

LEADERSHIP POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Operational Agreements of the
Board of Commissioners, County
Administrator, and County Counsel

January 14, 2025



**Benton
County**
OREGON



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GOVERNING STATEMENT

In Oregon, counties are political subdivisions of state government, mandated to perform certain functions and services in accordance with state law. The Oregon Constitution, Oregon Revised Statutes and the Benton County Charter speak to the powers, duties, and responsibilities of County government, which are exercised by the Board of County Commissioners (the Board). Those include, but are not limited to:

- Adopting a biennial County budget;
- Managing the business concerns of the County;
- Representing the County and having the care of County property;
- Administering public assistance programs;
- Providing services for the aged and veterans;
- Providing and maintaining adequate courtrooms and other court facilities for the state judicial district;
- Maintaining and operating a County jail;
- Maintaining County roads and bridges;
- Negotiating and entering into intergovernmental agreements with other governmental entities; and
- Adopting and enforcing resolutions and ordinances regarding health, safety and welfare issues.

The Board may exercise only those powers granted to counties that are specifically authorized in either state statute, the Oregon Constitution, or the Benton County Home Rule County Charter.

Within the Board's mandated authority, the Board can make decisions and take actions that have the effect of law, i.e., establish regulations and create policies that are then implemented by County staff. The Board is also authorized to take administrative actions to manage the business affairs of the County and to establish such offices as are necessary for the efficient management of the business and concerns of the County.

The Board recognizes the need to delegate with clarity to the two sole employees who report to the Board, the County Administrator and County Counsel, to effectively fulfill the obligations and responsibilities of the Board. However, the Board, as the governing body of the County, is ultimately responsible and accountable to the community members of Benton County. The complexities of issues facing the County and the competing interests within the community make a strict delegation of policy and day-to-day operations impractical. The Board's governance policy shall be rooted in a clear delineation of task responsibility and an expectation the Board is adequately and routinely informed of the performance of the various assigned tasks.

The intent of the Board is to focus on developing policy and providing high-level organizational leadership along with the County Administrator who focuses on day-to-day operational tasks. The Board will maintain meaningful control of the organization while allowing others to perform the day-to-day operations. Maintaining meaningful control requires that the County Administrator and County Counsel routinely advise the Board on day-to-day operational tasks. The Board will be informed of, but not dictate, the handling of such tasks. Through such active and routine communication, the Board can provide appropriate input to ensure assigned tasks

are consistent with the Board’s overall vision and strategic direction. The Board can jointly determine with the County Administrator and County Counsel what operational tasks may overlap or otherwise impact policy and require more active Board involvement.

The Board’s intent is to delegate to the County Administrator and County Counsel with great clarity by completing three steps:

1. Expressing the expectations of the tasks being delegated and the level of input and communication expected from the Board.
2. Assigning the expectations with no ambiguity and to be held accountable for meeting the expectations.
3. Regularly checking that expectations are being met.

The Board’s policies shall be the primary vehicle for delegating tasks, recording expectations, and monitoring on a regular basis. In these policies, the Board does not intend to form any type of contractual employment arrangement with any employee or person. Rather these are guidelines intended to clarify task responsibility. The document is purposefully written to allow flexibility in interpretation with the expectation the Board, County Administrator, and County Counsel will continually and jointly communicate on the need for refinement or more specificity as particular circumstances may warrant.

The Board has five general categories of policies that communicate the expectations for involvement and delegation:

Policy 1.0 - Governance Commitments of the Board

The Governance Commitments of the Board will clarify how the Board will work together, how the Board will conduct business, and how the Board will interact with community members and outside agencies of the County.

Policy 2.0 - Board / Staff Linkages

The Board/Staff Linkages policy will clarify the delegation and task assignment as to departmental operations and staff oversight to the Board’s two sole employees, the County Administrator and the County Counsel.

Policy 3.0 - Executive Limitations

Executive Limitations delineate task expectations, constraints on authority, and required Board input within which the County Administrator and County Counsel can act.

Policy 4.0 - Strategic Direction

The Board will provide overall guidance and direction for County operations.

Policy 5.0 - Code of Conduct and Ethics

The Board of County Commissioners shall operate in an ethical and legal manner.

Policy 1.0 GOVERNANCE COMMITMENTS OF THE BOARD

Policy 1.1. County Commissioners Governance Commitments

Board members are committed to working with each other, other elected officials, staff, and community members in a manner that emphasizes collaboration, courage, respect, preparedness, fiscal responsibility, and communication.

