

The County Board Organizational Meeting

In the Boardroom

February 25, 2026

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GENERAL OVERVIEW:

1. Organizational Meeting
2. Calling the Meeting to Order and Conducting Elections
3. Opportunities to Create a Foundation for Success



Organizational Meeting



Organizational Meeting

Wis. Stat. § 59.11(1)(c):

(c) The board, except in counties with a population of 750,000 or more, shall meet on the 3rd Tuesday of **each April** to organize and transact business. At this meeting the board may transact any business permitted at the annual meeting, including the appointment of all county commissions and committees. The meeting may be adjourned in the same manner as the annual meeting.

- Required to meet on the third Tuesday of April?
- May adjourn to different date
- Purpose is to organize and transact business

Organizational Meeting - Officers

Wis. Stat. § 59.12:

(1) The board, **at the first meeting after each regular election** at which members are elected for full terms, shall elect a member chairperson. The chairperson shall perform all duties required of the chairperson until the board elects a successor. The chairperson may administer oaths to persons required to be sworn concerning any matter submitted to the board or a committee of the board or connected with their powers or duties. The chairperson shall countersign all ordinances of the board, and shall preside at meetings when present. When directed by ordinance the chairperson shall countersign all county orders, transact all necessary board business with local and county officers, expedite all measures resolved upon by the board and take care that all federal, state and local laws, rules and regulations pertaining to county government are enforced.

(2) The board **at the time of the election of the chairperson** shall also elect a member vice chairperson, for the same term, who in case of the absence or disability of the chairperson shall perform the chairperson's duties. The board at the time of the election of the chairperson may also elect a member 2nd vice chairperson, for the same term, who in case of the absence or disability of the chairperson and vice chairperson shall perform the duties of the chairperson. Except for the board of a county with a population of 750,000 or more, the board may provide for the payment of additional compensation to the vice chairpersons.

(3) In case of the absence of a chairperson for any meeting the members present shall choose another member to be temporary chairperson.

Organizational Meeting - Committees

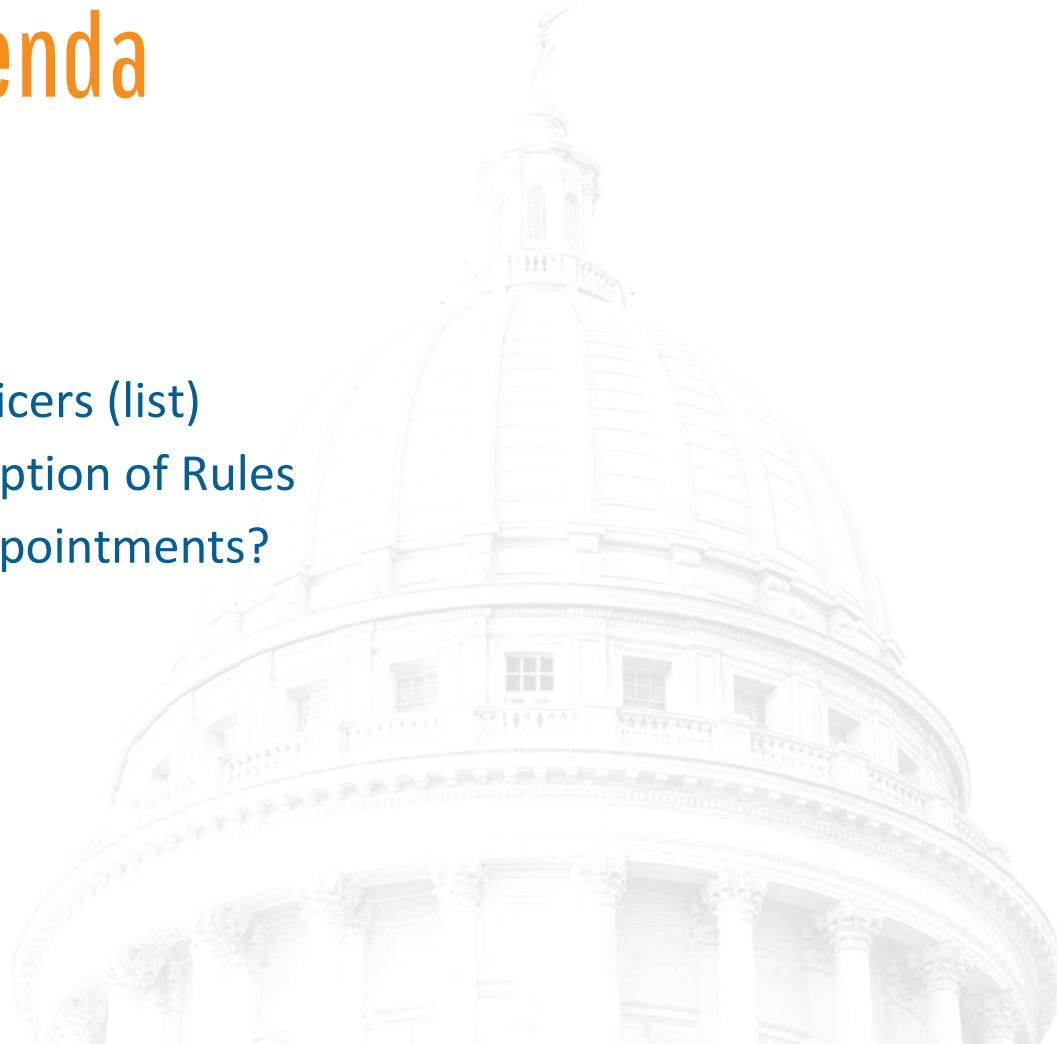
Wis. Stat. § 59.13(1):

