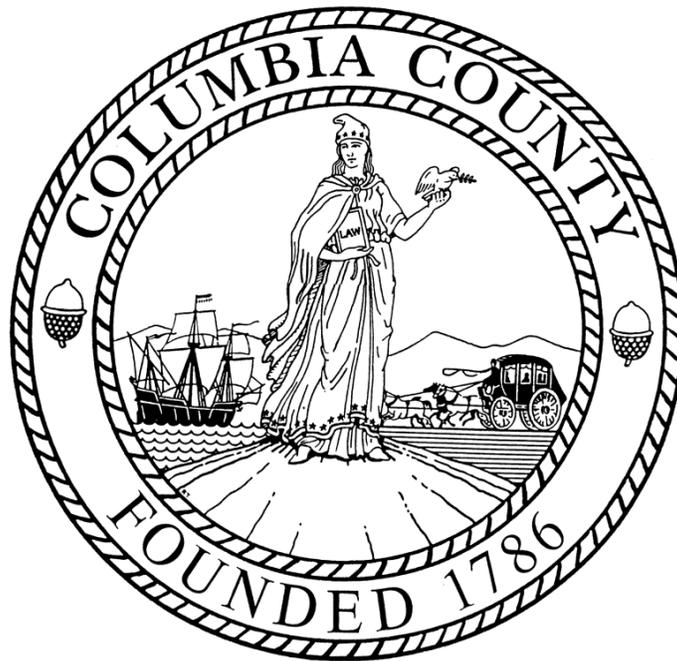


# BETTER GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY



## THE CASE FOR A COUNTY MANAGER

PREPARED BY THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT  
COUNTY MANAGER INITIATIVE SUBCOMMITTEE

*PRESENTED TO THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE ON JUNE 21<sup>ST</sup>, 2011*

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## **THE CASE FOR A COUNTY MANAGER**

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**COLUMBIA COUNTY  
COUNTY GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE  
COUNTY MANAGER INITIATIVE SUBCOMMITTEE**

Member	Position	Town/Affiliation
Roy Brown (R)	Chairman – Board of Supervisors	Germantown
Leo Pulcher (R)	Board of Supervisors	Stockport
Valerie Bertram (R)	Board of Supervisors	Stuyvesant
Edward Nabozny (I)	Board of Supervisors	Greenport
Arthur Bassin (D)	Board of Supervisors	Ancram
Anthony Cashen	Community Member	Austerlitz
Ed Herrington	Community Member	Hillsdale
George Rodenhausen	Community Member	Claverack
Robert Fitzsimmons	County Attorney	Columbia County
John M. Rutkey, Jr.	County HR Director	Columbia County

## PREFACE

Columbia County was enacted via an act of the New York State Legislature on April 4, 1786. On that date, the first-ever meeting of the Columbia County Board of Supervisors was convened. The Board consisted of seven members, one moderator, and one clerk. The Board was in charge of the “strong box of the treasury”, was required to meet “at the County town annually on the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday in October” and other times they deemed appropriate to conduct their business, and held the authority to appoint the County Treasurer<sup>1</sup>. Ninety years later, in 1877, the County Board of Supervisors had evolved to a twenty-three member board with one Clerk. In that year, the County collected \$161,000 in taxes, made \$27,000 from the sale of bonds, distributed \$31,000 in State School Funding, paid \$87,000 in taxes to the State Treasury, and spent \$13,000 to support the poor<sup>2</sup>.

One-hundred-thirty-four years later, the twenty-three member Board of Supervisors continues to oversee the legislative and administrative components of Columbia County government. In 2011, the Board of Supervisors oversees a \$150 million budget and twenty-eight major departments. Federal and State mandates, ever increasing, are implemented and revised annually, and accounting procedures and reimbursement criteria are complex and vary greatly from department to department. A system of governance via a Board of Supervisors, still with its strengths, faces tremendous challenges managing present-day complexities via a part-time controlling body.

In response to these challenges, and at a time of economic hardship, the County Manager Initiative Subcommittee was formed from the County Government Committee and tasked with identifying ways in which focused professional management could improve efficiency in providing County services, reduce costs and taxes, and promote the County-wide interests of its citizens. The first meeting of the subcommittee convened on September 13, 2010. Since that time, the subcommittee has met fourteen times, solicited the thoughts of all members of the Board of Supervisors and all Department Heads through surveys, met and/or consulted with other NYS county board members and county managers/executives, sought input from members of academia who specialize in NYS and county governance, and conducted analysis of other NYS counties relative to how they have restructured their approach to governance to meet present-day challenges.

Resulting from these efforts, the County Manager Initiative Subcommittee respectfully submits for consideration its “Case for a County Manager”.

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1. *History of Columbia County, New York* (Philadelphia: Everts and Ensign, 1878) p. 67  
2. *History of Columbia County, New York* (Philadelphia: Everts and Ensign, 1878) p. 143

## THE CASE FOR A COUNTY MANAGER

**THE OPPORTUNITY:** Columbia County government has become big and complex. The County has a \$150 million budget, employs about 1,000 people, supports 300 retirees, is organized into twenty-eight operating departments, and works with four unions. And we try to manage this enterprise with twenty-three part-time town supervisors, who perform legislative and management duties through nine committees which oversee the County's twenty-eight department heads. *While all county governments across the state face the same challenges we face, only nine still use part-time town supervisors without a full time professional manager, administrator or elected executive to manage their counties.* The other forty-eight counties outside of NYC have either an elected full time county executive, or have appointed professional administrators or managers responsible for day-to-day management of county operations, reporting to the Board or Legislature.

**THE RECOMMENDATION:** The County Manager Subcommittee believes establishing and filling a County Manager position in 2011 is the fastest and least disruptive way to dramatically improve the day-to-day management of Columbia County government, and by doing that, to secure the efficiencies and cost savings which will benefit the residents and taxpayers of the County. Part-time Town Supervisors, with priorities divided between their regular day jobs, Town business and the County's needs, do not have the time to manage the complex programs, processes and priorities facing the County. The result of this situation is decisions take too long to make, and when made, take too long to implement, costing the County millions of dollars in lost opportunities. *When we compared Columbia County to the 20 counties closest to us in population, we found we have the highest per capita property tax levy of the group.*

**THE COUNTY MANAGER JOB DESCRIPTION:** Exhibit 1 is the proposed County Manager job description. As described in Exhibit 1, the County Manager will be the chief operating officer of the county, reporting to the Board of Supervisors. The County Manager will have responsibilities for the day-to-day operations of Government. All appointed Department Heads will report to the County Manager. Elected County officials will be required to work with the County Manger to develop their annual budgets, but otherwise will continue to report directly to their home committees.

**THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS JOB DESCRIPTION:** Exhibit 2 outlines the current and proposed responsibilities and duties of the Board of Supervisors. With a County Manager in place, the basic responsibilities and duties of the Board of Supervisors will not change, but the amount of time the Board of Supervisors' member spends on routine administration will decrease, and the amount of time spent on more complex policy and strategy matters will increase.

**RELATIONSHIP WITH DEPARTMENT HEADS:** Exhibit 3 discusses the relationship between the County Manager and appointed and elected Department Heads, and how Department Head roles will be influenced by the addition of the County Manager.

**RESULTS OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AND DEPARTMENT HEAD SURVEYS:** Exhibits 4 and 5 summarize the results of the Supervisor and Department Head surveys. On balance, the department heads recognize the inefficiencies of the current management system and look forward to having a full time professional manager running county government on a day-to-day basis. About 50% of the supervisors' responding to the survey indicated support for the county manager position, while 25% appear opposed and 25% are still uncertain.

**ISSUES RAISED BY THE SURVEYS:** Exhibit 6 identifies the major issues raised by the surveys, and responds to them.

**MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS THE COUNTY MANAGER WILL CORRECT:** Exhibit 7 identifies the specific management problems raised by the surveys which the County Manager will be better able to manage efficiently for the Board.

**COST REDUCTION OPPORTUNITIES:** Exhibit 8 outlines about \$13.75 million of cost savings that a County Manager will be able to help secure over a five year period by improving the speed and discipline of the County's management process, and discusses the costs associated with lost or delayed opportunities due to the inability to develop long term plans and implement/complete those plans if developed.

**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT THE COUNTY MANAGER RECOMMENDATION:** Exhibit 9 summarizes the answers to the most frequently asked questions about why we are recommending moving to a County Manager.

## **EXHIBIT 1: COUNTY MANAGER JOB DESCRIPTION**

**DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF THE CLASS:** The County Manager shall be the chief operating officer of the County of Columbia and, as such, shall be responsible for the overall management of County Government, and shall provide and coordinate staff services to the Board of Supervisors, Chairman of the Board, and Board Committees. The County Manager shall be appointed by the Columbia County Board of Supervisors and shall serve at the pleasure of the Board. The County Manager shall report directly to the Chairman of the Columbia County Board of Supervisors and shall be subject to his/her supervision, direction, and control as set forth herein.