1.1.1. Display Collaboration. The Board shall display collaboration in a concerted effort to reach compromise or consensus. The Board is committed to the following:

- a. Sharing initial perceptions;
- b. Finding common ground and documenting decisions, i.e., an action item record;
- c. Exploring options;
- d. Working together to develop action steps to move forward;
- e. Focusing on the positive aspects of the roles and achievements.

1.1.2. Display Courage. The Board will display courage and is committed to the following:

- a. Acting in the best interest of residents of Benton County;
- b. Committing to goals both individually and collectively;
- c. Pursuing the Board goals with courage and determination;
- d. Being willing to admit when wrong and exhibit the willingness to change;
- e. Being willing to ask if programs or ideas are necessary and fiscally defensible.

1.1.3. Display Respect. The Board is committed to display respect for each other as Board members, the process, the schedules, the agenda, and timelines. The Board is committed to the following:

- a. Being non-judgmental during interactions;
- b. Allowing disagreement among colleagues, staff, and community members;
- c. Respecting the opinions of one another.

1.1.4. Prepare Proactively. The Board will prepare proactively and is committed to the following:

- a. Preparing for Board business, planning, Board discussion time, and work sessions by reading staff reports and supporting materials in advance;
- b. Avoiding surprises with each other, the County Administrator and the County Counsel by raising agenda-related issues in advance with the County Administrator and/or County Counsel.

1.1.5. Communicate. The Board will effectively communicate by committing to the following:

- a. Targeting communication toward the County's strategy, Board goals, budget, and agenda items for the next meeting;
- b. Making communication with each other a priority;
- c. Structuring time for communication with each other, the County Administrator, and the County Counsel;
- d. Avoiding surprises with each other, the County Administrator, and the County Counsel (examples of situations that should be communicated include contacts with the press, taking public positions individually, and taking actions individually that could have an effect on the public, the County or the staff);

- e. Ensuring all Board members' voices are heard;
 - f. Noticing meetings;
 - g. Avoiding negative criticism of other Board members; providing constructive criticism.
- 1.1.6. Public Input.** The Board will actively engage and seek input from community members on matters of public interest and concern in order to make informed decisions.
- 1.1.7. Division of Labor.** The Board will practice the effective division of labor by committing to the following:
- a. Sharing the workload, particularly as related to County representation on various boards and committees;
 - b. Fulfilling separate roles while ensuring cross-checks between these roles;
 - c. Practicing accountability to the Board as a whole and each other individually.
- 1.1.8. Opinions and Votes.** Board members will respect the legitimacy of the opinions and reasoning of other Commissioners when and after making Board decisions. A member of the Board who votes in the minority is free to express dissent but will respect the process and legitimacy of the majority decision.
- 1.1.9. Process and Performance.** The Board will regularly monitor and discuss the Board's process and performance to ensure the continuity of the Board's governance capability through self-evaluation, and continuing education and training. The Board will seek facilitation assistance to conduct the self-evaluation and to improve the governance capability if deemed necessary.

Policy 2.0 BOARD/STAFF RELATIONSHIPS AND EXPECTATIONS

The Board oversees two employees - the County Administrator and County Counsel.

Policy 2.1. County Administrator Delegation

The Board's link to the day-to-day operations of County departments, including elected offices, is the County Administrator. Implementation and subsidiary decision making regarding these tasks is delegated to the County Administrator pursuant to the guidelines, requirements, and constraints set forth herein.

- 2.1.1.** With the exception of legal issues, the County Administrator shall have supervisory and operational control over the day-to-day functions required to carry out the policies and objectives of the Board. A Board member may communicate directly with staff to obtain information to assist in the Board's policy making functions.

When this occurs, other than in casual conversations, the Board member will notify the County Administrator as a courtesy. Significant requests by individual Board members of staff will be directed through the County Administrator.

The County Administrator will make every reasonable effort to accommodate requests for information; but, if in the opinion of the County Administrator, such requests will require an amount of staff time or resources that would be detrimental to other necessities, the County Administrator may ask the full Board for guidance. As a general rule, any request by an individual Board member that may consume more than four (4) hours of staff time will be brought to the full Board for guidance. The Board will avoid giving direction to persons who report directly or indirectly to the County Administrator.

