



# Oceana County Government

*The mission of Oceana County is to provide efficient, effective, responsive government with the highest quality services in a fiscally responsible manner to promote the health, safety and general welfare of all Oceana County citizens, guests, and visitors.*

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A brief guide describing many of the duties and responsibilities of elected and appointed offices.

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S:/Administrator/Administrator Reports

## **County Administration**

The County Administrator is appointed by the Board of Commissioners (Board) and is under the general direction of the Board. The position serves as the chief administrative and fiscal officer, chief operating officer, chief purchasing officer, and chief personnel officer. The County Administrator recommends new policies, changes to existing policies, and the necessary steps to implement all policies of the Board including administration, employee relations and labor negotiations, budgeting and financial management, facilities management, and other internal services to name just a few. The County Administrator acts as liaison between the Board and elected and appointed officials, boards, and commissions. Working with the Board to identify and achieve strategic goals in another important role of the County Administrator.

## **Airport**

The pattern for establishing and operating airports in Michigan is varied. Counties own and operate some of them. In other places cities operate the local airport. And in a few instances, combinations of local government operate airports through airport authorities. Counties that own and operate their own airports must establish a three-person committee to constitute the "county airport committee." But the County Board has two basic approaches for selecting the members-- the board may appoint three county commissioners to serve as the airport committee or it may designate the county road commissioners to be the policy and administrative oversight body for the airport operations. The airport manager is appointed by the County Administrator.

## **Animal Control**

Prior to 1972, animal control was primarily a township or city program. In 1972, the legislature allowed Boards of Commissioners to adopt ordinances to establish an animal control agency. The County Board may assign the animal control agency to any of the county departments or make it a separate department. Animal Control Officers must have not less than 100 hours of instruction as prescribed by the Michigan Department of Agriculture. Animal Control Officers are appointed by the County Administrator and County Treasurer.

## **Board of Commissioners**

The governing body and major policy approval center for County government. However, its responsibilities are not all encompassing. Power of the County Board is limited as there are other county agencies and boards that, while part of the county, are rather independent. You can think of County government not as a government but as a "collection of governments". We have a seven (7) member Board elected by district for two year terms. The County Board is only directly responsible for hiring the County Administrator but may be involved directly or indirectly with other appointments.

### **Building Department**

The purpose of this office is to administer the state construction code. The county is required to provide building code enforcement in those parts of the county where townships and cities do not provide their own enforcement. The department coordinator is appointed by the County Administrator.

### **Circuit Court**

Circuit Courts are Michigan's major trial courts or courts of general jurisdiction. Oceana and Newaygo Counties make up the 27th Judicial Circuit Court. Operating costs are shared with the state. A number of County personnel are required to assist the courts. The County Clerk, for example, is the Clerk of the Court with duties that involve maintaining case files, bonds and other documents. Clerking the court also involves accounting for the revenues and fees collected. The Sheriff and his deputies are another group of county employees who serve the court as they must attend sessions of the court when requested to do so by the Judge. Deputies also are process servers.

### **Circuit Court Probation/Parole**

This is a State office that provides probation/parole services in Oceana County with administrative support provided by the County as a statutory requirement.

### **County Clerk**

The office performs a number of statutory duties. Files and maintains all vital records including birth, death, and marriage certificates. Also, performs accounts payable, payroll, and general ledger accounting functions. The County Clerk is elected to a four year term and serves as the chief election officer and clerk of the Jury Board.

### **County Road Commission**

County Road Commissions are administrative agencies that manage a large proportion of roadways in Michigan. They are important policy making bodies that control large sums of money, most of which come from the State. The Road Commission has a governing board that is separate from the County Board of Commissioners.

### **County Treasurer**

Receives all moneys from whatever source they may be derived. County Treasurers are elected to a four year term and may not make payments except upon an order of the Board of Commissioners signed by the Clerk and Chairperson of the Board. Accountability is emphasized. Treasurers may only deposit funds in banks designated by the County Board. Other duties include property tax administration, distributing and reconciling taxes collected; handling delinquent tax accounts; operating a delinquent tax revolving fund; sale of dog licenses; serving on the apportionment commission.

### **Courthouse and Grounds**

The supervisor of the department is appointed by the County Administrator and is responsible for all county facilities including their operations and upkeep.

