

# Counties & Municipalities



## What's the Difference?

This Power Point can be used alone or in conjunction with Carolina K-12's lesson, "Counties & Municipalities, What's the Difference?" available in the Database of K-12 Resources: [k12database.unc.edu](http://k12database.unc.edu)

To view this PDF as a projectable presentation, save the file, click "View" in the top menu bar of the file, and select "Full Screen Mode"

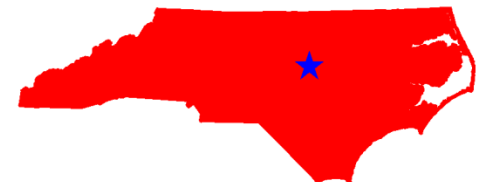
To request an editable PPT version of this presentation, send a request to [CarolinaK12@unc.edu](mailto:CarolinaK12@unc.edu)

# Local Government?

- What comes to mind when you hear these two words?
- What do you already know about local government?

# Overview

- While **counties** and **municipalities** both provide services to their residents, they are formed in different ways, have a different basis for providing services, and exercise their authority differently.



# Basis of County Government

- Counties are the oldest unit of local government
- Colonies were divided into counties to help carry out laws and collect taxes in rural areas
  - Because farmers lived far apart, county business was conducted in a central place most people could reach within a day's wagon ride
  - This distance to the '**county seat**' established the boundaries of many counties



## Basis of County Government cont'd...

- Counties were legally established by the **North Carolina General Assembly** to make basic government services more readily available throughout the state
- County lines were drawn and redrawn from 1776 to 1912, when the last of the hundred counties was created

# North Carolina Counties



# Kinds of county government services...

- The county **register of deeds** maintains legal records of all property transactions and of marriages, births, and deaths.
- The county **board of elections** registers voters and conducts elections for federal, state, and local offices.



# Kinds of county government services cont'd...

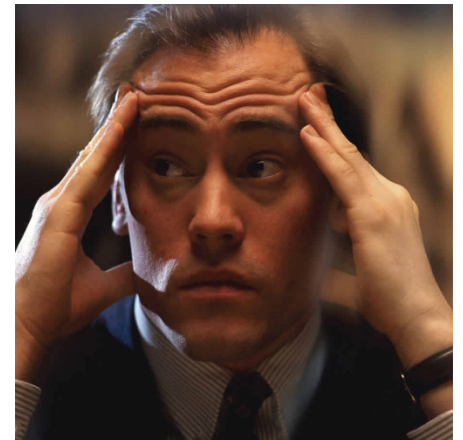
- The **county sheriff** operates a jail to hold people awaiting trial and people convicted of minor crimes and the county is required to provide appropriate space for the state's district and superior courts.
- Counties provide **emergency medical service** either through county departments or through support for volunteer EMS squads.





# Kinds of county government services cont'd...

- Counties have responsibility for social services, public health services, and mental health services.



# Kinds of county government services cont'd...

- Counties provide for the safe disposal of solid wastes produced in the county.
- Counties provide substantial funding for public schools, often the single largest expenditure in county budgets.



# Kinds of county government services cont'd...

- Counties also have been given authority to perform a number of other services, including: building inspections, law enforcement, fire protection, public libraries, parks and recreation programs, planning and zoning, water supply, and wastewater treatment.



# Basics of Municipal Government

- Municipalities (cities, towns, and villages) are **incorporated** within counties because people living there desire an even more localized provision of public services and decision-making
- Municipalities must be incorporated by act of the General Assembly, which defines the geographic boundaries of the municipality and approves its charter.
- The **charter** may call the municipality a city, a town, or a village
  - in North Carolina, these terms carry no special legal meaning and are not tied to the population of the municipality as in some other states.

# Municipal government services

- Municipal governments often provide the same types of services as counties, such as water supply, wastewater treatment, police and fire protection, garbage collection, planning and zoning, and building inspection.
- Some municipalities operate additional services, such as airports, auditoriums, bus systems, cemeteries, electric or gas systems, parks and recreation programs, public housing, and traffic control.
- \*Oftentimes, counties and municipalities will work together to coordinate for the most efficient provision of services.