- 2.1.2.** Only decisions of the Board acting as a Board are binding on the County Administrator. Decisions or instructions of individual Board members are not binding on the County Administrator except in instances when the Board has specifically so authorized. However, the responsibility of the County Administrator is to discuss individual Board members' decisions or instructions at the next available opportunity with the full Board to ensure consistency and compliance with Board policies and objectives. The responsibility of the County Administrator, not the individual Board members, is to communicate with the full Board to obtain consensus on decisions, instructions, or requests of individual Board members.
- 2.1.3.** The boundaries between policy and day-to-day operations may, at times, not be clearly delineated and may overlap. The Board may change the latitude of choice given to the County Administrator to accommodate changes in policy or vision. However, the Board will respect the authority given to the County Administrator herein until such time as a modification or reduction in task authority is clearly identified. The Board's delegation remains contingent upon a clear communication channel between the Board and County Administrator. The County Administrator's responsibility is to discuss with the full Board at the next available opportunity any tasks not clearly delineated or which may overlap with policy issues to obtain consensus on such task.
- 2.1.4.** The negotiation of contracts may be handled by either the County Administrator (or designee) or the County Counsel, depending on the nature of the issue, as may be agreed by the County Administrator and the County Counsel or as directed by the Board.

2.1.5. Any deviation from Board policies should be by approval of the Board. All deviations should be communicated to the Board at the next available opportunity by the County Administrator.

Policy 2.2. County Administrator Communication

The County Administrator is responsible for ensuring the work of the Board is informed and supported. The desire of the Board is to delegate the day-to-day functions to the County Administrator while recognizing the quality of County government depends on the partnership and team concept between the Board, County Administrator, County Counsel, and staff.

2.2.1. Accordingly, the County Administrator will:

- a. Inform and seek the guidance of the Board on issues that may have an impact on the policy making functions of the Board;
- b. Make the Board aware of all relevant and changing trends, conditions, public reactions, or events that may affect the assumptions upon which Board policy has been previously based;
- c. Inform the Board of internal and external communications or actions that are, in the County Administrator's judgment, salient and important;
- d. Inform and seek the guidance of the Board on both policy and operational issues that may have an impact on public relations or the public perception regarding how the County is operating;
- e. Routinely inform the Board of operational issues, strategies, objectives and accomplishments. The Board does not desire to dictate these functions, but rather to be informed and provide input on operational functions that may have unintended effects on Board policy or public perception;
- f. In order to support fully informed Board discussions, input, and choices, provide the Board with as many staff and external (including unpopular or politically charged) points of view, issues and a range of options as needed, including fiscal ramifications. The information provided to the Board will be concise and complete in a user-friendly format;
- g. Ensure the Board receives materials timely to allow adequate review;
- h. Communicate with an individual Board member at the earliest opportunity if, in the County Administrator's opinion, the Board member is not in compliance with the Board's own leadership policies and Board/staff relationships and expectations. If this approach is unsuccessful in remedying the situation, the County Administrator will communicate with the Board as a whole;
- i. Foster open communication and strive to create a coordinated approach to the functions of County government.

2.2.2. The Board recognizes the County Administrator's duty of loyalty is to the entire Board rather than individual Commissioners. The balancing of this loyalty requires the County Administrator to exercise discretion as to the sharing of information amongst Board members about the acts of or the opinions and beliefs held by individual Board members.

Policy 2.3. County Administrator Relations with Other Elected Officials

The County Administrator is responsible for ensuring the work of the other Elected Officials (District Attorney and Sheriff) is supported. The County Administrator is responsible for coordinating and working with the other Elected Officials to ensure Board priorities are accomplished while respecting the autonomous nature of the other Elected Officials.

2.3.1. Accordingly, the County Administrator will:

- a. Inform and discuss with the other Elected Officials when taking action that may impact employees in the Elected Officials' respective offices;
- b. Routinely inform the other Elected Officials of Board priorities, policies, mission, and goals and any modifications or shifts in these areas that may impact the functions of the Elected Officials' respective offices;
- c. Inform, discuss, and seek input in preparation of the budget for the other Elected Officials and strive to amicably develop a budget that reflects fiscal integrity, Board priorities, and other Elected Officials priorities to the extent possible;
- d. Work cooperatively with the other Elected Officials and maintain healthy working relationships in carrying out the functions of the County;
- e. Be accessible to the other Elected Officials and foster open communication in order to create a coordinated approach to the functions of County government.

However, as noted, the County Administrator may not exercise control over any matters delegated by state statute to any Elected County Official.

