

## Structure Committee - Executive Summary

This committee was formed with a clear bias toward organizational streamlining and cost reduction. In this quest the committee has examined what services the County is mandated by state law to provide. It has taken a written survey of employees that allowed anonymity, if the respondent preferred, with a more than 20% response, much greater than anticipated. It conducted interviews in all major departments with face to face discussions with over 60 department heads and staff. Lastly, it looked at how other organizations, both public and private, are organized for comparison. What was learned was materially different than what was expected.

The Committee found that the County, with just a few very minor exceptions, is providing no services that are not specifically mandated under the state charter. Cost cutting has had ongoing focus for a number of years and, if anything, has perhaps gone too far. The County has little or no bench strength in the administrative departments sustained by the General Fund and maintenance in all areas has been deferred to the extreme leaving the County vulnerable to costly surprises. Organizationally there are some opportunities for improvement but they will take time to implement and they will not be the magic cost saving bullet that saves the budget.

Experts on organization say that a Board of Directors (Commissioners) should be responsible to hire a chief executive, set policy and provide fiscal oversight. Coos County Commissioners have never hired a chief executive and consequently have themselves mired in the myriad details of running the day to day affairs of the County. There is little time left for policy development or fiscal oversight beyond statutory budget preparation and expenditure approvals. There is no time for long range planning, departmental progress reviews or even periodic performance analyses. This should be squarely addressed and soon.

The Committee's Findings and Conclusions will likely point out some opportunities for realignment of functions and perhaps consolidation of departments. The Committee would urge such opportunities be approached cautiously and with ample input from staff. Information Technology plays a very important role in supporting processes and interaction between departments. They must be involved in any reorganization effort. Do not expect immediate cost saving from such efforts.

The most important issue, however, and the one that first needs to be addressed by the BOC is whether it is ready to elevate its role to that of governance rather than management. Departmental staff universally recognizes the need for administrative leadership.

To be sure, there are areas where efficiencies can be realized, particularly in the public works areas. Constructing an IT function that provides easy interdepartmental interface will, in the long term, yield cost savings and make the entire process of providing service to the citizens of Coos County run much more smoothly.

County staff has been very candid in the surveys and interviews and generous with their comments and suggestions for improvement. It has made the job of the Committee much easier and provided the basis for a much more meaningful product. As taxpaying citizens we also thank them for their dedication and hard work under some very challenging conditions.