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Ramsey County Government Study Commission

Final Report and recommendations submitted to
the Honorable Judge Ronald E. Hachey
and to the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners.

OFFICIALLY FILED ON DECEMBER 22, 1977

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL
December 22, 1977

TO: Honorable Judge Ronald E. Hachey,
Members of the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners and
Citizens of Ramsey County

This final report of the Ramsey County Government Study Commission is hereby officially filed.


As Chairman of the Commission, I want to express my sincere appreciation and commendation to Judge Hachey for selecting an outstanding group of citizens to serve on the Commission and to each of the Commission members because they have performed a most competent and extremely valuable public service. All of the Commission members gave many hours of conscientious thought to the tasks they were assigned. It took a lot of time and they served without any compensation except in what I hope will be their own satisfaction with an excellent final product. I do not believe a better example of citizen participation could be found.

On behalf of the Commission, our thanks and appreciation go to the members of the County Board who cooperated in every respect to make the Commission's work productive. All of the Board members and all of the County staff that were asked to participate in interviews or to provide information were most cooperative and helpful. We are grateful to representatives of citizens' groups who attended and participated in the Commission's activity and to individuals who attended or expressed themselves on the important subject matter of the Commission's work. We must also acknowledge with appreciation Sandi Schneider, our Administrative Secretary, and Bernard E. Steffen, our Research Consultant, for their assistance to the Commission's total effort.

The Commission has recommended change in the structure of Ramsey County. The need for this change is almost universally recognized and the process by which it can occur has been negotiated in a spirit of compromise and mutual respect.

We sincerely believe that implementation of the recommendations of this Commission will add to the efficiency and responsiveness of Ramsey County Government.

Respectfully submitted,


A. J. (Tony) DeZiel, Chairman
Ramsey County Government Study Commission

INDIVIDUAL COMMISSION MEMBER CONCURRENCE

The undersigned members of the Ramsey County Government Study Commission hereby individually concur with the recommendations and report of the Ramsey County Government Study Commission and agree that it be formally filed as a final report of the Commission on December 22, 1977.

A. J. (Tony) Deziel
A. J. (Tony) Deziel, Chairman

Shan Knox
Shan Knox, Vice-Chairperson

Diane Ahrens
Diane Ahrens

John T. Finley
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I.

LISTING OF MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

A. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO THE ROLE OF THE COUNTY BOARD

A-1. The role of the County Board should be shifted to enlarge the policy and planning responsibility and capability of the Board and by delegating specific administrative functions to an executive director.

A-2. The Commission recommends that a County Board standing committee system be retained, with primary emphasis on policy and long-range planning issues. The committee organization should follow functional lines to the extent possible; the responsibility for maintaining staff capability and committee agenda preparation should be vested in the County Executive Director.

A-3. The Commission recommends that the role of commissioner aides and the role of administrative staff be clearly defined and distinguished to prevent interference of aides in the administrative and policy development process and to minimize potential involvement of administrative staff in commissioner district political affairs.

A-4. The Commission recommends that a County Board made up of seven members be continued and that a mechanism to provide for continuity of membership through staggered terms be made available by legislative action as soon as possible.

A-5. The Commission recommends that the internal audit function continue to be accountable directly to the Board of County Commissioners.

A-6. The Commission recommends that the State Legislature be requested to reexamine required advisory committees and that legislation be enacted which would leave the decision to continue or abolish advisory committees to the County Board. It is further recommended that all advisory committees be given written statements of charge or responsibility and that there be a formal and regular system of reporting activities to the County Board, either directly or through one of the standing committees.

A-7. To accommodate what appears to be an increasing public interest in participation in governmental decision making, the Commission recommends that the County Board retain its formal advisory committee appointment procedure and that the County Executive Director be charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the procedure is followed.

A-8. The Commission recommends that the County Board continue its current policy of assigning legislative representation responsibility to a standing committee of the Board. The Executive Director should be charged with the responsibility to assist the County Board in the initiation of a legislative program and to provide staff service to the County Board's legislative effort on a continuing basis.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO PROPOSED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ROLE

B-1. The Commission recommends that the position of Executive Director be created by County Board resolution with qualifications, appointment and termination provisions and authority as provided in the proposed resolution set forth in Appendix 1. It is further recommended that enactment of the legislation proposed as Appendix 2 be postponed indefinitely if the County Board acts in 1978 to implement an administrative structure which substantially conforms to the recommendations of the Commission.

B-2. The Commission recommends that the resolution or future legislation creating the Executive Director position set forth general administrative authorities and responsibilities pursuant to recommendations of the Commission; and should include delegation of responsibility to the Executive Director to appoint or terminate unclassified personnel subject to appointment by the County Board, with the advice, consent and final approval of the County Board.

B-3. The Commission recommends that a structure for long-range, overall management planning be created. A primary assignment of the Executive Director should be responsibility for development of the appropriate planning structure, staffing of that structure, and the integration of administrative, fiscal, and service policy considerations into the planning decision structure.

B-4. The Commission recommends that the budget process be improved by adding to the current procedures a clearly-defined responsibility for the Executive Director to develop program evaluation procedures which include cost/benefit analysis on the basis of program. He should provide for re-alignment of the budget format in terms of program identification. The annual budget should be integrated with long-range planning and capital improvements projections.

B-5. The Commission recommends that the Executive Director be assigned responsibility for developing formal procedures for the evaluation of the performance of operating departments and administrative staff. This evaluation system should include an annual performance review, coupled with a compensation program for management personnel. Both the evaluation program and the compensation program should be professionally implemented and maintained to provide objective bases for policy board review and action. The Executive Director should be assigned the function of developing detailed descriptions of job functions of department heads. He should develop a formalized application process which includes written position qualifications to be used in the recruitment process for these positions.

B-6. The Executive Director and administrative staff should be responsible for maintenance and support of the standing committee system and for communicating an interpretation of basic written administrative code matters to department heads.

B-7. The Commission recommends that the Executive Director be charged with the responsibility and authority to develop and maintain a complete public information and internal communication program for Ramsey County.