Policy 2.4. County Counsel Delegation

The Board's link to the legality of operations is the County Counsel. Implementation and subsidiary decision making regarding the legal representation of the County is hereby delegated to the County Counsel pursuant to the guidelines, requirements, and constraints set forth herein. The County Counsel's Office is subject to the same personnel policies and procedures as all other County departments.

2.4.1. The County Counsel shall have supervisory and operational control over the legal representation of the County. The County Counsel shall provide legal services to the Board, as well as County Elected Officials (unless a conflict of interest exists between the Board and the elected official), County departments, and County boards. The County Counsel shall oversee the legal representation of the County on all legal matters, including the preparation, prosecution, and defense of lawsuits; the settlement of all outstanding claims; and the general representation of County government.

2.4.2. The negotiation of contracts may be handled by either the County Administrator (or designee) or the County Counsel, depending on the nature of the issue, as may be agreed upon by the County Administrator and the County Counsel or as directed by the Board.

2.4.3. Only decisions of the Board acting as a Board are binding on the County Counsel. Decisions or instructions of individual Board members are not binding on the County Counsel except in instances when the Board has specifically authorized such exercise

of power. However, the responsibility of the County Counsel is to discuss individual Board members' decisions or instructions at the next available opportunity with the full Board to ensure consistency and compliance with Board policies and objectives. The responsibility of the County Counsel, not the individual Board members, is to communicate with the full Board to obtain consensus on decisions, instructions, or requests of individual Board members.

- 2.4.4.** The boundaries between policy and day-to-day legal operations may, at times, not be clearly delineated and may overlap. The Board may change the latitude of choice given to the County Counsel to accommodate changes in policy or vision.

However, the Board will respect the authority given to the County Counsel herein until such time as a modification or reduction in task authority is clearly identified. The Board's delegation remains contingent upon a clear communication channel between the Board and County Counsel. The County Counsel's responsibility is to discuss with the full Board at the next available opportunity any tasks not clearly delineated or which may overlap with policy issues to obtain consensus on such task.

- 2.4.5.** Any deviation from Board policies should be by approval of the Board. All deviations should be communicated to the Board by the County Counsel at the next available opportunity.

Policy 2.5. County Counsel Communication

The County Counsel is responsible for ensuring the Board is informed and supported in all legal matters. The desire of the Board is to delegate the legal representation to the County Counsel while recognizing the quality of County government depends upon the partnership and team concept between the Board, County Administrator, County Counsel, and County staff.

- 2.5.1.** Accordingly, the County Counsel will:

- a. Inform and seek the guidance of the Board on all significant legal issues that may expose the County to detrimental liability;
- b. Educate the Board on legal issues and liabilities in performing Board duties;
- c. Make the Board aware of all threatened or possible claims of action, all applicable changes in the law, or any other event that may expose the County to liability or otherwise affect the effective implementation of Board policies, missions, and goals;
- d. Inform the Board of internal and external communications or actions that, in the County Counsel's judgment, are salient and important;
- e. Inform and seek the guidance of the Board on legal issues and actions that may have an impact on public relations or the public perception regarding how the County is operating;
- f. Routinely inform and seek the guidance of the Board on day-to-day negotiations, prosecution, or defense of issues that may have a detrimental impact on public relations or the public perception regarding how the County is operating;
- g. Routinely inform the Board about legal issues and status of ongoing projects. The Board does not desire to dictate these functions, but rather to be informed and provide input on legal issues that may have unintended effects on Board policy or public perception;

- h. Provide the Board with as many staff and external points of view, issues and a range of options as needed for fully informed Board decisions. The information provided to the Board will be concise and complete in a user-friendly format;
- i. Ensure that the Board receives materials on a timely basis to allow for adequate review;
- j. Communicate individually with Board members but strive to deal with the Board as a whole;
- k. When practical, obtain all Board members' input on applicable decision-making items;
- l. Communicate with an individual Board member at the earliest opportunity if, in the County Counsel's opinion, the Board member is not in compliance with the Board's own leadership policies and Board/staff relationships and expectations. If this approach is unsuccessful in remedying the situation, the County Counsel will communicate with the Board as a whole;
- m. Foster open communication and strive to create a coordinated approach to the representation of County government.

2.5.2. The Board recognizes that the County Counsel's duty of loyalty is to the entire Board rather than individual Commissioners. The balancing of this loyalty requires the County Counsel to exercise discretion as to the sharing of information amongst Board members about the acts of or the opinions and beliefs held by individual Board members.

Policy 2.6. County Counsel Relations with Other Elected Officials

The County Counsel has been authorized by the Board to support the other Elected Officials (District Attorney and Sheriff) in legal matters.