### **District Court**

Michigan's District Court system was established in 1968 and is a court of limited jurisdiction and is the first level of court for both civil and criminal actions. The entire justice of the peace system was abolished in 1968. District Court has jurisdiction when the amount in controversy is not greater than \$25,000. Many municipal ordinances and even state laws now classify violations as civil rather than criminal infractions and district courts have jurisdiction over such civil infractions. District Court jurisdiction also extends to garnishment of wages; abatement of nuisances, housing disputes; and other disputes involving property such as foreclosure on mortgages and land contracts. The general rule regarding venue is that the cases will be processed in the district court covering the geographical area in which the event occurred. District Courts handle misdemeanors that are punishable by fines and/or imprisonment of up to one year. District Court serves as the traffic bureau and small claims court.

### **Drain Commissioner**

Drain Commissioners are elected to a four year term and are responsible for planning, developing and maintaining surface water drainage systems. They must administer the state drain code. The Oceana County Drain Commissioner is also charged with soil erosion and sedimentation control.

### **Economic Development**

The Oceana County Economic Alliance is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit agency that initiates economic development projects. The agency is governed by a 15 member board of directors. Its central purpose is to encourage business activity, industrial development, job formation and a growing tax base. The original EDC agency was organized and incorporated pursuant to Public Act 338 of 1974, as amended, to alleviate and prevent conditions of unemployment, assist and retain local industries and commercial enterprises, to strengthen and revitalize the economy of the county and state.

### **Emergency Management**

The Emergency Management Department is responsible for developing, implementing, and maintaining emergency management programs, plans, policies, and procedures with the goal of reducing injury and loss of life, property, or environment in Oceana County as a result of an emergency or disaster. The department works in all aspects of emergency management programs including mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. In addition, this office provides a coordination role in Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activations. The manager is appointed by the County Administrator.

### **Emergency Medical Services**

Oceana County went from a "paid" volunteer service in the 1970's and 1980's to a full-time advanced life support service in 2001, and then began contracting for services in 2018. The largest source of funding has historically been a voter-approved special millage. The county's Emergency Manager currently serves as the EMS liaison with local, state, and national agencies.

### **Equalization**

The duty of the equalization department is ensure that all assessors within the County are properly reflecting the taxable properties and values in the respective assessing units. In addition, the department may be charged by the board to assist local assessing officers in developing and maintaining accurate property descriptions, to identify, list and evaluate properties for tax purposes, and to develop and use uniform valuation standards and assessing techniques. The Equalization Director is appointed by the County Administrator. Currently, the position is filled via an independent contractor.

### **Friend of the Court**

The FOC is a major administrative arm of the Circuit Court Family Division. The Friend of the Court is appointed by the Chief Judge of the Courts. This office enforces court orders, collects child support payments and disburses those funds to recipients. Other responsibilities relate to visitation orders, investigating the well-being of the children involved, and other matters.

### **Juvenile Court**

Juvenile Court services of the Family Division of Circuit Court varies considerably from county to county. In Oceana County, Juvenile Court employees deal with the following individuals: any child under 17 years of age who has violated a law or who is uncontrollable; any child under 17 years of age who has come to the attention of the court because of an inappropriate home environment; and, any child less than 18 years of age whose parents neglect or refuse to provide proper or necessary support.

### **Mason-Oceana 911**

The county is a member of the Mason-Oceana 911 Authority funded by a voter approved special millage and telephone surcharge fees. The authority has a separate governing board made up of members from both counties Board of Commissioners, their law enforcement agencies, EMS, and fire agencies.

### **Medical Examiner**

The county is a member of a multi-county consortium that contracts for medical examiner services with the West Michigan Forensic Pathology Authority and the Mid-Michigan Medical Examiner Group.

### **MSU Extension**

MSU Extension extends the resources of Michigan State University to the people of Michigan through educational programs in the broad areas of agriculture and natural resources, children, youth and families and community and economic development. MSU Extension serves both a rural and an urban clientele with programs that tap the resources of five MSU colleges and 19 academic departments.

### **Probate Court**

Probate Judges have non-judicial proceedings duties such as appointment of county members to the State boundary commission that deals with issues of annexation and incorporation. The Probate Judge appoints a citizen member to the county allocation board. Probate Courts have always been courts of limited jurisdiction and become even more so with the court reforms. The Probate Judge oversees the execution of wills and administration of estates; has jurisdiction over the administration of trust proceedings; appoints guardians and conservators and resolve contested matters regarding estates or wards; make judgments on petitions seeking the commitment of persons having mental illness.

### **Prosecuting Attorney**

The County Prosecuting Attorney is elected to a four year term and represents the People of the State of Michigan in all proceedings in the courts of Oceana County. The Prosecutor will review the investigations of all local and state police and decide if enough evidence exists to pursue criminal actions in a court of law. The Office also represents the Department of Health and Human Services in proceedings to protect the welfare of children. In matters relating to the establishment of paternity, the Office represents the state to identify paternity and establish an order for support of children. The Office may also represent the County in legal matters.