B-8. It is recommended that a specific component of the public information function recommended by the Commission include attention to public information with respect to the budget process of the County.

B-9. It is recommended that clearly-defined responsibility for developing and maintaining communication lines between the County and all municipal governments within the County be shared by the County Board members in their representative capacities and the individual department heads with respect to service relationships. The Executive Director should play a role as an initial contact and as the office responsible for ensuring careful definition of responsibility and performance in those cases involving staff relationships.

B-10. It is recommended that the staff presently charged with the functions of identifying, coordinating, and recommending grant programs for County Board approval be assigned to the Executive Director.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO DEPARTMENTAL ORGANIZATION

C-1. The departmental service delivery organization of Ramsey County needs to be significantly re-aligned to promote efficiency, to establish accountability, and to ensure responsiveness to public policy decisions. It is recommended that the administrative structure of the County contain a specific component which is assigned the function of analyzing and recommending re-alignment of service departments as a continuous responsibility in the management structure of Ramsey County.

II.

BACKGROUND, METHOD and SCOPE OF STUDY

The Ramsey County Government Study Commission was created pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Chapter 375A. The Ramsey County Board adopted a resolution, in December, 1975, requesting the Honorable Ronald E. Hachey, Chief Judge of the Second Judicial District, to appoint a commission in accord with the statutory authorization.

The Commission held its organizational meeting in June, 1976. During the first four months after its creation the Commission took testimony from persons experienced in Minnesota county government generally, and from persons involved in similar studies in other Minnesota counties.

In October, 1976, the Commission retained Bernard E. Steffen, a partner in the law firm of Steffen, Munstenteiger, Bearnse, Beens & Parta and a former Anoka County Administrator, to develop a work program and to serve as a consultant coordinator to the Commission and its committees for the remainder of the Study. At that time, the Commission recognized that it could not effectively complete the Study within one year, as dictated by the applicable Statute. An extension of time was requested and granted to allow the Commission additional time to complete its work. The extension will expire

in July, 1978.

The Commission organized into three subcommittees to expedite its work program. They were charged as summarized below:

County Board Organization and Procedures Committee - Analysis of the top management and policy organization of the County.

Management Staff Organization Committee - Review and analysis of the organization and procedures used to communicate between policy makers, department heads and key administrative staff.

External Relationships Committee - Study of the systems of communication available to citizens and to representatives of other governmental units which have an interest in the functions and programs of Ramsey County.

Each of the subcommittees developed a list of proposed interviews and subjects to be covered. The time between November, 1976 and June, 1977 was devoted to this research phase of the Commission's Study.

In early 1977, it became apparent that the interviews and general subject areas of the County Board Organization and Procedures Committee and the Management Staff Organization Committee would overlap and a procedure of joint committee meetings for these two committees was then developed.

During the research phase, the Commission continued monthly meetings of the Commission as a whole to handle administrative matters and to generally maintain communication

among the three subcommittees which had been formed.

In the early part of the research phase of the Study, the Commission made a preliminary and tentative decision that none of the available options specifically fit the needs of Ramsey County and that the Commission would proceed to recommend a specific action by the State Legislature, where appropriate, and by the County Board, where appropriate, in order to tailor proposed structural changes to the specific needs of Ramsey County. This preliminary decision was reaffirmed as the committees reported back to the full Commission in July and August of 1977. The recommendations of the Commission in its preliminary report reflected this basic assumption and decision.

After the preliminary report was prepared, the Commission held two public hearings and a meeting with the County Board. A special committee was appointed to develop agreement with the County Board on the specific substantive recommendations of the Commission and to resolve differences between the Commission and a majority of the County Board on the procedure for implementation.

The Commission is not recommending that any of the available options set forth in Minnesota Statutes Chapter 375A be adopted. It is also not recommending that legislation in

accordance with the draft contained in the Appendix of this Report be supported by the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners and the Ramsey County legislative delegation unless the County Board does not act in 1978 to implement an administrative structure substantially in accord with the recommendations of the Commission.

The Commission made one other preliminary decision and assumption which should be recognized in analyzing the recommendations which have been made. The assumption is that the organizational structure of the departments and activities carried out by Ramsey County government, in fulfilling its service role to the citizens of the County, involves an exceedingly complex and ever changing set of relationships.

The Commission determined that it would limit its concerns to policy and administrative structure relationships rather than to attempt the detailed study that would be necessary to recommend specific departmental organizational changes. In recommending the proposed structure, the Commission anticipates that the County Board and the Executive Director will develop procedures that will result in appropriate departmental reorganizations.

The Commission began its work with a review of previous studies of Ramsey County government which have taken place within the last decade. Those studies dealt with many of the

same issues which came before this Commission in 1976 and 1977. Both the County Board and the Legislature have responded to the previous studies with affirmative action to develop a better governmental structure. The recommendations of this Commission are extensions of the prior work; those efforts should be recognized as the starting point for and great assistance to the work of this Commission.

III.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND BACKGROUND FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Why Any Change In Structure?

Over the past two decades, Ramsey County, like other counties in Minnesota and across the nation, has experienced a very high rate of service program growth. This growth has occurred primarily in the human services or social services areas, largely because the legislature has recognized the county unit as the appropriate level of government for delivery of these services. The county is a unit of government which is close enough to the people to be sensitive but large enough to be efficient.

All of this growth, with its diverse and complex program requirements, has been absorbed by a unit of government which has not changed its basic commission form since its creation as a rural service agency more than 100 years ago. This structure provides a very high level of political responsiveness. It provides a relatively low level of management efficiency. It is a form that was abandoned in most large cities nearly a half century ago. Except for counties, it now exists only in small municipalities with relatively small and simple service programs.

The Legislative Interim Commission that studied county government in Ramsey County in 1970 recognized the management weakness of this basic structure. That commission recommended:

"That the County Board consider the appointment of a County Administrator pursuant to Minn. Stat. 375.48, .49, .50, to be charged with the overall business management and administrative responsibility for County government."