2.6.1. Accordingly, the County Counsel will:

- a. Make the other Elected Officials aware of all threatened or possible claims of action, all applicable changes in the law, or any other event that may expose an Elected Official to liability or otherwise affect the functions of an Elected Official's respective office;
- b. Routinely inform and seek the guidance of the other Elected Officials on negotiations, prosecution, or defense of issues that may have an impact on the Elected Officials' respective offices;
- c. Zealously represent the other Elected Officials' best interests;
- d. Inform and discuss with the other Elected Officials representation that may conflict with Board priorities and ensure the other Elected Officials are properly represented if such conflict would preclude effective representation by the County Counsel's Office;
- e. Work cooperatively with the other Elected Officials and maintain healthy working relationships in carrying out the legal representation of the County so the Elected Officials can continue to utilize in-house representation for cost savings;
- f. Be accessible to the other Elected Officials and foster open communication in order to create a coordinated approach to the representation of County government.

However, as noted, the County Counsel may not exercise control over any matters delegated by state statute to any elected County official.

Policy 3.0 EXECUTIVE LIMITATIONS

Policy 3.1. County Administrator Limitations

The County Administrator should not cause or allow any practice, activity, decision, or organizational circumstance that is unlawful, imprudent, or in violation of Board policies, directives, or commonly accepted business and professional ethics.

3.1.1. Staff Treatment. With respect to staff, the County Administrator will:

- a. Prevent conditions, procedures or decisions that are discriminatory, disrespectful, unfair, unsafe, undignified, disorganized or unclear, unnecessarily intrusive, or that fail to provide appropriate confidentiality and privacy;
- b. Operate with an up-to-date employee handbook that assists in clarifying day-to-day operations and will operate with written personnel rules/employee handbook that clarify rules for staff, provide for a fair and effective handling of grievances, and protect against wrongful conditions;
- c. Be accessible to staff;
- d. Promote clear communication with all levels of the organization when policies or procedures change;
- e. Promote an organizational culture of trust;
- f. Maintain a rapport and professional relationships with department directors and Elected Officials;
- g. Operate with an established organization chart and act inside the appropriate chain of command.

3.1.2. Fiscal Health. With respect to fiscal health, the County Administrator will not:

- a. Jeopardize the fiscal integrity of County government;
- b. Cause or allow the development of fiscal jeopardy or loss of fiscal integrity in accordance with Board objectives and policies;
- c. Allow the County's assets to be unprotected, inadequately maintained, or unnecessarily risked;
- d. Expend more funds than are available or allow cash to drop below the amount needed to settle payroll and debts in a timely manner;
- e. Allow the General Fund and other fund balances to decline below percentages and reserves as established by the Board in the Board's Reserve Policy;
- f. Engage in any purchases wherein normally prudent protection has not been given against conflict of interest or may not engage in purchasing practices in violation of state law or County purchasing procedures;
- g. Use any fund for a purpose other than for which the fund was established;
- h. Fail to keep and maintain financial policies and procedures;
- i. Fail to report out-of-the-ordinary fiscal events to the Board in a timely manner;
- j. Relinquish responsibility or accountability for maintaining fiscal health of the organization.

3.1.3. Budget. In accordance with the Fiscal Health requirements set forth herein, the County Administrator, operating as the Budget Officer, will not allow budgeting that:

- a. Deviates from statutory requirements;

- b. Deviates materially from Board priorities related to allocation among competing budgetary needs;
- c. Contains inadequate information to enable credible projection of revenues and expenses;
- d. Plans the expenditure in any fiscal year of more funds than are conservatively projected to be received in that period, or which are otherwise available;
- e. Reduces fund balances or reserves in any fund to a level below that established by the Board as outlined in the County's Reserve Policy;
- f. Fails to maintain a budget contingency plan capable of responding to significant shortfalls within the County's budget;
- g. Fails to provide for an annual audit that adequately protects the County's fiscal assets;
- h. Fails to contain as many staff and external points of view (including unpopular or politically charged) as needed for fully informed Board choices, decisions, or input;
- i. Fails to be educational and informative to the staff and community members of Benton County;
- j. Fails to be derived from multi-year plans and projections;
- k. Omits credible projection of revenues and expenses, separation of capital and operational items, cash flow projections, and disclosure of planning assumptions;
- l. Results in new positions or material increases in salaries and benefits without specific approval of the Board. The County Administrator's responsibility is to communicate with the Board on what constitutes material increases;
- m. Fails to overlook opportunities to secure funding sources outside the County;
- n. Fails to develop a long-term plan for projecting ongoing operating, maintenance, and replacement expenses for existing and proposed capital improvements.