**SPECIFIC POWERS AND DUTIES:** Without curtailing, diminishing or transferring the powers provided by law of any elected official or appointed County official, the County Manager shall perform all duties now and hereafter conferred or imposed upon the office by law and directed by the Board of Supervisors and shall have all the powers and perform all the duties necessarily implied or incidental thereto.

### ***Policy and Strategic Planning:***

- Assure compliance with all Local Laws, legalizing acts, ordinances, and resolutions of the Board;
- Attend meetings of the Board and its' committees;
- Serve as an advisor to the Board in the development of policies and procedures for their consideration. Develop and implement necessary management policies as may be required to carry-out the policies established by the Board;
- Undertake studies and submit to the Board reports and recommendations regarding governmental operations as he/she deems appropriate or as the Board may request;
- Maintain liaison and represent the Board in contacts with political subdivisions and State and Federal officials and agencies.

### ***Financial Management & Budgeting:***

- Develop the annual County budget within the fiscal guidelines established by the Board, and present the budget annually at the public hearing. Develop and recommend a budget program that includes long-range capital budgeting and annual operating capital budgets under the direction of the Board;
- Institute the appropriate budgetary controls in order to promote effective, efficient and economical management of appropriated funds;
- Prepare grant requests and recommend the disposition of each to the Board;
- In conjunction with the County Controller/Auditor, review all claims, accounts and demands which are made County charges by law and which otherwise would be audited by the Board;
- Execute any contract for goods or services subject to review and approval of the County Attorney's office "as to form", and within the amounts authorized by the Board;
- Transfer funds within the budget within all object codes, as needed, subject to the amounts and policies as set by the Board.

***Departmental Management & Supervision:***

- Exercise supervision and control of all County departments and agencies except as otherwise required by law. All department heads and agency heads, except elected department heads and officials, shall be responsible to and report to the County Manager;
- Approve the organization and staffing within each department, agency or operation subject to his/her direct management control, and approve other temporary assignments within a department, agency, or operation or from one department, agency, or operation to another;
- Develop and carry-out a professional department head performance evaluation process, excluding elected department heads, and recommend salary increases of department heads to the Board in accordance with County policy and applicable statutes;
- Coordinate the activities of County department heads and the management of all units of County government;
- Manage supporting services and facilities for the various units of County government, including the supervision of central printing and purchasing.

***Personnel Management & Labor Relations:***

- Appoint such assistants within his/her office as may be authorized by the Board;
- Possess the authority to lay off, suspend, or remove all persons employed in all County departments, agencies, offices and operations (except where law specifically directs that some other appointing official shall lay off, suspend or remove) in accordance with the Civil Service Law of the State of New York and such other laws , rules, regulations and collective bargaining agreements as may apply;
- In conjunction with the Human Resources Director, recommend for appointment by the Board, the heads of all County departments, not administered by an elected official;
- Participate with the County Negotiations Team in the conduct of collective bargaining negotiations with organized employee organizations.

**FULL PERFORMANCE KNOWLEDGE. SKILLS AND ABILITIES:** Knowledge of the principles and practices of public administration; Knowledge of government budgeting and accounting; Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with department heads, public officials, civic leaders, and the general public; Ability to conduct complex studies and to formulate substantive recommendations relative to County policies and priorities; Ability to supervise the work of professional staff and evaluate said staff against performance goals and benchmarks; Advanced proficiency level with internet, email, and common office applications, such as Microsoft Excel, Access, Word, and PowerPoint.

**MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:**

- A. Possess a Masters degree or professional degree from an accredited college or university, AND have ten (10) years of full-time management experience in a business, educational, or governmental enterprise, OR
- B. Possess a Bachelors degree from an accredited college or university AND have twelve (12) years of full-time management experience in a business, educational or governmental enterprise, OR
- C. Possess an equivalent combination of education and experience as listed in (A) and (B) above.

**SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:**

- A. The County Manager is to hold no other public, private, or political office.
- B. The County Manager need not be a resident of Columbia County at the time of appointment, but shall become so as soon practical following appointment but not to exceed (180) days, and shall remain a resident throughout the term of office. Failure to become a resident or remain a resident shall be cause for termination by the Board without other or further notice and without benefit of the removal provisions of the New York State Civil Service Law.
- C. The County Manager must have a valid NYS Driver License at the time of appointment and maintain a valid NYS Driver License throughout the term of office.

## **EXHIBIT 2: ROLE OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

### **Currently, Without a County Manager:**

**1. BOARD OF SUPERVISORS' RESPONSIBILITIES:** To pass laws and resolutions which provide for the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Columbia County, and approve recommendations of the County's operating departments; adopt the annual County budget.

**2. HOME COMMITTEE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM:** Through the Board of Supervisors' committee system: a) review and recommend to the full Board of Supervisors for adoption, resolutions related to policies, procedures, organization, staffing and spending requested by the County's departments, b) with input and assistance from the County Attorney's office, develop and propose to the full Board of Supervisors laws which will provide for the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the County, c) oversee and supervise the County departments which deliver and provide services to the County's citizens, d) hire, fire, promote and demote department heads;

**3. CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD'S ROLE:** A part-time role requiring "full-time" devotion. Appoints individual supervisors to committees and sub-committees; Oversees the management of day-to-day County government operations; Participates in union contract negotiations; Coordinates new projects and initiatives.

**4. INDIVIDUAL SUPERVISOR'S ROLE:** As individual supervisors, serve as members and or chairs of Board of Supervisors' committees and sub committees as assigned by the Chair of the Board of Supervisors;

**5. COMMITTEE STRUCTURE: Standing Committees** -- Finance, Budget & Salary, Public Works, Human Services, Health & Medical Services, Public Safety, County Government; Economic Development & Planning; Negotiations. **Special Committees** - MIS Subcommittee, DSS Space, County Manager, Insurance.

### **Proposed, With a County Manager:**

**1. BOARD OF SUPERVISORS RESPONSIBILITIES:** Same as above, but with more focus on the legislative tasks associated with these responsibilities and less time devoted to the administrative components.

**2. COUNTY MANAGER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM:** Through the Board of Supervisors' committee system: a) review and recommend to the full Board of Supervisors for adoption, resolutions related to policies, procedures, staffing and spending requested by the County's departments **which exceed the authority delegated to the County Manager,** b) with input and assistance from **the County Manager** and the County Attorney's office develop and propose to the full Board of Supervisors laws which will provide for the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the County, c) oversee and supervise the County departments which deliver and provide services to the County's citizens **through participation in the development of the annual department budget, and through quarterly departmental budget and**

**operations reviews conducted by the County Manager and the Department Head, d) review and approve recommendations of the County Manager** to hire, fire, promote or demote Department Heads; **e) provide an annual performance appraisal of the County Manager**

**3. CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD'S ROLE:** Will continue to appoint members of the Board to committees and subcommittees and will remain involved with all issues but the degree of commitment required will be significantly reduced as the County Manager will have primary responsibility to provide proactive professional management of day-to-day County government operations, reporting directly to the Chairman of the Board. With the time that becomes available, the Chairman will focus on strategic issues and needs of the County, as well as meet with State Legislators and officials on a quarterly basis. Additionally, the Chairman will proactively meet with community members to build relationships and educate citizens on matters concerning county government initiatives.

**4. INDIVIDUAL SUPERVISOR'S ROLE:** No Significant Change. However, Board of Supervisors members will be encouraged to develop a professional working relationship with the County Manager who, in many instances, will serve as a liaison between the Board and the County's departments.

**5. COMMITTEE STRUCTURE:** Same standing and special structure as today, with the addition of a handful of "strategic development" or "critical issues" committees which can provide focus, continuity and attention to issues the Board of Supervisors identify as priorities. Such issues and priorities might include:

- **Columbia County Jobs Task Force** - to focus on attracting and expanding businesses and jobs in the County.
- **Town and County Cooperation & Coordination Group** - explore consolidation between towns and County, and among towns.
- **County Comprehensive Planning Committee** -- to define what we want the County to look like in 10 years, and what do we have to get there.
- **County Transportation Plan Implementation**
- **Moon Study Implementation**

In addition, the County Manager will attend all Committee meetings on behalf of the Department Head for all routine business needs and approval requests. For more complex departmental issues, the Department Head would also attend the Committee meeting. At any time, the Committee could direct the presence of the Department Head at a regularly-scheduled or special committee meeting.