### **Register of Deeds**

This Register is elected to a four year term and is the repository for the official records of real property in the county. The title of the office suggests that it registers or records property deeds. That much is true. What the title leaves out is that registers record everything that affects the quality of the deed. A lender records the mortgage with the register of deeds as a formal notice to anyone that the mortgage is an obligation or lien against the property.

### **Sheriff**

The office of Sheriff is an elected office, constitutionally mandated in the State of Michigan. The Sheriff serves a 4-year term of office with the duties and powers of the Office provided by law. The Sheriff is first and foremost a peace officer charged with enforcing the laws of the State of Michigan and for the preservation of public peace within the County. Included in this list are: Establishment, maintenance and operation of the County Jail; Execution of orders, judgments and civil process of the Courts as well as Court Security; Patrol and traffic services on the county

roads; Executive duties on the County Concealed Weapons Board; Enforcement of local marine safety; Recovery of the drowned bodies; Enforcement of county and local ordinances; Maintaining local criminal records.

It's interesting to note that the only statutory requirements of the Sheriff are to oversee jail operations and to serve as a process server for the courts.

### **Technology**

The County Administrator appoints a technology coordinator who is responsible for computer networks, network servers, operating systems, digital storage, and wired/wireless infrastructure activities. Also evaluates and recommends PC, laptop and mobile application programs and supports many of the programs.

### **Transfer Station**

The transfer station is used for the County's recycling and community trash disposal needs.

### **Department of Veterans' Affairs**

The county Department of Veterans' Affairs shall perform such duties and exercise such powers as shall be necessary in carrying out the provisions of one or more state statutes and county policies. The department is primarily funded by a voter approved special millage.

The following table briefly describes each of the boards and commissions that county officials and volunteers from within our community serve.

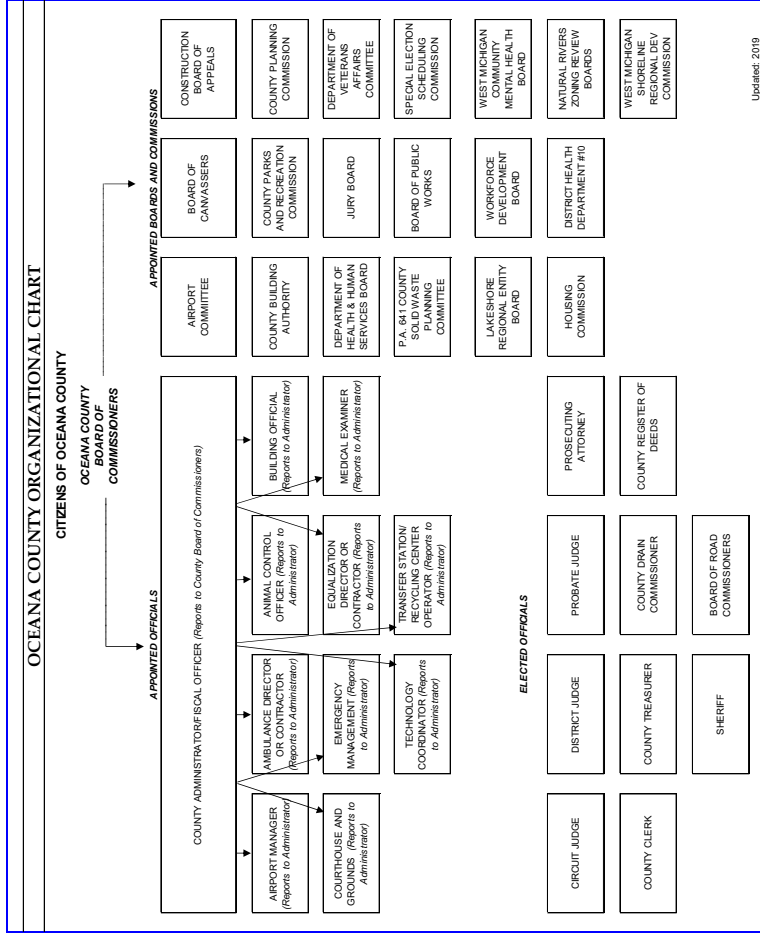
|                                    | <b># of Members</b> | <b>Term</b> | <b>Description</b>   |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------|--|
| Board of Canvassers                | 5                   | 3 years     | To certify the counting of ballots and the tallying of votes.  |
| Board of Public Works              | 5                   | 3 years     | Created to allow the issuance of bonds for applicable projects.  |
| Building Authority                 | 5                   | 3 years     | To oversee and direct financial investments and bonds of building projects.  |
| Construction Board of Appeals      | 9                   | 5 years     | Hears appeals made with respect to building, electrical, plumbing and mechanical code enforcement.   |
| Dept. of Health and Human Services | 3                   | 3 years     | Control over funds use for emergency social services. Also oversees the Medical Care Facility. 2 of the 3 members are appointed by the County Board. The other by the State. |
| District Health Dept. #10          | 2, plus 1 alternate | 1 year      | A 10 county regional health dept. to provide public health services. Each county appoints 2 members.   |
| District Extension Council         | 2                   | 3 years     | To identify the needs of citizens in which to base educational programs.   |
| Economic Development Corporation   | n/a                 | n/a         | The EDC was replaced with the Oceana County Economic Alliance,   |