3.1.4. Employee Compensation and Benefits. With respect to employment, compensation, and benefits to employees, consultants, contract workers, and volunteers, the County Administrator will not:

- a. Cause or allow jeopardy to the County's public image or allow discrimination based on race, sex, age, marital status, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, color, veteran status, political affiliation, gender identity, marital status, genetic information, or disability;
- b. Fail to seek Board guidance and direction on material changes to compensation and benefit structures and will not allow the County to be without acceptable compensation and benefit guidelines;
- c. Fail to ensure compensation policies are consistent, fair, incorporate standard business practices, and promote the hiring and retention of highly qualified personnel;
- d. Change compensation and benefits of the County Administrator;
- e. Promise or imply permanent or guaranteed employment.

3.1.5. Capital Improvement Programs. With respect to planning for and reporting on capital equipment and improvement programs, the County Administrator will not:

- a. Jeopardize the programmatic or fiscal integrity of the County;

- b. Allow the development of a capital improvement program which significantly deviates from the Board’s stated priorities;
- c. Plan to use more funds than are projected to be available in any fiscal period for expenditures;
- d. Fail to project ongoing operating, maintenance, and replacement expenses in making such determination;
- e. Fail to provide the Board detailed costs, benefits, budgets, and progress of each capital improvement program to allow accurate assessment both prior to and during construction;
- f. Fail to ensure a maintenance schedule is developed and followed as fiscally practicable.

3.1.6. All Other County Programs. With respect to planning for and reporting on all County programs, the County Administrator will not:

- a. Jeopardize or otherwise adversely impact the policies, objectives and strategies of the Board;
- b. Allow the development of a program that deviates materially from the Board’s stated priorities;
- c. Fail to project initial and ongoing costs of such programs;
- d. Fail to provide the Board detailed costs and benefits of each program to allow accurate assessment both prior to and during implementation;
- e. Fail to seek guidance and policy direction from the Board regarding significant program modifications or transfer to other organizations.

3.1.7. Asset Protection. With respect to the County’s assets, the County Administrator will not:

- a. Allow the County’s assets to be unprotected, inadequately maintained, abused, or unnecessarily risked;
- b. Fail to have in place adequate property and liability insurance for County operations;
- c. Subject facilities and equipment to improper wear and tear or insufficient maintenance;
- d. Allow internal control standards and disbursement of funds controls to be less than those necessary to satisfy generally accepted government accounting/auditing standards;
- e. Fail to properly and proactively maintain building and equipment and will not lack safeguards against theft, loss, or damage of property;
- f. Unnecessarily expose County government, the Board, or staff to claims of liability.

3.1.8. Emergency Plans. With respect to emergency planning, the County Administrator will work with the Sheriff’s Office and Emergency Management to:

- a. Have in place adequate plans to prevent and/or respond to emergencies and/or disasters;
- b. Have a functional and actionable emergency operations plan and a continuity of business operations plan for the County;

- c. Take appropriate action immediately to ensure the safety of the public and public assets, including authorizing specific actions by County staff;
- d. Ensure emergency plans are operational through training of appropriate personnel.

3.1.9. Public Treatment. With respect to the public, the County Administrator will:

- a. Ensure high standards regarding the treatment of community members and guests;
- b. Ensure the public receives the best possible services and facilities given available resources;
- c. Ensure attention is paid to detail and quality service that demonstrates a high level of professionalism is provided.

3.1.10 Public Information. With respect to information, the County Administrator will provide for and manage the dissemination of County information to further transparency and maintain a positive image.

3.1.11 Jurisdictional Relationships. With respect to external relationships, the County Administrator will develop strong connections and cooperative relationships with local jurisdictions including but not limited to other appointed and Elected Officials.

3.1.12 Efficient Operations. With respect to internal operating procedures, the County Administrator will ensure the County has internal procedures for the well-being of the County to promote effective and efficient County operations. With respect to efficient operations, the County Administrator will:

- d. Ensure expectations are clear and employees are held accountable in a consistent and equitable manner;
- e. Ensure poor performance is addressed in a swift, consistent, and respectful manner;
- f. Seek input from employees, at all levels as appropriate, and incorporate applicable feedback into decision making.