## **Expected Management Benefits of a County Manager:**

1. Timelier, more accurate, and standardized financial & operational information flow to the Board of Supervisors.
2. More timely and informed decisions by the Board of Supervisors.
3. More frequent and more rigorous oversight of department operations and Department Head implementation of Board of Supervisors' priorities - things will get done faster.
4. Support and supervision of Department Heads on a consistent basis for professional leadership, mentoring, and guidance which will empower the Department Heads to meet standards and goals for their departments as set forth by the Board of Supervisors and executed thru the County Manager.
5. Continuity and stability of leadership and management, as the County Manager is not subject to election every two or four years as are Town Supervisors.

### **EXHIBIT 3: COUNTY MANAGER RELATIONSHIP WITH DEPARTMENT HEADS**

The size and complexity of running Columbia County requires a correctly-structured management organization staffed with competent, accountable managers. Under an appointed County Manager, a complete review of the current management organization would be undertaken. Redundant and over-lapping areas of management would be eliminated. Clear lines of authority, responsibility, and accountability would be defined to assure efficiency in the conduct of County business and the provision of services to the County's citizens.

Just as the County moved in recent months to streamline the Board of Supervisors' committee structure, the appointed County Manager would be responsible for streamlining the County's operating management structure.

The appointed County Manager will be responsible for the management of all County operations reporting to the Board of Supervisors. All appointed Department Heads will report to the County Manager, and elected Department Heads will be responsible to the County Manager for budget preparation and budget performance. Once familiar with the priorities, opportunities, and problems facing the County, the County Manager will review the County's organizational structure and recommend changes in how the staff and operating departments of the County are organized and managed.

#### County Manager and All Department Heads:

The County Manager will be responsible to the Board of Supervisors to ensure that all Department Heads are managing their departments consistent with specific departmental goals and objectives, and within approved departmental budgets. The County Manager will hold regular operating reviews of each department, coordinate inter-departmental activities, provide day-to-day management support to Department Heads, and perform annual Department Head performance reviews.

#### County Manager and the Finance Functions:

A full-time County Manager must have accurate operating financial information in managing and supporting Department Heads and the Board of Supervisors. This requires an efficient accounting and financial reporting information system, and strong internal audit and compliance functions. The County Treasurer will work closely with the County Manager on all Treasury matters and the financing of County operations.

The County Controller/Auditor will report to the County Manager and work closely with him or her to develop and control the County's \$150 million budget. The organization of the financial functions may change with the appointment of a County Manager in order to provide the necessary financial support and controls required to operate effectively at the least cost to the taxpayers.

### County Manager and the Human Resources Function:

With the appointment of a County Manager, roles and responsibilities within the Human Resources Department will not change. Currently, the Human Resources Director provides the strategic and management support for the Board of Supervisors and Department Heads, responsibilities that will continue under the supervision of a County Manager. The Human Resources Director will work closely with the County Manager as he or she assumes lead responsibility for union contract negotiations. With approximately 1,000 employees and 300 retirees, the Human Resources Director and the Human Resources Department staff will continue to provide support for the Department Heads and extensive service to all County employees on matters of health and retirement benefits, employee recruitment and training, contract interpretation, and oversight on day-to-day labor issues.

### Summary of Organization Structure:

As defined in Exhibit 1, the County Manager job description outlines the specific powers and duties of this position. Accountable to the Board of Supervisors, the County Manager provides both strategic support to the Board of Supervisors and operating management and leadership for all County operations. Correctly structuring the organization and management team to achieve agreed-upon objectives will be one of the County Manager's most important responsibilities.

## **EXHIBIT 4: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS SURVEY – SUMMARY OF RESPONSES**

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*16 out of 23 possible responses received.*

### **1. What do you feel works well in Columbia County’s current form of legislating and managing its operations?**

- Supervisors recognize that change is needed and that part-time supervisors cannot manage the day to day operations of a \$146 million County Government
- The current BOS process
- Committee structure works well: Diverse collection of people with various areas of expertise.
- I think that the committee system that we are presently using works very well. It is important to keep the supervisors involved with the discussion that takes place with the Dept Heads so that we will better understand how various departments operate.
- Committee system isn’t all that terrible, except we are easily spooked by possibly offending some small group or single person. The current national and statewide fiscal crisis has given us a bit more stamina in resisting the urge to spend. I fully believe the supervisors are more effective at governing than a legislature. Supervisors tend to know their public and towns as they are out there everyday.
- I believe the meeting structure lends itself to debate and openness. As a new supervisor, I feel comfortable expressing an opinion, or voting in the minority, as it should be. Years back it wasn’t quite that way.
- The cumulative knowledge level of the Board stemming from committee involvement.
- The committee meetings are a vital part of our government business, as it allows us to oversee the expenses the departments ask for and need in order to allow their departments to run effectively. The committee meetings also allow the supervisors to ask questions and discuss issues with the department heads before making decisions regarding their expenses. This communication is vital if a governmental body is going to effectively serve its constituents and be held accountable for the County’s money.
- The supervisors seeing what the dept heads are doing and have to address the issues.
- The new committee structure is creating more accountability within the committees and creates less meetings.
- Resolution Process: Dept Heads have to justify and explain the reason for expenditures, etc.
- Getting resolutions early.
- Close link between towns and county government.
- Connection of supervisors to Town and County issues.
- Operations and processes are satisfactory, with oversight being thorough, probably too thorough.
- Hands on approach with departmental management.

### **2. What challenges/inefficiencies do you encounter in the County’s current form of legislation and management?**

- Current committee system is problematic for the following reasons:
  - Does not allow the dept heads to fully express their needs and seek guidance.
  - Budget & Salary should be an advisory opinion. Final say should rest with Home Comm.
  - Committee’s operate on the Chair’s sense of the committee’s role, leading to inconsistencies in how departments are managed.
  - Leadership and mgmt of committees changes year to year, which erodes continuity of management and oversight at the dept level.
  - Lack of oversight and involvement of some committee chairs.
  - Dept Heads do not discuss budget, policy, or performance issues with their committees.

- No formal goals, objectives or performance measures are set for each dept head in conjunction with their home committee
  - Dept planning and budget development is not in the hands of the Home Committees, leaving little impact on the priorities of the department.
  - You cannot effectively manage anyone in one-hour per month.
  - The Supervisors only meet once a month to address any issues that the Dept Heads have.
  - Certain committees lack oversight and follow-through.
  - Having Dept Heads come to three different committees with their requests not only bogs down the process but keeps the Dept Heads away from their duties.
- Where does the “buck” stop? It is the home committee chair? The dept head? The committee itself? Without clarity, we seem to have no true accountability when something falls through, or even in setting priorities.
- Who’s the final authority (the BoS is in the end); but going through the process, is it the chairs, the commissioners, etc.? I think this will have final definition once the manager is in place. The organizational chart will be more defined, also.
- The lack of communication and cooperation among departments is problematic, which leads to an uninformed legislative body.
- Town supervisors on the BoS are elected on town issues, not County issues or management backgrounds.
- BoS members are not typically trained or experienced for the county management role.
- No formal department head performance reviews.
- Repetitiveness, redundancy and impediments in decision making.
- There is little attention to the whole – and little structure to address the bigger objectives, goals and visions for the County.
- The BoS relies on the Dept Heads to drive our process as the BoS lacks appropriate structure to address larger issues.
- The length of time to complete anything.
- I do not feel the current form of legislation works all that well. Seems to take too long to accomplish anything.
- Overly politicized.
- Inefficiencies exist when the resolutions are voted on without the opportunity for much group discussion outside the home committee’s vote of approval for the resolution.
- A big challenge I see to our government’s function is the need for more assignments to a committee for which a supervisor has a particular strength, skill or knowledge. It would be more effective to maintain those supervisors on a committee, who have knowledge of a department’s history, providing of course that those supervisors are reelected.
- The endless debates and nothing, whether it is right or wrong, ever seeming to be accomplished.
- Quite often it takes too long for a specific decision to be made. This is true whether it is a purchase or a vacant position to be filled.

**3. How do you see the County Manager position positively impacting the current legislative and management process in Columbia County?**

- Not at this time.
- I don’t.
- More oversight.
- Issues will be handled in a more timely manner.
- The County Manager will provide a constant communication link to the dept heads.
- Provide resources to the dept heads to help them accomplish their goals as set forth by the BoS.
- Will allow the BoS to focus on the long-term goals and objectives of the County.
- Will help with fiscal oversight (yet that is what we hired the Controller for)
- A centralized point of communication between County management and the legislative body, providing for quicker response times concerning departmental issues (which gives the BoS an opportunity to focus on greater efficiency)

- Hopefully, leadership and efficiency in getting things done, which committees don't always accomplish. All department heads will have to answer to the same uniform management, which doesn't always seem to be present now with the committee system.
- A County Manager will be able to improve the quality and consistency of dept head committee presentations, and will be better able to implement decisions of the BoS once made.
- The County Manager would improve efficiencies. Many decisions could be made in a more timely manner. Also, having a County Manger would bring more continuity to County Government.
- Efficiency; holistic views of the County; better positioned to assess options and tradeoffs.
- In creating a County Manager position, we will be able to hold someone accountable for what is happening, and that is extremely important.
- More accountability for dept heads.
- Time spent in committees on everyday matters will be nearly eliminated. The future of the County will take a more central position in legislation and deliberations.
- By eliminating the multi-level process that is now in effect and thus streamlining the entire process.
- The County Manager will have all the information needed before resolutions go to committee and thus eliminating unneeded meetings, conferences, etc. before the final determination.
- I will have a better understanding of this position when I hear how the supervisors' responsibilities would be impacted.