The Local Government Study Commission of Ramsey County, established by the legislature in 1973, in its 1974 final report, recommended:

"That Ramsey County adopt the county manager form of government as defined in the Optional Forms of County Government Act".

The County Board did establish a county administrator position in 1971 pursuant to M.S. 375.48. Because of statutory name change provisions, the position is currently titled "Executive Secretary to the County Board". Since 1975, this position has not been empowered to administer county functions. The position is primarily used as a communication and procedural linkage center. The County Board, through its standing committee structure, provides the only real central administrative activity that exists.

It should be noted that the studies referred to above also made several other recommendations for structural change that were adopted.

Through the commission's interview process, county department heads, the current Executive Secretary, County Board members, and officials from Ramsey County municipalities were asked to comment on the current structure and to indicate in general what weaknesses they saw in the current structure; what its strengths are, and to the extent that they were in a position to do so, to recommend changes in that structure. There was not unanimous agreement on what weaknesses exist nor the extent of those weaknesses. Recommendations for change to strengthen the structure and areas in which change was deemed advisable were not unanimous.

There was, however, a thread of agreement through virtually all of the opinions expressed that Ramsey County generally has no internal mechanism to develop its policies, objectives and administrative procedures systematically. In some respects, it appears to be operating in spite of itself or in spite of its structure.

This situation is not unique to Ramsey County, and considerable credit must be given to the people involved in its government, because they dedicate themselves to making a structure run which is out of date and not generally efficient for its purposes. The structure does not contain staff that has been given clearly defined authority or made clearly responsible for administrative, day-to-day operational decisions. Therefore, administrative decisions increasingly

evolve back to the County Board. The result is that the County Board has its time and energy excessively devoted to administrative detail.

There is a natural tendency for this to occur in any organization if the management allows it to happen and if there are structural weaknesses which allow it to continue. Again, it is a weakness common to commission form governments. The adverse effects of these weaknesses are: 1) Department heads escape accountability for administrative matters that properly rest with them; 2) The County Board simply does not have time to give attention to major policy activity.

The need to develop a structure which would provide an appropriate balance between political responsiveness and administrative efficiency and accountability became the primary focus of the Commission's work.

Recognition of the need to change the current structure was virtually universal among the officials interviewed. The question of what would be the best structure and the best mechanism for development of that structure led to many hours of Commission discussion and debate. There is virtually no disagreement on the general concept that the administrative structure of the County should be strengthened and the County Board members should be thereby given more time to devote to policy decisions and management planning.

Managing any large business or service entity effectively, whether private or public, requires basic management systems and controls to be developed at least in the following general areas:

1. A system for making short and long-range financing and expenditure decisions and controls.
2. A system for personnel acquisition, organization or deployment of personnel, and performance control.
3. A system for planning and providing space, tools and equipment for both short and long term operations.
4. A system of sales promotion or advertising, in the governmental sphere, public information.

The Commission in its research did not find a conscious recognition of these basic management system requirements in its review of the current operations of Ramsey County. Again, this is not a unique or specific criticism of Ramsey County when compared to other governmental units. In fact, a number of the parts of these systems are in place and functioning very well in Ramsey County. However, the present structure does not provide for continuity and specialization of effort from the appropriate officials. The need to have a consistent policy management approach is apparent.

Why Not One Of The Major "County Options Act" Options?

Each of the major options available under the County Options Act contained in Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 375A involves a structure designed to deal with the specific management question outlined above.

The major options available are:

- a) The Elected Executive Plan,
- b) The County Manager Plan,
- c) The At-Large Chairman Plan,
- d) The County Administrator

An objection to each of these options arose as the Commission examined and attempted to relate them to Ramsey County needs. Either the particular option created too much administrative autonomy (The Manager Plan), or additional political power structures that were viewed as unnecessary (Elected Executive Plan, At-Large Chairman Plan); or, the powers enumerated did not fit directly when compared to the general weaknesses and needs observed by the Commission (The Administrator Plan).

Also, a decision to proceed with a recommendation of one of the major options involved a recognition on the part of the Commission that no referendum proposal for any one of the options that has been made since 1973 in the State of Minnesota has succeeded. From the Commission's own observations and testimony from persons involved in referendum

attempts in other counties, the complexity and low visibility of county government structure issues creates an insurmountable education and information requirement if the objective is to get voter approval on an informed judgment basis. The conclusion, therefore, is that the matter should be dealt with by County Board and County Legislative Delegation action and that the recommended change should take place through actions of these bodies.

Strengthen The "Administrative Structure" Through County Board Action.

Considerable discussion and debate evolved in the Commission on the question of whether or not the proposed administrative structure creating the Executive Director position should be a matter left to County Board action rather than proposing legislative action. This question became the major difference between the Commission and the County Board following publication of the preliminary Commission report in which the Commission majority indicated that it favored legislative action, primarily to ensure continuity of administrative structure, irrespective of political or personality change.

It is recognized that in the balance of responsiveness and efficiency which is necessary, it is important that the County Board have virtually unlimited control over the selection and tenure of the person holding the Executive

Director position. It is the conclusion of the Commission that the appropriate political control should be exercised by evaluating the performance of the Executive Director. It should not be exercised by County Board action deleting authority from the office in the event that performance in a particular area is not satisfactory. This is a philosophical and political relationship question which was thoroughly debated in the Commission meetings. In addition to the desire for administrative continuity and certainty of structure, the Commission members who favored legislative action on this matter put heavy emphasis on the fact that the need for this type of position has been discussed, analyzed, and broadly accepted in previous studies; but the County Board continues to operate without fully implementing what appears to be a commonly recognized need. The initial legislative recommendation was a result of these considerations and factors.

The result of discussions with the County Board was development of agreement clearly indicating the intent and desire of the County Board to implement a strong administrative structure that substantially conforms with the recommendations of the Commission.

In the interests of accomplishing the mutually recognized needed structural changes in the most immediately certain and universally accepted form, the Commission has agreed to postpone its legislative recommendation.