3.1.13 Education. With respect to education, the County Administrator will make the Board, County Elected Officials, and County staff aware of changes or pending changes to the law that may adversely impact the policies, visions, and functions of County government.

3.1.14 Professional Training. With respect to training, the County Administrator will maintain and upgrade the professional knowledge, skills and development of staff to effectively carry out the expected duties.

3.1.15 Absence from the County. The County Administrator will not leave the County without ensuring adequate coverage by the Assistant County Administrator or another member(s) of the County management team who can perform the tasks of County Administrator while absent.

3.1.16 Board Goals and Objectives. At the direction of the Board, the County Administrator will work with the Board to establish and annually update the Board's goals and objectives.

Policy 3.2. County Counsel Limitations

The County Counsel should not cause or knowingly allow any practice, activity, decision, or organizational circumstance that is unlawful or may expose the County to unwarranted liability.

3.2.1. Staff Treatment. With respect to staff, the County Counsel will:

- a. Reduce the County’s legal exposure from conditions, procedures, or decisions that are discriminatory, disrespectful, unfair, unsafe, undignified, disorganized or unclear, unnecessarily intrusive, or that fail to provide appropriate confidentiality;
- b. Be accessible to staff.

3.2.2. Employee Compensation, Benefits, and Relations. With respect to employment, compensation, and benefits to employees, consultants, contract workers and volunteers, the County Counsel will reduce the County’s legal exposure from discrimination based on race, sex, age, marital status, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, color, veteran status, political affiliation, gender identity, marital status, genetic information, or disability.

3.2.3. Representation. With respect to representing the County in litigation, negotiations, and all other matters, the County Counsel will:

- a. Zealously represent the County’s best interests;
- b. Avoid representing the County in any situation that presents a conflict of interest;
- c. Foster the goals and objectives of the Board;
- d. Maintain a professional demeanor both internally and externally;
- e. Take appropriate and timely action to reduce liability to the County;
- f. Assure the County is properly represented in all legal proceedings and that all legal documents are approved for form and legality;
- g. Provide enough detail on the costs and benefits of each legal matter to allow the Board to accurately assess the proposed matter both prior to and during implementation.

3.2.4. Education. With respect to education, the County Counsel will make the Board, County Elected Officials, and County staff aware of changes or pending changes to the law that may adversely impact the policies, visions, and functions of County government.

3.2.5. Availability. With respect to availability, the County Counsel will provide adequate staff coverage for weekly Board meetings, applicable staff meetings, staff inquiries, and other needed legal services.

3.2.6. Outside Counsel. With respect to outside representation, the County Counsel will:

- a. Obtain necessary outside counsel to adequately protect the County’s interest in a cost-effective manner;
- b. Ensure services from outside counsel are competent, appropriate, and within approved budgets.

3.2.7. Public Treatment. With respect to the public, the County Counsel will:

- a. Ensure high standards regarding the treatment of community members;

- b. Ensure a high level of professional conduct;
- c. Ensure professionalism among County Counsel's Office staff.

3.2.8. Professional Training. With respect to training, the County Counsel will maintain and upgrade the professional knowledge, skills, and development of staff to effectively represent the County.

3.2.9. Absence from the County. The County Counsel will not leave the County without ensuring adequate coverage by another member(s) of the County Counsel's Office who can perform the tasks of County Counsel while absent.

Policy 4.0 STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Policy 4.1. Strategic Direction

- 4.1.1. Goals and Objectives.** The Board will provide leadership in order to establish a strategic, long-term direction for the organization. In that regard, the Board will establish goals and objectives that provide guidance and direction to the County Administrator for implementation organization wide on an annual basis.
- 4.1.2. Values.** The County will support, foster, and encourage the following values from the Board and staff:
- a. Honesty and integrity – Exhibit professional conduct to build and preserve the public trust.
 - b. Respect – Consistently demonstrate courtesy, understanding and concern for community members, colleagues, and visitors.
 - c. Dedication to public service – Understand the purpose is to serve the needs of the public.
 - d. Open and transparent government – Ensure the public is well informed, and welcome public involvement.
 - e. Responsible stewardship of public resources – Demonstrate the utmost care and competence in managing the financial and property resources of the County.
 - f. Accountability – Be dedicated through duty and action to community members, inspiring confidence in County government.

Policy 4.2. Chair’s Responsibility

The responsibility of the Chair is to maintain procedural integrity of Board meetings. The Chair shall also represent the Board as delegated by the full Board or when necessary to deal with exigent circumstances.