**4. Do you believe the County Manager will hinder the current legislative and management process? If so, how?**

- It will hinder the process by eliminating the cumulative knowledge of the Board stemming from committee involvement.
- This will cause a disconnect for Supervisors from the day to day operations and, therefore, we would be unaware of many issues that should have our attention.
- Perhaps a lack of open debate and information on some issues.
- A concern I have is that the individual will be swayed politically in decision-making and fail to communicate with the Board of Supervisors, or make deals behind closed doors and the Board would have no say.
- No, it will complement our legislative and management process.
- It will take some decision making away from the committees.
- No, but giving this position too much power could alter the balance between County management and the legislative body.
- No, to the contrary. BoS will still pass laws and resolutions but the information the BoS receives as background prior to passing the laws/resolutions, and the implementation once the BoS has passed laws/resolutions should be significantly better with a County Manager in place.
- No. (answer provided three times)
- If we do not clearly determine how we are empowering and supporting the County Manager, and how he/she is expected to empower and support the dept heads, then we will just add another layer of frustration.
- Hiring a County Manager does not address the underlying issue that the BoS does not currently have a structure to set short and long term priorities and goals, not do we have the ability to manage those goals.
- Another layer of management depending on future role of committees and potential friction with elected department heads.

**a) What could be done to reduce the hindrance?**

- Forget the concept of a County Manager.
- The County Manager should be restricted to fiscal oversight, not involved in day-to-day operations of any department.
- Ensure this position has limited spending approval level (\$10,000)

- Identify the system of how the BoS will manage the County Manager.
- Clearly delineate the role of the County Manager and the scope of the Supervisors' role.
- The position should be an elected one, which would remove any obligation to one person and oblige them to their constituents in the County.

**5. How do you see the County Manager position making your legislative role easier? More difficult?**

- I don't.
- Reorganizing the committees has already helped in making my job easier.
- The small issues with each department will be addressed during the month so we can concentrate on the short and long range plans for each department and the County.
- The County Manager could deal with daily details, while supervisors would have more time to deal with policies and take a more proactive role in trying to solve present and future needs of the County.
- We would not see everything and reduce our time and involvement. Easier not better.
- Easier, and the communication from departments to supervisors will be better.
- Will allow the supervisors the time to focus on long-term visions and goals for the County.
- Unsure as of now.
- The obvious is less meetings.
- Given the lack of clarity proposed for the new role of the BoS, it's hard to say how difficult or easy the job of the BoS will be.
- Just focusing on policy may not make our jobs easier...there is nothing easy about developing overriding policy.
- Easier. The BoS will get better information prior to being asked to make decisions; will get better performance metrics for each department; things will get done faster; things will not get lost in the cracks; BoS intent will be translated into action better; and projects and results will be monitored on a daily or weekly basis (or as often as necessary) depending on the department's issues and opportunities.
- The ability to make unilateral decisions on less important issues without BoS approval and, at the same time, work out details on significant issues prior to BoS review.
- Potential for a lot of end running.
- I would assume with a County Manager, there will be less transparency than we have now. Information to us is so important in aiding us to effectively govern. We have a shortage now; I would assume up-to-date info will be even less with a County Manager.
- I do not believe a supervisor's legislative role would be negatively impacted. Easier...I'm not sure. I don't believe it is extremely difficult once you have the facts, do your "homework", and communicate.
- I will be able to answer that when I know more about the specifics of both positions – particularly when the supervisors' roles are redefined.

**6. What qualities are you looking for in a person who would serve as the County Manager?**

- A no-nonsense, common sense leader who will hold department heads accountable for their department's actions, productivity and efficiencies.
- A person with a sound fiscal background.
- A person with strong managerial skills, a strong financial background, independent and free from political influences, is not afraid to hold department heads accountable for unnecessary spending, and follow-up with supervisors regarding issues we must be apprised of.
- The County Manager first and foremost should be a good listener and have an open door policy. He/she should have a good understanding of how our County government works. Also, the individual should have experience with creating budgets, negotiating contracts, financial background, and most importantly a people person.
- Leadership, communicator, politically savvy, but decisive and independent.
- A person with integrity, self motivator, personable, high ethical standards, quality management skills, visionary, and assertive.

- Demonstrated managerial experience in large, complex organizations; strong financial skills and experience cutting costs in other large organizations; personal philosophy that his/her job is to coach subordinates to make them more effective and successful; even tempered; able to deal with job pressures and emotional or stressed-out subordinates in a relaxed, sensitive and politically neutral way; aware of the political pressures at work and able to deal with them; strong enough personality not to be bullied by political pressures; action oriented and energetic; a doer and motivator.
- Intelligent, knowledgeable, excellent communicator, patient, short learning curve, compromiser, gets consensus.
- Someone who comes from outside the framework that we have been working in may be our strongest candidate, since our County is quite “self-embroiled”.
- Loyalty is a strong quality of our community, which can be both a strength and hindrance, and can create a unique challenge for anyone who might serve as the County Manager. It would be important that the BoS hire someone who would respect the underlying qualities that built our county, while helping to identify ways to move beyond them. We will need someone who is an entrepreneurial/creative thinker, who has strong fiscal/analytical thinking skills and even stronger people management skills.
- Non-partisan professional management experience.
- Someone untouchable by the political garbage that has influenced this county for decades.
- Someone (male or female) with broad shoulders who can and will stand up to the intrusions by the political side of the coin. Someone who has experience as a manager and not someone who will be doing on the job training. Finding the right individual will be a very important task but I feel the committee that is in place can handle the process without problems.
- Committee deliberated.
- Someone who can implement the plans that the Supervisors want and handle the Dept Heads without too much friction.

**7. Is there anything else you would like the subcommittee to consider as we move forward with the County Manager initiative?**

- This position should be an elected position.
- Should hold several public hearings at neutral locations throughout the County to give the public an opportunity to hear about the proposed change in their County’s government.
- Can we afford this position during such tough economic times? Given a \$150,000 number, we need to have clear numbers of the proposed salary and benefits package, with salary separate from benefits.
- The current economic climate...and the anger the public will have with adding this \$150k position.
- Need a clear outline of proposed duties of the BoS, including any new committee structure changes and responsibilities being suggested.
- The taxpayers (and some Supervisors) will not be supportive of the compensation levels being discussed, particularly with the revenue and expense vulnerabilities the County is facing. It might be a better idea in the short-term to consider an existing County employee with a salary adjustment.
- At this time, I don’t see the cost effectiveness of hiring a County Manager. I would look to increase staff in the HR Dept, possibly a Deputy Director. Although the concept of a County Manager is a good one, I am not comfortable at this time hiring anyone that would demand a six-figure salary. The County has much more efficient with the hiring of the Controller/Auditor and we should “sit” on the County Manager for at least a year.
- We need to identify some very clear positive outcomes for the “outside”. Can we identify some clear projects and initiatives that we would expect the County Manager to begin with? Can we identify some cost savings opportunities that we believe are there that we would ask the County Manager to review and make recommendations about? If we can pull some of these together and be willing to make the County Manager accountable over the appropriate dept heads for those objectives, we can share some of the tangible outcomes for this position, which will not only help

anyone we hire, but also clarify why we think we should employ a County Manager in the first place.

- Committee deliberating/deliberated.
- Just keep moving forward and not listen to the detractors. You will never please everybody and there will always be the suspicious ones that will question everything you do.
- The sub-committee needs to develop a firm and detailed description of the role supervisors would have if/when the position of County Manager comes to fruition.
- I think it is extremely important that the roles of the County Manager and the County Supervisors be defined.
- Salary and budgeting for the County Manager's position. Has it been discussed? Since the Board will less duties and responsibilities, cutting their (my) pay, say \$2,000 per year, eliminate one deputy chair, and we would have over half the money there. Yes, I know we're underpaid, but it would be a statement to send to the voters.