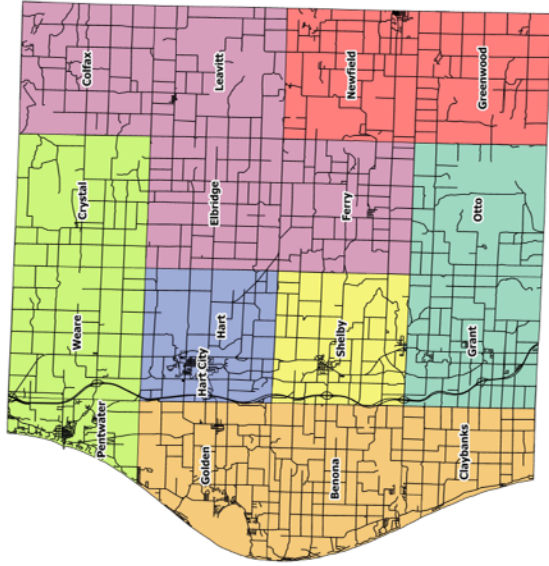
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|------------------------------------|----|------------------|--|
|                                    |    |                  | a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, operating with a 15 member board.   |
| Housing Commission                 | 5  | 5 years          | Created by county ordinance to address unsanitary and unsafe inhabited dwellings. Develop safe and affordable housing.   |
| Jury Board                         | 3  | 6 years          | Appointed by the County Board, upon recommendation of the Chief Judge. No more than 2 members from the same political party. The board is required in counties with populations of less than 2,000,000. Selects individuals to serve on jury panels. |
| Land Bank Authority                | 7  | 1, 2, or 3 years | Fosters the public purpose of returning property that is non-revenue generating, non-tax producing status to effective utilization status in order to provide housing, new industry, and jobs.   |
| Lakeshore Regional Entity          | 1  | 1 year           | The member is appointed by the County Board. The LRE assists and guides people and communities in need of substance abuse services.  |
| Local Emergency Planning Committee | 27 | 1 year           | Created by the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act to develop, train, and   |

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|   |    |         | test the hazardous substances emergency response plan.  |
| Parks and Recreation Commission             | 10 | 3 years | Per PA 261 of 1965, advocate what is best for parks and recreation programs in the county.  |
| Planning Commission                         | 9  | 3 years | Per PA 33 of 2008, assists and coordinates development in the county.   |
| Senior Resources Board                      | 1  | 3 years | Senior Resources of West Michigan is an Area Agency on Aging and serves Muskegon, Oceana, and Ottawa counties to provide a comprehensive and coordinated system of services designed to assist in maintaining the independence, dignity, and quality of life for the elderly. And, act as an advocate for issues that are vital to their welfare. |
| Veterans' Affairs Committee                 | 5  | 3 years | See the description of the Dept. of Veterans' Affairs earlier in this guide.  |
| West Michigan Community Mental Health Board | 5  | 3 years | Represents Lake, Mason, Oceana counties since 1996 and operates under the provisions of the mental health code MCL 330.1001 – 330.2106. Resource sensitive solutions to behavioral health problems for individuals.   |

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|---|---|------------------|--|
| West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission | 2 | 1 year           | Appointed by County Board. WMSRDC is the federal and state designated regional planning and development agency; economic development, transportation, homeland security, environmental planning, community development, information and communications, etc. |
| Workforce Development Board                             | 3 | 1, 2, or 3 years | To coordinate and deliver quality, comprehensive, workforce development, employment, and training services in Muskegon and Oceana counties.  |



# Board of Commissioners District Map



- District 1 (Dean Gustafson)
- District 2 (Martha Meyette)
- District 3 (Denny Powers)
- District 4 (Andrew Sebolt)
- District 5 (Larry Byl)
- District 6 (James Brown)
- District 7 (Robert Walker)

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Oceana County 2019

*Editable booklet:*

*S:/01-Administrator/Administrator Reports/A Guide to Elected and Appointed Offices Booklet*