



Winnebago County

The Wave of the Future

DATE: May 8, 2023
TO: Members of the Winnebago County Board of Supervisors
FROM: Winnebago County Corporation Counsel
RE: FAQs about Self-Organized Government

Background:

Self-organization is a process used by county boards that provides the board with alternatives to some of the specific procedures otherwise mandated in Chapter 59, Wisconsin Statutes. A county that has undertaken self-organization has given itself somewhat more flexibility in the manner in which its board of supervisors may operate. A county which has undergone self-organization may adopt its own policies regarding:

- A. Compensation of supervisors for attendance at board meetings and paying mileage,
- B. Use of staggered terms for the supervisors, electing half of them each year rather than electing them all each even-numbered year,
- C. Filling vacancies in the office of county supervisor.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: How many Wisconsin counties have become self-organized?

A: 52 of the 72 counties in Wisconsin.

Q: Which Counties have elected not to become self-organized?

A: Barron, Bayfield, Brown, Buffalo, Burnett, Clark, Eau Claire, Florence, Fond du Lac, Forest, Jackson, Kewaunee, Menominee, Milwaukee, Oconto, Outagamie, Sauk, Trempealeau, Waushara, and Winnebago.

Q: Will becoming self-organized allow the Winnebago County Board of Supervisors to change procedures without any checks and balances?

A: No. There are only three areas (compensation, staggered terms, and filling board vacancies) that could be affected by becoming self-organized. However, the County Board Supervisors should bring forth a resolution for each separate issue for the County Board to vote on. Nothing changes unless a resolution is brought forward.

Q: If you change one procedure, do you have to change them all?

A: No

Q: Is there another way to change the compensation for Winnebago County Board Supervisors without becoming self-organized?

A: Wis. Stat. 59.10(3)(f) provides that "any board may, at its annual meeting, by a two-thirds vote of all members, fix compensation of the board members to be next elected."

Q: When does Winnebago County Board's Annual Meeting take place?

A: Wis. Stat. 59.11 provides that "Every board shall hold an annual meeting on the Tuesday after the 2nd Monday of November in each year for the purpose of transacting business. Any board may establish by rule an earlier date during October or November for the annual meeting..." Also, Winnebago County Board Rule 4.0 is captioned "Budget Session/Annual Meeting."

Q: What is the vote required to amend the Winnebago County Board's Department Budget at the annual meeting?

A: Majority of members present.

Q: How is self-organization accomplished?

A: A majority of the County Board adopts an ordinance invoking the authority of the authorizing statute, Wis. Stat. 59.10(1). A certified copy of the adopted ordinance is to be filed by the County Clerk with the Secretary of State. The County Board adopts the policies it decides regarding staggered terms, compensation for board members, and filling vacancies.