## **EXHIBIT 5: DEPARTMENT HEAD SURVEY – SUMMARY OF RESPONSES**

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*17 out of a possible 28 responses received.*

### **1. What do you feel works well in Columbia County’s current form of managing its day-to-day operations?**

- I have not had any major issues with the current form of day-to-day operations in the County.
- I have not had any issues with the current way the County operates.
- My committee does an excellent job. All major decisions are done based on the consensus of the committee.
- Home Committee monthly meetings/Supervisor accessibility and availability when issues arise.
- Dept Heads want to provide the best possible service to those they serve within their respective budgets (acknowledged by BoS at Dept Head meetings)
- Dept Heads have some level of autonomy.
- The current form of management empowers department heads bring an entrepreneurial spirit to the day-to-day operation of their departments. This culture fosters “out-of-the-box” thinking for the challenges we face.
- Policy implementation is with the dept heads that are closest to the issue and can best determine the manner of implementation.
- The BoS is deeply committed to the welfare of the residents of Columbia County and are interested in knowing the challenges faced by my department.
- Human Resources Dept, County Attorney availability, efficient answering of payroll info, and our internal dept systems.
- Creating a Controller, Human Resources Dept, and the committee system (if certain committees are given the proper authority).
- Town Supervisors comprising the BoS aids communication, which is an essential component for building teamwork and the vision for a common goal.
- In recent years, the ability to contact Human Resources for assistance in dealing with personnel matters; a better understanding of what is required of dept heads; the quarterly budget protocol.
- Not sure. We seem to change positions/policies often

### **2. What challenges/inefficiencies do you encounter in the County’s current form of management?**

- Too many chiefs.
- My office is hindered by a process that is fragmented due to the lack of the right logistics allowing us to share information quickly and accurately. The current process is confusing and frustrating, and tasks are duplicated between my dept and other County departments, resulting in higher costs to run my department.
- Unclear realm of authority for department heads
- Inefficiencies include the fact that our management system fosters autonomy within departments with little accountability from one department to another. One example would be our Purchasing Department.
- Ability, including time demands, to coordinate with multiple department heads.
- Decisions are untimely.
- No single point of contact for County operations.
- Challenges include the need to satisfy multiple layers of people before decisions can sometimes be made.
- Committee process is problematic for the following reasons;
  - Difficult to explain complex issues to numerous supervisors in a committee meeting structure.
  - Inadequate coordination of priorities among the committees.

- It is unnecessary and inefficient for Dept Heads to be required to prepare resolutions and conference objective forms for their Home Committee's approval for expenses already effectively approved by the passage of the annual budget.
- Layers for approvals are cumbersome and time consuming.
- A more responsive and timely system of processing unanticipated routing requests is needed.
- Committees are too hurried; supervisors have a lot to consider in a short time...and their towns to run.
- No role description for committees.
- Duplication of duties (ex: Budget & Salary and Finance)
- Budget & Salary Committee has become a committee that has too much power over home committees – too much committee time and too many hoops.
- Does not allow for sufficient departmental coordination and collaboration to enhance outcomes, reduce redundancy and costs.
- The BoS does not have sufficient time to learn, and cannot otherwise be expected to possess the expertise to adequately assist department heads with detailed, profession-specific operational issues of concern.
- Non-existent today is the lack of continuity of overlaying and comparing the County business plan with the department-level business plans.
- Dept heads who work their way up to a management position feel they are taken for granted.
- The Payroll system is antiquated.
- Sometimes there is a delay in purchasing items that are needed in a more timely manner due to the fact we have so many committee requirements, etc.
- The current building maintenance procedures do not work.
- Time consuming to work through the partisan layers of bureaucracy.
- Too many steps in the hiring process.
- Need appropriate training for professional staff and managers.
- Cumbersome decision-making process that restricts the ability of departments to move quickly. With responsibility for organizational performance resting with the individual department head, concomitant authority needs to be vested at that level. In an operating environment of increasing complexity, the ability to detect and pursue opportunity in a nimble fashion is a central feature of effectiveness. There are too many layers in the decision chain that, by their very nature, blunt creativity and promote avoidance of responsibility.
- Difficulty understanding the nature and functional diversity of government works against developing a big picture understanding of all the moving parts. This makes it an extraordinarily heavy lift to sustain conversations across organizational and functional boundaries. Most significantly, it impedes efficient decision-making and implementation.
- Annual changes in leadership and committee membership are a significant obstacle to continuity on departmental and county-wide initiatives.
- It encourages a fragmented view of the business of county government in which each department operates with varying business practices. The county should be viewed as a single employer with divisions following consistent policies and procedures.
- Combining legislative and executive functions in a single body carries inherent conflicts.

### **3. How do you see the County Manager position positively impacting the current management process in Columbia County?**

- Should be able to establish policies that create more efficiency, which will reduce confusion and frustration.
- It could make it more efficient and cost-effective if done correctly.
- Will review and improve the current requisition, purchasing, receiving, and accounts payable process within the County.
- Audit the petty cash process.
- Consistent basis for priorities, policies and procedures.
- More efficient assignment of duties.

- Coordination among department heads.
- A County Manager can possibly bridge the gaps between departments, assist with building a consensus when decisions are needed, and become a sounding board for personnel and labor related matters.
- The County Manager will professionalize County government, which will result in more effective, efficient and streamlined government.
- Checks and balances from a Quality Assurance perspective, rather than punitive.
- Bring down the department head silos.
- Timely answers and decisions would allow for increased workflow and productivity.
- Streamlined request/approval and budget processes.
- This position will ensure that each department-level business plan is supportive and/or falls in line with the overall County plan.
- Providing a single, clearly defined focal point for establishing, implementing, and coordinating business processes across departments.
- Integrating and managing relationships between and among human resources, fiscal, IT, physical infrastructure domains.
- Engaging department heads as “internal consultants” to support inter-organizational program development and operational linkages. These conversations need to be sustained and produce defined outcomes.
- Respecting department head expertise and judgment as basis for appropriate autonomy and programmatic authority.
- Working with departments having complementary missions, client overlap, subcontracts, etc. to identify opportunities for co-location, shared staffing, innovative organizational structures.
- Establishing performance measures, transparency, and accountability.
- Continuing and extending the professionalization of public management initiated during the past 2-3 years.
- Fostering and sustaining creative dialogue across departments and between departments and the Board.
- Implementing strategic planning and financial management. Human resource development is central to the process, i.e., how many people with what skill sets are going to be needed over a 5-10 year time horizon.
- Developing the capacity to engage in capital improvement and replacement budgeting. Far too many county building and equipment assets are beyond useful life
- If the County Manager is given the decision making authority, it could be better, more expeditiously serve the dept heads in this county.
- If the County Manager has the authority to expedite his/her responsibilities, I feel it would have a positive impact. If not, you are only adding another layer of duplication to the current process.

**4. Do you believe the County Manager will hinder the current management process? If so, how?**

- Yes, because it will be another level of approval that we will need without the elimination of committees.
- It will add another layer to our approval process if he/she is not given the authority to make decisions. There does seem to be some duplication of duties that already exist, however.
- No, I feel the County Manager can help my department improve its service delivery.
- No, the County Manager would not hinder the process.
- Not sure how it would hinder the process.
- It depends on the amount of authority the County Manager possesses.
- Will hinder the process only if the County Manager is not the “right choice”.
- It could, depending on who is hired.
- If the wrong person is hired.
- I don’t think so...should fill the gaps of things not being done today. The only hindrance seen is when adjustments are made to a dept head’s plan or goals.

- I do not believe that a County Manager will hinder the current management process, so long as the County Manager does not take it upon himself/herself to micromanage the day-to-day operation of the County. Instead, the County Manager needs to remain focused on the big picture: identify opportunities to create efficiencies; identify opportunities to streamline government; identify opportunities to save tax payer dollars; and become a friendly resource for department heads to discuss the difficult challenges that they face.
- The partisan nature of the individual hired (nobody is truly nonpartisan) will impact his/her decisions. If this happens, what is the department's recourse? And, how will grievances be brought to light in a public way?
- If the position becomes "just another layer" for the decision-making process it will be a hindrance. Recognizing that the transition will be marked by understandable conflicts, performance metrics should be established before the interviewing/selection process begins. We need to be clear with ourselves and the candidates how success will be measured along multiple dimensions.
- A delay in getting answers or assistance with questions/issues in a timely manner, as we are able to do now would certainly be a concern. Answers already come from the BOS & The County Manager would "report"/"confer" to/with them, which, to me, seems to be a duplication of duties. The same goes for this individual reviewing various paperwork along with the Controller/Auditor. This was the reason for the elimination of the .4 committee & going to a Controller and now there will be another person who this duty will fall upon? I don't know that these are considered challenges, but the position itself seems like a duplication of duties between various depts. and titles that have been created for what was said to be "the good" of county government and the ability to run it efficiently. Adding one more level of government that will simply work in "conjunction" with positions already created to complete these specific duties seems unnecessary during these fiscal times, county and statewide. I also believe that having this person appointed by the BOS and serving at the "pleasure" of them, allows for a threat of inconsistency within the county gov't & the turnover with this position may be greater as elections come and go, and Chairmen change every so often.