It should be noted that the County Board members raised valid concerns relating to the legislative recommendation. They also impressed the Commission with their sincere and informed recognition of the need to improve the administrative structure of the county. The Board members noted that they were awaiting completion of the Commission's work before proceeding.

Staggered Terms For County Board Members

A review of the problems that were created through the need to quickly background five new County Board members, elected to take office at the beginning of 1975 when all seven members of the Board were up for election, was clearly enunciated by the new members themselves, by members of the County Board who carried over from the previous term, and by department heads. The potential for this lack of continuity in the policy body to be repeated is a major weakness in the system. The legislature is urged to deal with this question prior to the expiration of terms for the current County Board members.

Communication Recommendations

Another major area of concern is the need to maintain and improve communications to and from the general public, with other governmental units within the county, with metropolitan agencies and with the state and federal levels of government. The systems for meeting this need are built

into the recommendations that the Commission has formulated, both with respect to the role of the County Board and the Executive Director position. The communication function is becoming increasingly important. A systematic approach is needed to ensure its accomplishment.

IV.

RATIONALE

The recommendations of the Commission contained in this section involve a basic assumption which the Commission made during its study. That assumption is that all of the options available under M.S. Chapter 375A contain some authority and responsibility changes that the Commission finds are inappropriate to the needs of Ramsey County. Therefore, special legislation has been prepared as part of the Commission's work product (Appendix 2). It is designed to provide changes in the administrative organization of Ramsey County that are directly related to the recommendations of the Commission. The proposed legislation should be supported and enacted only if the County Board does not act in 1978 to implement an administrative structure substantially conforming to the recommendations of the Commission.

Changes in the authority and responsibility of the administrative structure of the County necessarily assume changes in the role of the Ramsey County Board. The efficiency and responsiveness of the total governmental unit is dependent upon a clearly understood and delicately balanced relationship between the County Board and the

administrative leadership of the County. The recommendations of the Commission recognize this balance question.

The rationale and recommendations of the Commission are set out in this section in the following order:

- A. Role of the County Board;
- B. Role of the Executive Director;
- C. Departmental Organization;
- D. Miscellaneous Issues.

A. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO THE ROLE OF THE COUNTY BOARD

- A-1. The role of the County Board should be shifted to enlarge the policy and planning responsibility and capability of the Board and by delegating specific administrative functions to an executive director.

Rationale

It is a finding of the Commission that the current County Board is involving itself in detailed administrative matters in keeping with the "commission form" of government that has been the historic form in Minnesota. It is a finding that all of the County Board members have dedicated a great deal of time to their duties relating to the business of Ramsey County government.

The concern of the Commission is that this form commits much of the time of the County Board members to administrative matters and thereby prevents dedication of sufficient time to long-range policy, development of clear plans for meeting current and future needs, and similar long-range decision making responsibilities. The recommended change in the

role of the County Board members will not diminish their responsibility nor their value. It will not reduce the time which they will be required to dedicate to their official responsibility. One of the fundamental intentions in the recommendation and in the anticipated result is to allow the County Board members to shift their emphasis from the day-to-day crisis orientation of administration and instead to concentrate upon determining service direction, participation with other levels of government in determining the role and services to be provided by the County in the future, analysis of top-level employment needs, performance, evaluation, etc. Specifically, the Commission believes that the commissioners, under the proposed form, would be more valuable and that they will play a greater role in developing good governmental programs.

* * * * *

A-2. The Commission recommends that a County Board standing committee system be retained, with primary emphasis on policy and long-range planning issues. The committee organization should follow functional lines to the extent possible; the responsibility for maintaining staff capability and committee agenda preparation should be vested in the County Executive Director.

Rationale

The Commission finds that integration of policy and administrative work flow with projections for the future requires direct and constant communication between the policy board and top-level administrative department heads. The County Board's standing committee structure now serves as a vehicle for sharing accountability for administrative decisions at the same time that it provides a basic understanding of current and future needs. This should not continue. The County Board standing committee structure

should be aimed at the development of service and fiscal policy. Departments should be structured along functional lines into administrative working units which are accountable for the execution of policy and the delivery of services.

The standing committees of the Board, as re-aligned two years ago and with changes made at the beginning of 1977, have provided a communication system which is viewed by both Board members and department heads as a significant improvement in communication between the County Board and department heads. Partly because of the newness of the system, and the fact that five of the County Board members were new in 1975, there is some confusion in procedures and functions of the committees which should be clarified.

The Commission recommends that one of the assignments of the Executive Director be to provide a staff component whose function is to service the committee system, including clearly written descriptions of each committee charge, and to develop proposals for County Board consideration to re-align the committee structure itself along better functional lines. The current standing committee system draws from a tradition which mixed long-range planning functions and administrative control functions without clear distinction. This creates confusion for department heads and the County Board. Re-alignment of committees to eliminate this confusion is recommended.

* * * * *

A-3. The Commission recommends that the role of commissioner aides and the role of administrative staff be clearly defined and distinguished to prevent interference of aides in the administrative and policy development process and to minimize potential involvement of administrative staff in commissioner district political affairs.

Rationale

One of the difficult processes to understand in government and the public attitude toward government today is the need for policy makers to remove themselves from administration in order to have time to develop policy, while at the same time requiring them to spend time in contact with their constituencies in order to be able to respond to requests for services, complaints about service, and other citizen concerns. This ombudsman function must be recognized, and the need for policy makers to have "eyes and ears" beyond their own in their constituencies to keep a political flow that results in responsive government must be recognized.

Increasingly, elected officials in local government must directly involve themselves in development of background and understanding with which they can communicate directly with elected officials in layers of government either above or below their own.

* * * * *

A-4. The Commission recommends that a County Board made up of seven members be continued and that a mechanism to provide for continuity of membership through staggered terms be made available by legislative action as soon as possible.