- 4.2.1.** The Chair will ensure the conduct of the Board will be held openly, orderly, efficiently, and with dignity to facilitate an orderly meeting. The Chair shall keep the discussion content consistent with the agenda and allocated time to the extent reasonably possible.
- 4.2.2.** The Chair will work cooperatively with the County Administrator to prepare the agenda for full Board meetings. The County Administrator will inform and seek the guidance of the full Board on items to be placed on the agenda that may be of a politically sensitive nature.
- 4.2.3.** The Chair will act on behalf of the full Board when so delegated by the Board or when absolutely necessary to protect the County in situations requiring immediate action when full Board participation cannot be obtained. The responsibility of the Chair, or through the County Administrator, is to communicate and obtain guidance from the full Board at the earliest opportunity when such actions are taken. Except as set forth in this section, the Chair will obtain all Board members’ input on applicable decision-making items. The Chair represents the Board only when so delegated such authority by the full Board.

- 4.2.4.** The Chair is responsible for responding to correspondence addressed to the full Board.
- 4.2.5.** The Chair will preside over meetings and sign documents on behalf of the Board of County Commissioners.
- 4.2.6.** The Chair will seek to obtain consensus among Board members on significant discussion issues in Board meetings.
- 4.2.7.** The Chair will initiate the annual performance evaluation process for the County Administrator and the County Counsel.
- 4.2.8.** The Chair will be responsible to be available to the County Administrator and the County Counsel for consulting as necessary. Individual Board members may meet with the County Administrator as necessary.

Policy 5.0 CODE OF CONDUCT AND ETHICS

Policy 5.1. Code of Conduct and Ethics

5.1.1. The Board shall operate in an ethical and legal manner and is committed to the following:

- a. Promoting decisions that benefit the public interest;
- b. Promoting public confidence in County government;
- c. Performing the duties of the Board diligently and promptly;
- d. Maintaining a positive image;
- e. Providing the best service or product at the lowest cost without sacrificing quality and fiscal responsibility;
- f. Maintaining a respectful attitude toward employees, other public officials, colleagues, and the public;
- g. Effectively and efficiently working with government agencies and organizations to further the interests of the County;
- h. Accepting the responsibility that the mission is that of a servant to the public;
- i. Advocating for the best interests of the County and community members at the local, regional, state, and national levels;
- j. Recognizing and avoiding or disclosing conflicts of interest;
- k. Recognizing and avoiding situations that might create an appearance of impropriety;
- l. Acting with integrity.

5.1.2. Statutory Responsibilities. Members of the Board will act in accordance with Oregon Revised Statutes in relation to the Board’s responsibilities and authorities. The Board will not:

- a. Perform any statutorily precluded act;
- b. Accept any statutorily precluded gift ([ORS 244.025](#)).

5.1.3. External Communication Protocols. The appropriate communication protocol for engagement of another local government or public entity on official business involving the County is acknowledged as follows:

- a. County Elected Official to external Elected Official;
- b. County Administrator or Assistant County Administrator to external appointed Agency Head (City/County Administrator, Superintendent, etc.);
- c. County Counsel to external Agency Attorney;
- d. County staff to external staff.

There are, however, recognized exceptions to this protocol. Board members will maintain appropriate channels of communication by using best judgment to avoid any appearance of impropriety or undue influence and to keep one another and the County Administrator informed when such contacts do occur.

5.1.4. Boards and Commissions. The Board believes community member involvement in County government is a positive and valuable resource to the Board as the governing body of Benton County. Consequently, the Board appoints various boards, commissions, and committees to serve in an advisory capacity, to fulfill functions and

duties established by the Board, and to undertake specific assignments as directed by the Board. Such appointments shall be made in accordance with Benton County Policy A113, Volunteer Policy, which may be amended from time to time.

5.1.5. Compliance. Compliance with all policies contained herein shall be reviewed by the Board on an annual basis, or more frequently, if necessary.

STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF LEADERSHIP POLICIES AND PRACTICES

I, _____, hereby acknowledge I have read, understand, and agree to abide by the policies and practices set forth in Benton County Leadership Policies and Practices [Operational Agreements of the Board of Commissioners, County Administrator, and County Counsel], revised January 14, 2025. I understand it is my responsibility to familiarize myself with these policies.

By signing this statement, I acknowledge I am aware of the expectations outlined in these policies and practices and that I will adhere to them in the course of my activities with Benton County.

Signature _____

Date _____

Printed Name _____

Position/Title _____