**b) What could be done to reduce the hindrance?**

- No need for home committees if there is a County Manager.
- Hire a qualified person and provide the person the autonomy to perform at their best.
- Keep local politics out of the interviewing and selection process.
- Need to change the committee system.
- Too much authority assigned to one position could be problematic.
- Proper education of the County business plan and goals, and why adjustments are being made to departmental level plans and goals.
- Eliminate the committee process in certain scenarios.

**5. How do you see the County Manager position making your job easier? More difficult?**

- I don't feel it will make a difference.
- If the position is allowed to expedite the decision making process, it would definitely make our jobs easier.
- I do not see my job being easier. I see another person I need to get approval from before my resolutions are passed.
- Assist the dept heads with acquiring necessary training.
- A department head will have a single point of contact and decision-making entity.
- The County Manager will be able to assist the BoS in formulation of policies that are most effective in this new and changing environment, which can then be communicated to employees.
- Easier, as a County Manager will be able to address many of today's inefficiencies.
- Depends on their experience in State and Federal regulations, and healthcare finance.
- I expect improved PR to show how our initiatives are helping the tax payers not only today but to protect against the risks we face for a very uncertain and constantly changing world.
- Someone available who can make a decision and be more readily contacted.

- Could eliminate some of the time-consuming layers.
- Paying attention to and managing activities and processes that transcend individual organizational boundaries, e.g., ensuring preventive maintenance schedules, business support functions, etc. linked and integrated with internal agency operation.
- Depending on the relationship between the County Manager and the BOS, e.g., distribution of authority, lines of communication, etc. significant improvements in efficiency and effectiveness are possible.
- A downside...could shield issues from necessary public oversight.
- I'm not looking for the County Manager to make my job easier. I think that if the County Manager remains focused on improving/consolidating the delivery of county services; focused on maintaining our infrastructure systems current to the times, e.g. IT, telephone, building systems; focused on being there to support the needs of the County departments, that will help the County.
- The County Manager position will make my job more difficult if the individual hired is a Class A personality bent on micro-managing my department rather than being a resource to use to improve the operation of my department.
  - To that end, I think that the following should be struck from the County Manager Job Description:
    - "...Approve the organization and staffing within each department, agency or operation subject to his/her direct management control, and approve other temporary assignments within a department, agency, or operation or from one department, agency, or operation to another..." and,
    - "...Coordinate the activities of County department heads and the management of all units of County government..."
  - Instead, these sections of the Job description should read as follows:
    - Work with Department Heads to develop staffing levels and organization structures that meet the needs of the Departments while at the same time comporting with the fiscal ability of the County.
    - Work with Department Heads to coordinate their activities with the needs of the County.

## 6. What qualities are you looking for in a person who would serve as the County Manager?

- Someone with previous County Manager experience in a similar size population. Also preferred if they helped transition a county through a similar change in government structure.
- Someone with a backbone to enforce County policy and local laws.
- Honesty, integrity, ethical, decisiveness, exceptional communication skills, leadership abilities (internal and community), foster internal teamwork, forward looking, understands government operations.
- Fair and available.
- Fiscal conservative.
- Broad based knowledge of finance, service delivery and government process.
- An individual with governmental experience who is a good fiscal manager and a straight-forward thinker.
- Definitely someone with a background in government...and fiscal knowledge.
- Capable of the tireless multi-tasking and finesse required to implement the vision of the BoS, hold department managers accountable, coordinate services, and respond to the needs of residents and employees.
- MBA or MPA degree.
- Leadership skills; a visionary; quality management and performance improvement skills; good networking skills; excellent communication skills; background in federal and state regulations; ability to represent the County at Federal and State events; innovative; ability to negotiate contracts; supportive of training
- Strong NYS/County government work experience; strong communication and organizational skills; strong leadership skills.

- Must have proven team leadership and team building experience; strong effective communication and listening skills; ability to quickly assess strengths and weaknesses (and how to leverage strengths and minimize weaknesses); possess the courage to make the right decision that is in the best interest of the tax payer.
- Ethical, fair, open minded, and possesses common sense.
- Someone who can say no to a department head.
- No prior history with the County; professional; accessible
- Ability to identify and understand the underlying forces at play; courage to initiate action to change for the better; clear sense of performance metrics; team-orientation; commitment to leading/managing ethically; understanding human beings and why they behave the way they do; strong sense of self projecting confidence and competence; commitment to continuous improvement; ability to manage at the speed of change; understanding organizational culture; interested in organizational transformation/change; outstanding interpersonal skills; excellent boundary spanner; commitment to public service and moving good government forward; keen political instincts and skills that support consensus building; comfortable exercising authority; ability to manage diverse relationships, needs, and interests; tolerance for ambiguity; ability to bring people together and creatively manage conflict and shared decision-making; capacity to see things from different perspectives and levels; appreciation for the enormous complexity of the public sector; devoted to fierce pursuit of forward-leaning, outside of the box solutions; excellent analytical and critical thinking abilities; able to hit the ground running and able to think on his/her feet; a sense of a future that moves toward us inexorably and the implications for successful management in uncertain environment; keen sense of perspective and inner toughness without appearing insensitive/abrasive; ability to frame decisions under conditions of competition for scarce resources. Depth of experience and a track record of appreciable results is assumed.
- First, is the trait of stewardship. Stewardship is defined as follows: "The conducting, supervising, or managing of something ; especially : the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care." Stewardship is a quality that defines the highest levels of government service. If we can find a County Manager, or any County employee for that matter, that understand their obligation to carefully and responsibly perform their functions as stewards of public funds we have found the best.
  - Second, two qualities that are needed in a new County Manager are the understanding of the importance of 'we' and the belief that constant improvement is essential to meeting the needs/wants of our internal (county employees) and external (the public) customers.
  - Third, a County Manager needs to possess the "desire to make sense of things". A County manager needs to figure out what information means and what you should do with it. It is easy to find people who can put together a spreadsheet, restate data, tell you about a problem. It is hard to find people who can tell you what the spreadsheet means, what the data tells you, or recommend solutions to problems.
  - Lastly, a County Manager needs other important qualities as well, including leadership, self-confidence, motivation, decisiveness, flexibility, adaptability, sound business judgment, and determination.

**7. Is there anything else you would like the Board of Supervisors to consider as we move forward with the County Manager initiative?**

- Need to change/define roles and responsibilities of other departments (Controller vs Budget officer).
- Having an upbeat, positive person who is accessible to dept heads will be a plus.
- Structure committees so they are capable of making decisions instead of referring to other committees for decision making.
- Support the County Manager. This person is hired at the pleasure of the BoS, with 23 different politicians having 23 different agendas.
- The BoS should undertake a strategic planning process to develop a clear future direction and map to achieve the desired outcomes.
- Allow the department heads to have a part in the interviewing process.
- What is the BoS motivation and goals? How does this align with dept head goals?

- Non-partisan as much as possible.
- Will the County Manager be given the autonomy to be effective?
- Love the concept – not the right time due to fiscal instability.
- The BoS and County Manager should consider performing an assessment of management positions, and the level of responsibility and influence these positions have in achieving County goals. This would identify discrepancies between salaries being paid as compared to level of job responsibility and positive impact to achieving County business goals and objectives.
- This position is needed. However, a new position should not be created, put into the budget, and filled during a year when departments have already experienced cuts for the past three years, including a 5% cut in personnel accounts in 2011. To set an example, the position should not be filled until the economy is better and departments are not working in the first stage of their budget reduction contingency plans.
- I believe that during these harsh fiscal times, and with the County still upholding a “hiring freeze” within all departments, it is not a feasible decision to create another highly paid, appointed position. Departments are struggling day-to-day with the employee shortage that they do have, and it does not seem ethical or favorable to me to move forward with this process.
- Give the person the authority needed to perform the job. Otherwise, it is just a waste of taxpayer money.
- The person hired must be capable and publicly accountable and available so as to appear to be worth his/her salary, as there will be pushback against hiring another executive at a generous salary.
- Substantively involve 2-3 selected department heads in the screening, interview, and selection process. This is important - involving principal stakeholders will build support and make implementation and transition much easier.
- Construct a thoughtful on-boarding process with defined milestones.
- Consider the structural implications of how 30+ department heads will report to a single individual. Organizing departments into functional clusters coordinated by designating an existing department head to serve in a larger capacity should be considered.
- Moving to a County Manager suggests that the BOS is making a serious commitment to strong public management. A similarly strong commitment to human resource management should accompany the change, i.e., workforce retention and development including leadership and management development and succession planning.
- I think the County Manager duties and the Controller/Auditor duties should be consolidated as one position with an increase in salary. This would not only be practicable but cost effective as well.
- Many of the responsibilities of this position appear to duplicate those of the Human Resources Director and the Controller/Auditor. Perhaps we should consider combining some of these duties with those positions that already exist, versus creating and paying another high-salaried position.
- It appears that this position adds yet another layer of management to an already top-heavy system. From the job spec it would appear that we would be better served restructuring current appointments (Controller/Auditor) instead of creating another high-salaried position that would be a duplication of job duties. In this current economic climate, it would seem that taxpayers would be better served with a restructuring of current positions that we already have. We are a small county and have a number of positions handling almost the same things.
- The County should consider consolidating and restructuring current appointments instead of hiring another high level person. It appears from the job spec that this position would be responsible for items that are already under another department’s purview – Controller, HR, Civil Service, etc. Seems like there is a better way to do this, like restructuring the Controller job, and then other departments as well. Hiring another high-level position when you are telling service workers we cannot afford raises is disingenuous; we are getting like the State...top heavy.
- The perspective candidate for County manager needs to understand a general approach to all county operations and have as a goal to encourage harmony, cooperation and morale among the diverse agencies. The perspective County manager must not be of such a personality so as to be competitively driven and ambitious to a point where the person does not know how to “play well”. Instead, the county Manager needs to be motivated, balanced and focused.