Rationale

Under current law, all seven of the County Board members have terms which expire at one time. The complexity of County government is simply too great to allow the potential for a complete turnover, or a nearly complete turnover, of County Board members at any one time. Staggered terms, which would provide for four members of the Board to be elected at one time, and three members to be elected two years later, with four-year terms thereafter, is recommended. The mechanism

by which the change is made should include consideration of six-year terms once, with the distribution of the six-year and four-year terms on an equitable basis. The process of election is becoming increasingly expensive; the complexity of the policy-making functions, combined with this expensive process, dictates against development of two-year terms and four-year terms at one election and thereafter, four-year terms.

* * * * *

A-5. The Commission recommends that the internal audit function continue to be accountable directly to the Board of County Commissioners.

Rationale

Provision for adequate checks and balances under the proposed administrative structure should be provided to guard against malfeasance. An internal audit section reporting directly to the County Board currently exists and should continue to function as it presently does. The presence of this audit system will serve as a safeguard against potential abuse of administrative authority.

* * * * *

A-6. The Commission recommends that the State Legislature be requested to re-examine required advisory committees and that legislation be enacted which would leave the decision to continue or abolish advisory committees to the County Board. It is further recommended that all advisory committees be given

written statements of charge or responsibility and that there be a formal and regular system of reporting activities to the County Board, either directly or through one of the standing committees.

Rationale

Various advisory or administrative committees are now required by statute or by State or federal regulation and have been a fact of county government structure for many years. The County Board, on its own initiative, has created some advisory committees for specific projects or programs. The determination of the role to be performed by advisory committees, whether they should continue to exist as needs for service change, etc., should, to the extent possible, be a decision made by the County Board as part of its policy role. Committees operating in a quasi-administrative role tend to disperse responsibility and accountability, particularly where the directive to create such committees is from outside the policy body of the county.

Except in those instances where the legislature determines that an outside advisory group is necessary, the decision to establish or continue advisory committees should be left to the County Board. The legislature should examine the need for current statutory advisory committees and should consider the issue of accountability in determining whether existing statutory advisory committees should be continued.

* * * * *

A-7. To accommodate what appears to be an increasing public interest in participation in governmental decision making, the Commission recommends that the County Board retain its formal advisory committee

appointment procedure and that the County Executive Director be charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the procedure is followed.

Rationale

Increasingly, it is recognized that interested individuals who may not be known to the appointing authority should be given an opportunity to serve on advisory committees. The Ramsey County Board has adopted a good open appointment policy. The policy responds to a need for communication and involvement with the general public. It is recommended that this procedure be followed, that it be regularly updated, and that it continue as a part of the County Board operating procedures in the future.

* * * * *

A-8. The Commission recommends that the County Board continue its current policy of assigning legislative representation responsibility to a standing committee of the Board. The Executive Director should be charged with the responsibility to assist the County Board in the initiation of a legislative program and to provide staff service to the County Board's legislative effort on a continuing basis.

Rationale

Testimony received by the Commission made it very clear that decisions by both the State legislature and United States Congress have major impact upon county policy making and operations. The relationship with the State legislative delegation has been effectively improved with the current County Board operating procedure. It is extremely important to County government that legislators hear from both the elected and staff components of the County with respect to the effect that proposed legislation will have on the services rendered by the County, the effect on plans of the County, and the effect on revenue sources and service capabilities of the County. The political relationship between the County Board with its policy authority and State legislators in their role is an extremely important and delicate one. This relationship and the ability of the County to provide a systematic communication link with changing circumstances should be given primary emphasis by the County Board. Back-up to this effort by the administrative staff should take precedence over most other activities and functions. Because of the part-time nature of the legislature and the short terms for House members, it is extremely important that the communication process recognize a need to provide general information and education to the legislative delegation on a continuing basis.

* * * * *

B. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO PROPOSED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ROLE

B-1. The Commission recommends that the position of Executive Director be created by County Board resolution with qualifications, appointment and termination provisions and authority as provided in the proposed resolution set forth in Appendix 1. It is further recommended that enactment of the legis-

lation proposed as Appendix 2 be postponed indefinitely if the County Board acts in 1978 to implement an administrative structure which substantially conforms to the recommendations of the Commission.

Rationale

A strong Administrator form of government has been tried and abandoned in the recent history of Ramsey County. As a result, increasing responsibility for administrative decision making has been placed upon and accepted by the County Board. This has drawn the attention of Board members away from long-range planning requirements, away from attention to inter-governmental relationships, and away from contact with constituencies because of the time involved in the administrative process. The proposed Executive Director resolution or legislation clearly identifies basic administrative functions which should be assigned to the Executive Director. The County Board should have absolute authority to decide whether or not the Executive Director is performing in conformance with its policy, and to terminate the individual holding the position if performance is not satisfactory. The proposal involves creation of a position of trust and will require a high degree of ability to translate policy to administration and to communicate administrative functions, needs, and performance back to the policy body for planning and policy making purposes.

The County Board should not remove authority and responsibility from the officer at some point in the future as a means of changing the direction of administrative services. To allow this to happen destroys the accountability and effectiveness of the recommended structure.

The Commission recognizes that the structure which it is recommending will give considerable service delivery authority to an appointed administrative officer. Allowing removal of the officer at the will and pleasure of the Board is designed to provide the necessary checks and balances which will ensure that actual policy for delivery

of services and policy with regard to fiscal decisions does in fact remain in the elected County Board. Our recommendation with respect to continuing the internal audit function in a direct reporting relationship to the elected County Board is also designed to insure against administrative abuse.

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B-2. The Commission recommends that the resolution or future legislation creating the Executive Director position set forth general administrative authorities and responsibilities pursuant to recommendations of the Commission; and should include delegation of responsibility to the Executive Director to appoint or terminate unclassified personnel subject to appointment by the County Board, with the advice, consent and final approval of the County Board.

Rationale

Development of a capable top-level administrative staff for any business, including public business, requires the development of an administrative team that works together within common policy understandings and objectives. A fundamental requirement for the development and maintenance of this type of team relationship involves a recognition of the employment and termination authority of the top administrative officer. At the same time, involvement of the County Board in establishing and maintaining overall policy control requires input from that level into the development and maintenance of the administrative team. The appropriate balance in the opinion of the Commission, is achieved

by vesting the Executive Director with delegated authority to employ and terminate top-level personnel, subject to advice, consent and final approval by a majority of the County Board.