## Major Services Provided by Counties and Municipalities in North Carolina

*This chart shows a general listing of the services local governments are authorized to provide. Counties and municipalities may choose to contract for these services rather than operate them directly.*

### Services Usually Provided by Counties Only

- |   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 1. Community colleges                                   | 7. Public health services       |
| 2. Cooperative extension                                | 8. Public schools               |
| 3. Court facilities (construction and maintenance only) | 9. Register of Deeds            |
| 4. Elections  | 10. Social services             |
| 5. Jails  | 11. Soil and water conservation |
| 6. Mental health services                               | 12. Tax assessment              |
|   | 13. Youth detention facilities  |

### Services Provided by Both Counties and Municipalities

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Airports                           | 18. Law enforcement                                     |
| 2. Ambulance service                  | 19. Libraries   |
| 3. Animal shelters                    | 20. Open space and parks                                |
| 4. Art galleries and museums          | 21. Planning, land use regulation, and code enforcement |
| 5. Auditoriums/coliseums              | 22. Property acquisition, sales, and disposition        |
| 6. Building inspection                | 23. Public housing                                      |
| 7. Buses/public transit               | 24. Recreation programs                                 |
| 8. Cable television regulation        | 25. Rescue squads                                       |
| 9. Community and economic development | 26. Senior citizen programs                             |
| 10. Community appearance              | 27. Sewer systems                                       |
| 11. Emergency management              | 28. Solid waste collection and disposal                 |
| 12. Environmental protection          | 29. Storm drainage                                      |
| 13. Fire protection                   | 30. Tax collection                                      |
| 14. Historic preservation             | 31. Veterans' services                                  |
| 15. Human relations                   | 32. Water supply and protection                         |
| 16. Industrial development            |   |
| 17. Job training                      |   |

### Services Usually Provided by Municipalities Only

- |                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Cemeteries       | 5. Street lighting   |
| 2. Electric systems | 6. Streets           |
| 3. Gas systems      | 7. Traffic control   |
| 4. Sidewalks        | 8. Urban development |

From *Local Government in North Carolina* by Gordon Whitaker

# So who is in charge?

- Citizens?
- Mayor?
- City/County Manager?
- Council?
- Board of Commissioners?
- Sheriff?
- A combination of all these?



# Authority in counties

- **Voters** in each county elect a board of **county commissioners**, a **sheriff**, and a **register of deeds**.
- While the board of county commissioners has general responsibility for county government, this board shares authority for setting county policy with other officials--**state officials**, the sheriff, the register of deeds, and **independent county boards** that oversee elections, mental health services, public health services, social services, and alcoholic beverage control.
- However, funds to support these services must be raised by the board of county commissioners and the budgets must be approved by the board of county commissioners, giving the board of county commissioners the potential to influence these programs as well.



# Authority in Municipalities

- **Voters** in each municipality elect their own governing board, called a **council, board of aldermen, or board of commissioners**.
  - In some municipalities, a **mayor** is elected separately from other members of the governing board, while in other municipalities, citizens elect members of the governing board and then the governing board selects a mayor from within the group.
- The governing board makes all official decisions for the city, including setting the local tax rate, adopting the budget, making policies for services, passing ordinances to regulate behavior, and entering agreements on behalf of the municipality.
- **Advisory boards** made up of citizens appointed by the governing board often offer recommendations in areas such as planning and parks and recreation, but nearly all final decisions are made by the municipality's governing board.

# County/City Managers

- In every North Carolina county, and in all but the smallest municipalities, a *professional manager* serves as the chief executive for the local government; this is called the *council-manager form of government*.
- The manager is responsible for carrying out the governing board's policies and for running the local government's operations, including coordinating the work of departments, advising the board on policy issues, proposing a balanced budget, and monitoring the adopted budget throughout the year.
- Managers also hire and fire department heads, except for the county's sheriff and register of deeds, who are elected by the voters. Managers serve "at the pleasure of" the governing board," which means that he or she can be fired at any time whenever a majority of the board decides they want a new manager.

# Who You Gonna' Call?

## County or City?

- Your scenario involves an issue that a local government would be responsible for addressing.
- You and your group must figure out how to stage & act out the scenario, communicating all relevant details. Be creative but make sure you convey the main points of the scenario.
- After you have acted out your scene, the audience will determine whether the county or municipal government is most likely responsible for addressing the scenario, answering the question: “Who you gonna' call?”
- Use their notes and/or the “Services Provided by Municipalities and Counties” list as a guide.
- Remember...a great deal of overlap can occur, as county and municipality responsibilities and relationships can vary greatly by county.

# Public Service and public servants

- While elected officials are responsible for making many of the important decisions in counties and municipalities, they rely on staff for day-to-day operation of the locality.