## EXHIBIT 6: ISSUES RAISED BY THE SURVEYS

- 1. ISSUE: Cost/Benefit** - at \$150,000 or more, the County Manager costs too much...this is the wrong time to be doing this...and there is no guarantee for a "return" on the investment...what are the incremental cost savings a County Manager will be able to get that the Board of Supervisors cannot achieve on its own to justify this incremental cost?

*Response: There are three reasons to expect a financial return: a) faster & more disciplined decision making and implementation should result in faster realization of savings; b) a more in-depth management process should identify and implement departmental organizational & operational changes sooner; c) better information flow to and from the Board of Supervisors should result in better quality decisions, more clarity for Department Heads and less frustration for everyone. See Exhibit 8 for additional details.*

- 2. ISSUE: Too much power/authority** - one person in this role could have too much authority and power...how do we delegate enough authority and independence to the County Manager so he or she can be effective, but maintain Board of Supervisors' oversight and control?

*Response: The Board of Supervisors can delegate routine administrative matters, like replacing a budgeted staff member, approving budgeted expenses and transfers up to a certain amount, to the County Manager, but reserve decisions over a certain dollar value, all policy and strategy changes, decisions on hiring/firing department heads and all organizational changes. See Exhibit 1 for details of the County Manager's role and responsibilities.*

- 3. ISSUE: What are the benefits?** - how will County government be "better" for Department Heads and the Board of Supervisors after the County Manager is hired?

*Response: The County Manager will be able to provide full time professional management direction, supervision and coaching for Department Heads, and more organized information flow to the Board of Supervisors, which will mean better, faster decisions; The County Manager will be available to supervise Department Head implementation of Board of Supervisors' decisions on a daily and weekly basis, meaning faster, more reliable execution of Board of Supervisors' decisions and faster realization of savings and benefits of decisions.*

**4. ISSUE: Role of the Board of Supervisors** - What will the role of the Board of Supervisors be after we hire a County Manager?

*Response: Pretty much as it is today, except that authority and responsibility for routine decisions would be delegated to the County Manager, freeing up the Board of Supervisors to deal with more long term, strategic issues. See Exhibit 2 - "The Role of the Board of Supervisors" before and after the County Manager is hired.*

**5. ISSUE: Circumventing the County Manager** - How do we prevent Board of Supervisors' members, Department Heads and party leaders from "going around" the County Manager and subverting the management process?

*Response: The objective is to hire a competent, experienced, and mature manager who can deal with this and not get "blind-sided". Hopefully, Supervisors will work with and through the County Manger in achieving agreed upon objectives.*

**6. ISSUE: Political party pressure** - How do we protect the County Manager from political party "pressure"?

*Response: We don't. No different than today. It's a factor but it is the goal of the this committee to find someone who has the skills and abilities to deal with this type of pressure, and possesses the strength to make decisions in the County's best interest despite such pressure when it occurs.*

## **EXHIBIT 7: MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS THE COUNTY MANAGER CAN CORRECT**

- 1. Committee Structure Does Not Provide Adequate Management Oversight:** The Committee structure which currently exists to provide administrative direction and oversight of County operations does not provide consistent, complete, or timely direction to the operating Department Heads of the County. While the current Committee system of management does allow Supervisors to maintain a general awareness of what is going on in each department, Department Heads responding to the recent survey reported overwhelmingly that the Committee system was ineffective as a management process for running County operations. We believe the full time County Manager would be better positioned to help develop and support Board of Supervisors' approved County-wide goals and objectives and ensure that departmental goals and objectives are aligned to the County plan. The County Manager would have the time to obtain critical operating and performance details from the departments and provide that information to the home committees in a timely, usable fashion.
- 2. Long Term Planning Not Done Well:** Long-term planning is not routinely part of the current management process. When required, long-term plans take too long to develop and often are not developed in time to avoid major, known and predictable problems. And even when done, long-term plans have been difficult if not impossible to implement. A County Manager will be able to gather, integrate and analyze planning data in a more disciplined and timely manner, allowing for fact-based planning recommendations for Supervisors to consider when making decisions.
- 3. Current Management Role of the Board of Supervisors is Superficial:** The Board of Supervisors must now split its time between legislative and administrative/management functions. The time Supervisors devote to their administrative/management role is spent in committee meetings where the task is to review and approve operational recommendations from Department Heads that could be executed by the County Manager without Supervisor participation. A County Manager will be able to free up the time of the Supervisors to focus on their legislative role which will result in better policy planning and decisions of a strategic nature from the Board.
- 4. Decisions Take Too Long to Make and Implement:** Known operating inefficiencies and opportunities for cost savings and revenue enhancements are not acted upon in a timely way under the current Committee Management structure. The time taken to reach decisions and gain approvals is costly. Often, good business decisions that should be made are not made because there is inadequate financial analysis done, and weak project management in both the analytic and implementation phases of an effort. A County Manager will have the responsibility to accelerate the analysis and implementation of cost saving and revenue opportunities. The County Manager will have control of the financial staff, and management authority to insure project timetables will be met and project objectives delivered.

## **EXHIBIT 8: COST SAVINGS WILL PAY FOR THE COST OF THE COUNTY MANAGER**

A major objective of the appointment of a County Manager is to realize cost savings and efficiency in operations. To attract the person with the right mix of skills, background and temperament to succeed in the County Manager role, improve County Government, and achieve improved incremental cost savings, the compensation for this position must be competitive, not only with comparable government jobs but with comparable private sector jobs as well. We expect to set the salary for the County Manager at the \$125,000 to \$150,000 level, which is in the range of reported salaries for this position. *Based on a review of existing internal cost savings opportunities which have not yet been implemented, and a review of the experience of other counties with full time managers, administrators and executives, we expect the County Manager will be able to deliver nearly 14 times this salary amount in incremental cost savings over the next few years by initiating and accelerating the implementation of known cost savings projects.*

The County Manager will deliver savings faster by having more time to work on finding ways to implement known savings opportunities, and by more quickly identifying and implementing new ideas and efficiencies. Both results will come from full-time, not part-time, hands-on management. To achieve these results, the County Manager will conduct thorough comparative reviews and analysis of operating and financial statistics from other counties around the state to find the most efficient counties in each operating area, and see what we can learn from them.

Our review of what other counties have achieved in cost savings and efficiencies following the appointment of a County Manager has confirmed that significant savings are likely. In his three years as County Manager of Greene County, Dan Frank reported to us that their County saved approximately \$5 million in annual costs, or about 5% of 2008 operating costs, over a three year period. And all seven County Executives in the Hudson Valley recently reported annual budget savings of between 3% and 12% through better operating management, consolidation of services and facilities, strategic planning, and focused economic development. *A 5% savings in Columbia County, which is at the low end of the range, would be \$7.5 million. Listed below are cost savings opportunities that have been identified which could result in a minimum savings over a five-year period of approximately \$13.75 million:*

- a) Moon Study recommendations for DSS - \$1 million per year.
- b) Certified Home Health Agency privatization - \$400,000 per year.
- c) Changes in Health Insurance programs - \$500,000 per year.
- d) Revamped County Transportation Plan - \$250,000 per year.
- e) Sale of Ockawamick - \$1 million (one-time gain on sale)
- f) ERP System Efficiencies (New Payroll/HR/Fin Mgmt System) - \$400,000 per year.