A sub-issue relating to personnel matters considered by the Commission was a review of the rationale and position of the County Board in urging that the Civil Service Commission law be amended to allow more than three candidates to be submitted for appointment selection under the applicable Civil Service statute. The Commission concurs with the position of the County Board and urges that the Legislature give favorable consideration to the proposed amendment which would allow the County to use procedures similar to current State Civil Service procedures (modified rule of ten candidates).

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B-3. The Commission recommends that a structure for long-range, overall management planning be created. A primary assignment of the Executive Director should be responsibility for development of the appropriate planning structure, staffing of that structure, and the integration of administrative, fiscal, and service policy considerations into the planning decision structure.

Rationale

With the exception of those departments which have been required to develop long-range plans in response to state or federal requirements, there does not appear to be any systematic, long-range planning process in Ramsey County. This is a serious problem which shows up in confusion of objectives and space needs problems. The impression is that the system does not know where it is going. County Board members, individually and collectively, are filling this void

to the extent that they are able to do so without a formal structure and without specific assignment of responsibility to an individual or staff.

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B-4. The Commission recommends that the budget process be improved by adding to the current procedures a clearly-defined responsibility for the Executive Director to develop program evaluation procedures which include cost/benefit analysis on the basis of program. He should provide for re-alignment of the budget format in terms of program identification. The annual budget should be integrated with long-range planning and capital improvements projections.

Rationale

Ramsey County currently has a very detailed and effective line-item budget system. It provides an excellent and effective expenditure control procedure that is well understood by County Board members. The only serious deficiency in the system is that it involves a major amount of detail and is relatively incomprehensible to the general public. This same detail limits analysis by function and general program categories. The Executive Director should be specifically assigned the responsibility to add appropriate information to the current budget system to provide program summaries and cost benefit analysis information. This type of information would be valuable in establishing long-range planning and capital improvements program. It should also be used as the source of basic information necessary to make decisions about departmental reorganization along functional lines.

* * * * *

B-5. The Commission recommends that the Executive Director be assigned responsibility for developing formal procedures for the evaluation of the performance of operating departments and administrative staff. This evaluation system should include an annual performance review, coupled with a compensation program for management personnel. Both the evaluation program and the compensation program should be professionally implemented and maintained to provide objective bases for policy board review and action. The Executive Director should be assigned the function of developing detailed descriptions of job functions of department heads. He should develop a formalized application process which includes written position qualifications to be used in the recruitment process for these positions.

Rationale

The current administrative structure of Ramsey County does not provide any objective mechanism for reviewing the performance of departments, evaluation of department heads, or for an objective system through which decisions about compensation for top-level management are made. This is

recognized as a serious deficiency by both the County Board and department heads.

The advent of collective bargaining and the statutory authority for supervisory personnel to organize dictates the establishment of a formal system for the development of compensation on an objective basis. There is tremendous political pressure to keep costs down, and this leads to a tendency to restrict upper-management salaries. This force should be balanced by specific assignment of responsibility to the Executive Director or his staff to develop objective salary comparison analysis which can be utilized by the policy board in establishing compensation for unclassified individuals. One of the functions of the Executive Director should be recommendations for department head salaries.

A system of annual evaluation of department head performance, a system of compensation, and a system for recruitment of top-level management are all parts of what should be an integrated management system. Potentially, the performance evaluation system should involve the establishment of goals for an individual department head commencing with his date of hire and reviewed annually in conjunction with the salary setting process.

* * * * *

B-6. The Executive Director and administrative staff should be responsible for maintenance and support of the standing committee system and for communicating an interpretation of basic written administrative code matters to department heads.

Rationale

There is no uniformity or clear understanding of the areas in which a department head is both accountable and responsible as contrasted to those areas in which policy

makers are required to make decision. The newness of the committee structure, without written understanding of authority and responsibility, has resulted in a large number of administrative decisions being brought to the policy board; it has also resulted in some decisions being made at an administrative level which should have had policy review. A written administrative code defining administrative and policy relationships should be developed. A side benefit of this type of system would be the creation of some measures of performance in relation to requirements of the code.

* * * * *

B-7. The Commission recommends that the Executive Director be charged with the responsibility and authority to develop and maintain a complete public information and internal communication program for Ramsey County.

Rationale

The Commission considered, first of all, the question of whether or not there is a need to improve the mechanisms available for communication about Ramsey County generally. Considerable information was provided to the Commission by persons who were interviewed indicating that there was a substantial need to upgrade the communication capability of the County. The need takes several forms:

There is a need for information about meetings, agenda items, etc., to be disseminated in advance in a sufficiently clear and non-political form to allow interested segments of the public to be involved in the decision processes of the County.

There is a need for a carefully conceived and accurate summarization of actions which can be disseminated to groups, the press, etc. This need is increasingly important as the media finds itself

unable to assign reporters to the myriad of meetings and events through which County decision making is accomplished.

There is a need for communications expertise to be used in translating information about County programs to various audiences, including the media, potential users of service, other governmental agencies, etc.

The Commission considered establishing a separate Public Information Department, assigning this responsibility to County Board members individually, designating it as a function of each department, or as a function of the County Board chairman. Because of the broad scope of the needed communications process and its relationship to the departments individually, the planning and decision-making process, the political implications that are necessarily involved, and the need for professional capability, the responsibility should rest with the Executive Director. He should oversee and be accountable for both the quality and type of public information services rendered.

* * * * *

B-8. It is recommended that a specific component of the public information function recommended by the Commission include attention to public information with respect to the budget process of the County.

Rationale

Citizen concern about governmental functions and costs have changed the relationship between government and the people it serves. There is an increasing need to have organized procedures through which the services of government are publicized and government responds to changing demands and attitudes.

