Authority and duties divided into civil duties and court security; jail operations; and law enforcement including road patrol.
- Responsible for related services in areas of highway and traffic safety, education activities, boating safety and patrols, crime prevention, bicycle safety, mutual aid, natural disaster assistance, etc.

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County Departmental Structure, cont...

County Clerk

- Elected constitutional officer.
- Clerk of record for the state supreme court and the county court.
- Responsible for providing files, records, and indexes of papers in legal actions and proceedings.
- Records deeds, mortgages, assignments, and liens, kept permanently for attorneys and the public.
- Files records for town and county officers, bonds, maps, pistol permits, financing statements, and tax liens.
- Processes and reports on monthly conservation licenses issued by Town Clerks.
- Qualifies notary public appointments in the County.
- Issues motor vehicle registrations and licenses.

Board of Elections

- Conducts fair and open elections free from fraud.
- Maintains enrollment and registration lists; check voting machines for error and fraud; notify the public and secretary of state of election results; and coordinates any other tasks necessary in the election process.
- Coordinates all elections in the various municipalities, apart from school districts.

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County Departmental Structure, cont...

Coroners

- Investigates the circumstances and causes of any death in the County, particularly any unattended, violent, suspicious, or criminal deaths.
- Investigative and autopsy reports are provided to the Courts, District Attorney and police regarding cases in which a crime may have been committed.
- Reports in non-criminal cases may be important in determining insurance and other civil actions.

County Attorney

- State law requires the county to appoint a resident lawyer as the County Attorney.
- Required to be the legal advisor to the county and every officer paid in whole or in part from County funds. Responsible for the prosecution and defense of actions brought by or against the county.
- Prepares contracts and various legal documents for the Legislature and various other tasks.

Historian

- Responsible for collecting and preserving materials on the County's history, including documents and maps.

Local Health Department

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County Departmental Structure, cont...

Local Health Department

- Responsible for programs that promote health standards for county residents.
- Front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020.
- Special education programs for children under five years of age, family planning, treatment of sexually transmitted diseases (STD), and other screening programs.
- Environmental health/training sessions for water system operators, septic system installers and designers, food handlers, etc.;
- Emergency medical services.
- Responsible for certified home health agency and hospice programs.

Emergency Management Services

- Coordinates emergency responses for fire, disaster preparedness, civil defense, and emergency medical services
- Develops plans for response to floods, releases of hazardous materials, and other emergencies
- Develops and coordinates education programs to train fire, police, and medical and rescue teams
- Provides a central control point from which operations may be coordinated.

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County Departmental Structure, cont...

Highway

- State law mandates a county highway superintendent/ commissioner of public works.
- Responsible for all activities required to maintain county infrastructure.
- Patching pavement, grading and patching shoulders, cleaning and improving ditches, traffic sign repair and replacement, bridge repair, cutting trees and brush.
- Other duties as directed by the county.

Information Technology Services

- Responsible for managing and controlling computer resources and information throughout the county.
- Training for effective use and operation of systems.
- Leads your county's cyber security efforts.

Department of Residential Health Care Facilities

- Nursing home director has and exercises all the powers granted to him by the charter, local law or resolution.

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County Departmental Structure, cont...

Office for the Aging

- Initiates, conducts, and coordinates programs to improve the quality of life for senior citizens.
- Programs and services designed to assist older persons to live in their own homes for as long as possible.

Personnel

- Responsible for developing and administering a comprehensive personnel management system.

Planning

- Providing technical assistance in land use regulations, development, and environmental protection.
- Provides research and analytical capabilities to assist county officials.

Probation

- Protects safety and property, prevents juvenile delinquency, adult crime and related family malfunctioning. Conducts mandated functions of investigation, supervision, and intake, from Family Court.
- Monitors Leandra's Law compliance.

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County Departmental Structure, cont...

Public Defender

- Represents indigent defendants by order of the court and with the consent of such defendants.
- Represents the defendant at every stage of the proceedings
- Determines the eligibility for indigent defense services.
- Works in conjunction with a conflict defender or assigned counsel pool.

Real Property Tax Services

- Prepares and keeps tax maps up-to-date, advising assessors, recommending equalization rates.
- Responsible for coordinating all activities required by NYS Law.

Social Services

- Responsible for the administration of Medicaid, aid to dependent children, aid to the disabled, child welfare, institutional care and other related programs.
- Investigates suspected fraudulent applications for, and the receipt of, and public assistance.

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County Departmental Structure, cont...

Solid Waste

- Responsible for developing and guiding solid waste programs.
- Assists municipalities, develops recycling programs, provides sound solid waste practices for residents.

Veterans' Service Agency

- Provides services and programs to veterans, military personnel, and their families.

Weights and Measures

- Responsible for assuring measurement accuracy in commerce, gas, groceries, and deli scales.

Youth Bureau

- Assesses youth needs, municipal recreation and delinquency prevention programs, services for youths.

Laws, Resolutions and the Budget

Local Laws and Resolutions – Slideshow in your packet.

The Budget – Will be addressed this afternoon.

Constituent Services and the Media

Constituent Service(s)

- It is imperative that constituents are able to interact with their representatives.
- If there is a problem/need that the county can help with, lawmaker intervention is beneficial to all parties.
- If it's not a county matter, the lawmaker may be able to help them anyway, and it will be appreciated.

Working with the Media

- Being able to use traditional and social media platforms to educate residents and members of the public is helpful to both the county and the lawmaker.
- Social platforms should be used judiciously to discuss public service and county operations.
- Traditional media – newspapers, radio, and television news can be used to discuss programs, services and issues that impact county residents and communities.

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Questions?