Additional opportunities that a County Manager could bring to fruition, resulting in even more savings to the County, are:

- a) Comprehensive County Vehicle Policy – would likely reduce the number of vehicles necessary in the fleet, thereby eliminating all costs associated with maintaining a given vehicle.
- b) Establish a Fleet Maintenance Department – professional service technicians employed by the County will result in a significantly-reduced number of vehicles being sent out for service.
- c) Centralized Purchasing – use the County’s purchasing power to reduce costs.
- d) Uniform Equipment Replacement Schedule and establish a Capital/Asset Management Equipment Committee – will result in better-maintained equipment and logically-scheduled equipment replacement, thereby reducing costly repairs and unbudgeted emergency replacement of equipment.
- e) Consolidation of County Departments – to be determined

Finally, lost or delayed opportunities resulting from an inability to manage and implement complex, long duration projects have and could continue to cost the County millions of dollars. A full-time County Manager should be able to develop and maintain management processes to avoid situations such as:

- a) Delays in Renovating the County Courthouse: this project began in 1988 and is still underway. Costs to complete this renovation in 2011 are expected to be about \$8 million, which is nearly double what they would have been had we acted in a more timely way fifteen or twenty years ago.
- b) Delayed Decisions on County Facilities: Delays and false starts related to solving the Department of Social Services’ space problem and the larger issue of a long term solution to the County’s space needs have also cost the County millions. Rent paid for the Department of Social Services space at 25 Railroad Avenue over the last twenty years has totaled more than \$5 million, more than enough to have built a new facility five or ten years ago. The delays in solving our space problems for the County as a whole have likely cost the County 10% of its facilities’ energy, maintenance, and labor budgets. These lost savings likely exceeded \$500,000 over the last ten years.
- c) Delays in Identifying Departmental Problems: Operating problems in departments tend to go unnoticed and unaddressed until they are out of control and rise to the level of a major public crisis. The result of not discovering and correcting operating problems quickly shows up in the cost of expensive “clean-up efforts” (Office for the Aging), large unexpected write-offs (\$9 million DSS problem), and lost reimbursements (Pine Haven Medicaid payments). The costs associated with these kinds of problems probably exceed \$100,000 per year, along with the periodic \$9 million write-off.

- d) Delayed Capital Projects: When the County borrows to fund capital spending, it is based on the expected cost of the capital projects at the time the borrowing is done. Projects not started or completed on schedule, or projects which exceed their estimated costs for any reason, put the County at risk of not having enough money to do the capital projects we must do. Avoidable delays in two current bridge construction projects will cost the County \$75,000 more than planned.

## EXHIBIT 9: COUNTY MANAGER FAQ'S

- 1. What is a County Manager?** The job description describes the County Manager as the chief operating officer of the County. All appointed Department Heads will report to this position, and all appointed and elected officials in County government will be responsible to the County Manager for budget preparation and budget compliance.
- 2. Why do we need a County Manager?** County government is a \$150 million enterprise of 1,000 employees, 300 retirees, 28 departments and four unions. It has become too complex to be run by committees of part-time town supervisors. Our Department Heads need full time leadership, management, coaching and support, which part-time supervisors cannot provide. Over the past few years we have seen that decisions take too long to get made, and once made, decisions take too long to be implemented. As a result, the County is missing revenue and cost savings opportunities, which is a situation we believe the County Manager will be able to correct.
- 3. Do any other counties have county managers or similar positions?** We are among a handful of counties that does not have a county manager type position. Of the 62 counties in New York State, only nine do not have a County Manager, County Administrator or County Executive, and of these nine...five are currently looking at converting to a manager or administrator.
- 4. What will the Board of Supervisors do once there is a County Manager?** The Board of Supervisors will continue to do what it does now, but will have fewer administrative tasks to perform, as the County Manager will be delegated the authority to act for the Board of Supervisors on matters up to established financial and policy limits. The Board of Supervisors will continue to act in its capacity as the county legislature, and will focus on its legislative duties and responsibilities. Board of Supervisors' members will continue to sit on departmental and special committees to deal with longer-term strategic and policy issues facing the County.
- 5. Won't the County Manager diminish the role, responsibility and authority of the Board of Supervisors?** The Board of Supervisors will continue to be the governing body of the County, and will not relinquish any of its responsibilities or authority. By law, the Board of Supervisors is not allowed to relinquish any of its responsibilities or duties. The Board will deal with strategic issues and needs, and be "forward looking" on behalf of the County.
- 6. Why not eliminate the Board of Supervisors and set up a county legislature with legislators who are not also Town Supervisors?** The diversity and experience of the 23 town supervisors is one of the great strengths of the Board of Supervisors' system, and because town supervisors make up the County Board of Supervisors, County and town government links are very strong, which we believe benefits the County. Moving to a separate legislature would add another layer of political cost and confusion to the system, at a time when voters are asking that we reduce the costs of

government, professionalize the management of government and eliminate political party influence in government.

- 7. Why not go to an elected County Executive instead of an appointed County Manager?** The process to move to an elected county executive would take a charter change, which would be a multi-year process, and then most likely result in the election of a professional politician, rather than the appointment of a professional manager. We believe the professional county manager will have skills which are more appropriate to help improve county government than the probable political skills of an elected county executive.
- 8. Why do we have to pay \$150,000 for the County Manager?** The kind of person we are looking for would have to be paid a competitive salary and offered competitive benefits. We will be looking for someone whose management skills and experience will likely require compensation at the \$125,000 to \$150,000 level.
- 9. Will there be any management jobs eliminated because of the County Manager to offset the cost of the County Manager?** As the County Manager settles in and understands our organization, he/she may see opportunities to improve and streamline the County's organization and decision making, and may propose changes that would eliminate or consolidate management positions. Any organizational or management changes impacting Department Heads would have to be approved by the Board of Supervisors.
- 10. How do we know the County Manager will be "worth" the cost?** There are no guarantees. But we expect that a County Manager will speed things up -- we'll make decisions faster based on better information and more frequent managerial interaction with Department Heads, and we'll implement decisions quicker with more management support and oversight from a County Manager. Faster decisions and faster implementation of decisions will result in saving money sooner -- if we have \$5 million of cost savings projects out there that can be done a year sooner, that is a \$5 million incremental saving. If these projects happen three months sooner than they would have, that's still a \$1.25 million incremental savings. If we can accelerate cost savings projects of these magnitudes, we stand to save between 6 times and 25 times the cost of the County Manager -- a pretty good return on the investment.
- 11. How would the Board of Supervisors prevent the County Manager from becoming "too powerful" and having "too much" authority?** The Board of Supervisors will establish the decision authority of a County Manager by setting limits on how much budgeted or unbudgeted money the County Manager can spend or move between accounts or departments without Home Committee, Finance Committee or full Board of Supervisors' approval. Certain kinds of decisions, including major organizational changes and hiring or firing Commissioners and other Department Heads, would be reviewed and approved by the Board of Supervisors.

- 12. How can we prevent Supervisors, Department Heads and political bosses from trying to circumvent or subvert the County Manager to advocate their personal agendas?** This happens now, without a County Manager to "circumvent", and will continue to happen after the County Manager is hired -- but with a County Manager on the job, it should be harder to get away with advocating personal or political agendas over the County's best interests.
- 13. How can we prevent political party bosses from exercising "too much" influence and control over the County Manager?** The political parties already try to select and influence supervisor candidates, and elected supervisors. Because an appointed County Manager does not have to run for office and does not need political party support or funding, he/she would be less subject to the influence of the political parties than candidates and elected supervisors are now.
- 14. Did the Department Heads' survey responses indicate a need for and support for a County Manager?** 17 Department Heads replied to the survey, and were strongly in favor of the County Manager. The Department Heads do not feel the current Committee Management Structure works well, as it does not provide them with adequate full time leadership, continuity of management or timely decision making, as committee member turnover and superficial monthly meetings do not provide the management support the Department Heads need to be as effective as they want to be.
- 15. Did the Supervisors' responses to the survey indicate a need for and support for a County Manager?** 16 Supervisors responded. Responses were mixed, with a lot of positives and a lot of issues being raised. On balance, the Supervisors seem to be in favor. We'll know how the Supervisors feel when the County Manager idea is brought to a vote.
- 16. When will the Board of Supervisors vote on the County Manager?** Targeting the July 2011 meeting of the Full Board.
- 17. If the County Manager law is approved by the Board of Supervisors, what happens then?** A bi-partisan interview committee will be formed, which will consist of members of the Board of Supervisors, key County Department Heads, and private citizens from the community. Applications for the job will be solicited, multiple rounds of interviews will be conducted, and a well-qualified and capable individual will be appointed to the position of County Manager by the end of 2011.