Several of the groups and individuals interviewed by this Commission discussed concern about the difficulty of understanding and participating in the County Board budget

process. The complexity of this process, when viewed from the outside by the public, should be recognized. A specific effort should be made to provide summaries of basic budget policies and a listing of issues before the County Board during the budget process. A public release summarizing the budget in terms understandable to the general public should be provided following adoption of the budget.

* * * * *

B-9. It is recommended that clearly-defined responsibility for developing and maintaining communication lines between the County and all municipal governments within the County be shared by the County Board members in their representative capacities and the individual department heads with respect to service relationships. The Executive Director should play a role as an initial contact and as the office responsible for ensuring careful definition of responsibility and performance in those cases involving staff relationships.

Rationale

The Commission recognized that the communication links between the County and municipal governments within the County should be developed and maintained to establish an improved, cooperative service relationship between levels of government. The Commission interviews with various municipal officials and staff persons indicated a need to improve the communication process and the environment in which it occurred in terms of trust and understanding. It is a communication function which differs with respect to various issues and the

source of question or response desired. It is clear that some parts of this communication should be handled on an elected official relationship level. Other parts require staff relationships that are not currently clear. The public information component of the Executive Director's office should have as one of its assignments the responsibility to develop and maintain this communication system and to ensure that it is operating effectively.

* * * * *

B-10. It is recommended that the staff presently charged with the functions of identifying, coordinating, and recommending grant programs for County Board approval be assigned to the Executive Director.

Rationale

Identification of available federal and state grant sources, deciding to use those sources, and successfully applying for them is an increasingly important function that involves development of communication links with other levels of government. This activity has serious and important policy ramifications which should be identified and backgrounded for the County Board, because the institution of grant programs often results in continuing and increasing local costs. This process has implications for space, allocation of resources, and actual changes in service programs in response to available funds from other levels of government. Its policy implications dictate that this process be directed at the upper levels of administration and that the Executive Director be ultimately accountable for the presentation of a planned utilization of grant resources to the County Board for its approval.

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C. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO DEPARTMENTAL ORGANIZATION

C-1. The departmental service delivery organization of Ramsey County needs to be signifi-

cantly re-aligned to promote efficiency, to establish accountability, and to ensure responsiveness to public policy decisions. It is recommended that the administrative structure of the County contain a specific component which is assigned the function of analyzing and recommending re-alignment of service departments as a continuous responsibility in the management structure of Ramsey County.

Rationale

The functions to be performed by County government are constantly increasing and changing. Direction for this change comes from legislative decisions at both the State and Federal level and from analysis of need by policy makers at the County level. In discussions with County Board members and department heads during its research phase, the Commission found that significant changes in organizational structure have been made over the past several years in Ramsey County. Leadership by the County Board in requesting legislation and in acting on previous reports which recommend various structural changes must be commended. County Board members and many department heads gave the Commission several suggestions for organizational change, all of them well thought-out and all recognizing the need for additional change.

Additional study must be given to the need to identify logical functional lines as a basis for reducing the total number of departments, thus limiting the span of control of the Executive Director and ultimately the County Board.

It is beyond the scope of this Commission's work to identify a specific service organization and structure for service delivery for Ramsey County. The interview process has given dramatic evidence of the need to consolidate and continually review and change the service delivery structure.

While at first glance, the Commission recommendations for assignments of functions to the Executive Director may give rise to concern about additional staff and the cost of such staff, this cost can be offset by reducing the number of departments and divisions within each department and by providing better central planning and administrative service back up to each of the service delivery functions. This requires careful analysis and it requires staff which is accountable for developing specific changes in the functional alignment of the service organizations.

MISCELLANEOUS ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission has considered the County Options Act alternatives which allow for recommendations that the Sheriff be appointed rather than elected, and for appointment of a civil attorney separate from the elected prosecution responsibility of the County Attorney. The Commission has also looked at questions regarding the organization of the Court system, specific concerns with respect to the relationship between the County Board organization and the St. Paul-Ramsey Hospital board, and also concerns regarding the validity of the current Coroner structure and responsibility.

While each of these questions deserves further consideration, it is the opinion of the Commission that the fundamental changes needed involve the relationship between the County Board, its policy structure, assignment of delegated responsibilities to an Executive Director and the development of a structure which can continually update the service structure of the County. Specific changes with respect to the elective process are, therefore, not recommended in this report.

The Commission interviewed officials in the judicial branch of government, including Community Corrections elements of the system. The relationship of the judicial branch to the legislative branch of local government should be given further study, but the format for this relationship should be the same in Ramsey County as in the rest of the State of Minnesota. Therefore, we do not believe it is an area that appropriately belongs in the study function of this Commission.

The complex relationships involved in the administration and policy-making responsibilities relating to St. Paul-Ramsey Hospital is also a matter which goes beyond the unique considerations of Ramsey County. The teaching responsibility of the Hospital and the fact that its patient draw area is beyond the limits of the County, dictates that this matter be reviewed in a context well beyond the question of its relationship to the Ramsey County Board.

During the course of its research, the committees of the Commission heard testimony or received materials that recommended changes in service capability, departmental operation, priorities, etc. For example, a special report recommending upgraded forensic pathology expertise was reviewed and discussed. Substantial evidence was produced that probably

would justify support of the recommendation. However, because this matter involves an issue of service level rather than fundamental organizational structure, the Commission has not made a specific recommendation on this issue, or others similar to it.

It is recommended that the County Board and other interested parties review the bibliography and library materials prepared by the Commission as a resource, particularly with reference to those matters which were discussed but were judged to be beyond the appropriate scope of the Commission's report. Many of them should be given attention. We hope that the recommended structure will assist in the development of procedures which carry forward these kinds of questions to appropriate decisions and actions.

APPENDIX 1

Proposed County Board Resolution relating to Ramsey County; creating the office of Ramsey County Executive Director; specifying qualifications, term of office and duties.

Section 1. The office of Ramsey County Executive Director is hereby created. The Executive Director shall be the administrative head of the county and shall be responsible for the proper administration of the affairs of the county.

