

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS AND INDEPENDENT BOARDS

● This Power Point can be used alone or in conjunction with Carolina K-12's lesson, "County Commissioners and Independent Boards"; available in the Database of K-12 Resources: k12database.unc.edu

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The Board of County Commissioners

- Under the 1868 NC Constitution, voters in each county began to elect a board of county commissioners, replacing “justices of the peace” appointed by the governor
- The board of county commissioners has general responsibility of county government



Commissioner Responsibilities

- ❑ Setting local property tax rate
- ❑ Adopting the county budget
- ❑ Passing ordinances, resolutions, and orders to establish county policies
- ❑ Appointing a county clerk to keep official records of the board's meetings and decision, to publish notices, to conduct research, and to provide information to citizens about county government



Shared Authority

- Unlike a city or town governing board, the board of county commissioners shares authority for setting county policy with other officials:
 - ▣ State officials
 - ▣ The Sheriff
 - ▣ The Register of Deeds
 - ▣ The Clerk of Court
 - ▣ Independent County Boards

(Like County Commissioners, these are locally elected officials)

A diagram consisting of an orange rectangular callout box with white text. Three blue arrows originate from the left side of the box and point to the text 'The Sheriff', 'The Register of Deeds', and 'The Clerk of Court' in the list above. The box contains the text '(Like County Commissioners, these are locally elected officials)'.

State Officials

- The General Assembly and various state agencies are often directly involved in setting policy for county governments through mandates that require the county to provide certain services or follow specific procedures



The Sheriff, Register of Deeds, and Clerk of Court

- As elected officials, the sheriff, register of deeds, and clerk or court have authority independent of the board of county commissioners...
- ▣ The sheriff is responsible for law enforcement in the county
- ▣ The register of deeds is responsible for maintaining records of real estate ownership and other vital records including marriage licenses, birth certificates, death certificates, and business licenses
- ▣ The clerk of court is responsible for all administrative, clerical and record-keeping functions of the district and superior court. In addition, the Clerk receives and disburses money collected each year from court fees and fines.

Independent Boards



- ❑ NC state law provides for 6 separate independent boards in counties with responsibility for alcoholic beverage control, public education, elections, public health, mental health, social services
- ❑ Independent boards in NC counties appoint directors for their agencies and make local policies regarding agency operations

Independent Boards cont'd...

- Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC)
 - Ensures that the manufacturing, transportation, and sale of alcoholic beverages is handled in a responsible and controlled manner
 - Ensures that purchases are made by only those who are legally entitled
 - Provides education and information on alcohol-related issues



Independent Boards cont'd...

□ Board of Education

- ▣ Local boards of education are made up of officials, elected at the school district level, that:
 - Manage the budget for operating schools
 - Set school calendars
 - Make decisions about textbooks and other school-related matters



Independent Boards cont'd...

□ Board of Elections

- ▣ Registers voters
- ▣ Maintains voter registration records
- ▣ Files candidates
- ▣ Conducts elections
- ▣ Reports elections results to state board of elections



Independent Boards cont'd...

□ Public Health

- ▣ Regulates restaurant cleanliness
- ▣ Educates people about health issues
- ▣ Provides shots to prevent illness
- ▣ Cares for the ill who cannot afford to care for themselves



Independent Boards cont'd...

- Mental Health Services
 - ▣ Provide psychiatric services for county residents
 - ▣ Provide treatment for substance abusers
 - ▣ Provide schools and education services for the mentally challenged



Independent Boards cont'd...

□ Social Services

- ▣ Provide assistance to county residents with low incomes
- ▣ Help children through foster care, adoption, and counseling programs
- ▣ Administer the federal food stamp program



Note on independent boards and county commissioners

- Independent boards DO NOT have the authority to levy taxes. Funds to support independent board services must be raised by the board of county commissioners. Also, all independent board budgets must be approved by the board of county commissioners
- For the reasons listed above, the board of county commissioners has the potential to influence all county programs that depend on county money, including even the schools, which operate as separate administrative units

PART II:

Allocation decisions and funding examples

□ Allocation Decisions

- ▣ What do allocation decisions tell us about the needs of a county and/or commissioners' priorities, if anything?

Funding example

□ Durham County (FY 2016)

▣ Total Expenses: \$376,215,305

- Education: \$130,191,507 (32.84%)
- Public Safety: 57,309,107 (14.45%)
- Human Services (public health, mental health, and social services): \$95,523,012 (22.51%)
- Board of Elections: \$2,636,116
- General Government (minus elections): \$60,303,154 (24.65%)
- Transportation: \$12,500 (0%)
- Environmental Protection: \$4,300,471 (.98%)
- Economic & Physical Development: \$6,238,585 (1.53%)
- Cultural & Recreational: \$12,994,407 (3.03%)

■ Source: <http://dconc.gov/home/showdocument?id=13585>

Funding example

- Buncombe County (FY 2016)
 - ▣ Total Expenses: \$308,356,732
 - Education: \$80,480,659 (26.10%)
 - Public Safety: 61,703,475 (20.01%)
 - Human Services (public health, mental health, and social services): \$94,367,577 (30.60%)
 - Board of Elections: \$2,353,898
 - General Government (minus elections): \$25,125,245 (8.91%)
 - Economic & Physical Development: \$9,051,128 (2.94%)
 - Cultural & Recreational: \$8,120,791 (2.63%)
 - Source: <https://www.buncombecounty.org/common/budget-management/budget-in-brief-fy16.pdf>

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