Section 2. The Executive Director shall serve at the will and pleasure of the County Board in the unclassified service, and his employment may be terminated by the Board without notice, except that the County Board may make such other arrangements for notice of removal, termination allowance or term as it may deem advisable. Compensation for the Executive Director shall be fixed by the County Board.

Section 3. The Executive Director shall be chosen solely on the basis of his training, experience and administrative qualifications and need not be a resident of the County at the time of his appointment.

Section 4. The Executive Director shall have the following duties:

- (a) Appoint and terminate administrative analysts and assistants to County Board approved

positions within the Executive Director's Department.

(b) Recommend appointment or termination of persons in unclassified positions which are subject to County Board appointment and to take action appointing or terminating such persons with the advice, consent and final approval of the County Board. This provision shall not apply to any principal assistants of elected public officials appointed pursuant to Laws 1974, Chapter 435, Section 302(f) (2) (C).

(c) Establish, with County Board approval, and administer a long range overall management planning structure.

(d) Initiate an annual budget for consideration and adoption by the Board and enforce compliance with the budget, when adopted. This responsibility shall include preparation of the capital program pursuant to Section 4.02 of Chapter 435, Laws 1974.

(e) Develop, maintain and enforce a written administrative code which, when adopted by the County Board, shall identify and define specific areas of accountability, delegation and reporting requirements for county departments.

(f) Develop, with approval of the County Board,

and administer a performance evaluation system for all operating departments and all unclassified Board-appointed personnel, except any principal assistants of elected public officials appointed pursuant to Laws 1974, Chapter 435, Section 302(f) (2) (C).

(g) Analyze county service department organization on a continuous basis and recommend administrative realignment or reorganization for County Board approval when deemed appropriate.

(h) Develop, with approval of the County Board, and maintain a public information program with specific emphasis on communication and information flow to municipal governments within Ramsey County and on providing budget summary data for interested individuals and organizations.

(i) Identify, coordinate and recommend applications for County Board approval for grant funding programs.

(j) Provide such administrative assistance and staffing as the County Board shall from time to time request, for the following purposes:

- (1) Administration of open appointment procedures established by the County Board to provide a source of candidates

for appointment to statutory and such other special committees as may be appointed by the County Board.

- (2) To provide administrative staff to assist the County Board in legislative representation matters, as requested by the County Board.
- (3) To provide administrative staff support for the operation of County Board standing committees.

(k) The County Board may assign such additional powers, duties, and responsibilities to the Executive Director as it deems appropriate and consistent with his responsibility for the administration of the county. Section 5. This resolution should be effective

on _____.

APPENDIX 2

V.

A bill for an act

relating to Ramsey County; creating the office of Ramsey County Executive Director; specifying qualifications, term of office and duties.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

Section 1. The office of Ramsey County Executive Director is hereby created. The Executive Director shall be the administrative head of the county and shall be responsible for the proper administration of the affairs of the county.

Section 2. The Executive Director shall serve at the will and pleasure of the County Board in the unclassified service, and his employment may be terminated by the Board without notice, except that the County Board may make such other arrangements for notice of removal, termination allowance or term as it may deem advisable. Compensation for the Executive Director shall be fixed by the County Board.

Section 3. The Executive Director shall be chosen solely on the basis of his training, experience and administrative qualifications and need not be a resident of the County at the time of his appointment.

Section 4. The Executive Director shall have the

following duties:

(a) Appoint and terminate administrative analysts and assistants within the Executive Director's Department who shall be in the unclassified service.

(b) Recommend appointment or termination of persons in unclassified positions which are subject to County Board appointment and to take action appointing or terminating such persons with the advice, consent and final approval of the County Board. This provision shall not apply to any principal assistants of elected public officials appointed pursuant to Laws 1974, Chapter 435, Section 302(f) (2) (C).

(c) Establish, with County Board approval, and administer a long range overall management planning structure.

(d) Initiate an annual budget for consideration and adoption by the Board and enforce compliance with the budget, when adopted. This responsibility shall include preparation of the capital program pursuant to Section 4.02 of Chapter 435, Laws 1974.

(e) Develop, maintain and enforce a written administrative code which, when adopted by the County Board, shall identify and define specific areas of accountability, delegation and reporting requirements for county departments.

(f) Develop, with approval of the County Board, and administer a performance evaluation system for all operating departments and all unclassified Board-appointed personnel, except any principal assistants of elected public officials appointed pursuant to Laws 1974, Chapter 435, Section 302(f) (2) (C).

(g) Analyze county service department organization on a continuous basis and recommend administrative realignment or reorganization for County Board approval when deemed appropriate.

(h) Develop, with approval of the County Board, and maintain a public information program with specific emphasis on communication and information flow to municipal governments within Ramsey County and on providing budget summary data for interested individuals and organizations.

(i) Identify, coordinate and recommend applications for County Board approval for grant funding programs.

(j) Provide such administrative assistance and staffing as the County Board shall from time to time request, for the following purposes:

- (1) Administration of open appointment procedures established by the County

Board to provide a source of candidates for appointment to statutory and such other special committees as may be appointed by the County Board.

- (2) To provide administrative staff to assist the County Board in legislative representation matters, as requested by the County Board.
- (3) To provide administrative staff support for the operation of County Board standing committees.

(k) The County Board may assign such additional powers, duties, and responsibilities to the Executive Director as it deems appropriate and consistent with his responsibility for the administration of the county.

Section 5. In the event of a vacancy in the position of Executive Director, the County Board shall fill the position within six (6) months of the vacancy.

Section 6. This act shall take effect upon its approval by the Board of County Commissioners of Ramsey County, and upon compliance with Minnesota Statutes, Section 645.021.

CREDITS PAGE

AND

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following is a chronological list of persons who gave testimony and/or materials to the Study Commission during its deliberations. Some materials were prepared specifically for the Commission and are attached; other material is available from individual departments (e.g., annual reports, etc.). Materials filed in the Bibliography are in the same chronological order.

The Study Commission appreciates the assistance it received from the individuals listed here and others who were interviewed or in some manner participated in the Commission's work. We are grateful for their cooperation.

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