(1) The board may, by resolution designating the purposes and prescribing the duties thereof and manner of reporting, authorize their chairperson to appoint before June 1 in any year committees from the members of the board, and the committees so appointed shall perform the duties and report as prescribed in the resolution.

- What is the committee appointment process?
- What is the timing associated with committee work?
- How are Exec/Admin appointments handled?

Prepare Agenda

- Call to Order
- Roll Call
- Oath of Office
- Election of Officers (list)
- Review or Adoption of Rules
- Committee Appointments?
- Education?
- Business
- Adjournment



Calling the Meeting to Order and Conducting Elections



Who Chairs the Meeting

- Current chair
- Former chair that was defeated or did not run for office
- Vice-chair or 2nd vice chair
- County clerk
- Corporation counsel
- Someone trusted
- Should not be someone who is seeking the office

Nominations

- Declare the floor open for nominations
- Need not be recognized by the chair
- Anyone can nominate
- Can nominate yourself
- No second required but allowed to show support
- Seconding speeches are allowed
- Chair should restate the nominee placing their name before the body
- Nomination speeches are allowed
- Technically, nominations are not necessary – each member is free to vote for anyone eligible

Nominations (cont.)

- Motion to close
 - No motion necessary but may accept a motion to close
 - Not in order until reasonable time has been given
 - Is out of order if someone is seeking the floor
 - Requires two-thirds vote
 - No requirement to ask “are there any other nominations” three times
 - Chair can declare nominations are closed

Nominations (cont.)

- NOTE: Board Rules may provide a process for nominations and those seeking position.
- QUESTION: Do the prohibitions surrounding “walking quorum” apply to politicking for chair or vice chair?

Elections

- May allow candidates to say a few words (set a time limit beforehand)
 - Can candidates distribute literature?
 - May candidates make a presentation?
- If only one candidate, the chair may accept a motion to close nominations and cast a unanimous ballot

Elections (cont.)

- Only time a secret ballot may be used
 - Wis. Stat. sec. 19.88(1):

(1) Unless otherwise specifically provided by statute, no secret ballot may be utilized to determine any election or other decision of a governmental body except the election of the officers of such body in any meeting.

Elections (cont.)

- Appoint ballot clerks
 - Need not be a member of the body – can be County Clerk
 - Distribute, collect and count ballots
 - Report the vote
 - Chosen for their accuracy and dependability
 - Should have confidence of membership
 - Should not have a direct personal involvement in the outcome of the vote

Elections (cont.)

- Continue to vote until a majority is reached
- Candidates may withdraw
- Never remove lowest vote getter (more on this in a moment)
- When unable to reach a majority: take a recess, allow the candidates to speak, allow members to speak
- Winner assumes the chair for the balance of the meeting

Elections (cont.)

- Impropriety of limiting voting to the two leading candidates
 - Leading candidates may represent two different factions – division may be deepened
 - May unite members with a compromise candidate
- Improper to remove nominee w/lowest votes
 - Repeat balloting until you have a winner
 - Nominee with the lowest number of votes could be a “compromise candidate” who all can agree on

Opportunities to Create a Foundation for Success



The Daunting Task

- Imagine you are a first-term supervisor and you have just taken your oath of office. On the agenda is an action item requesting a transfer of \$250,000 from contingency to pay for an out-of-county placement of a person under the care of your Human Services Department. What do you do?
- The Organizational Meeting presents both an opportunity and a challenge to educate the new Board.
 - Opportunity – the education can begin before the Board “gets down to business.”
 - Challenge – there is NO way to fully educate new supervisors in the time allotted.
 - This means counties should be thoughtful about the approach to the Organizational Meeting and whether the education can and should be continued at a later date.

Establishing Expectations BEFORE the Organizational Meeting

- Does your county have a job description for county board supervisor?
- Does your county have a strategic plan?
- Does your county have an organizational chart showing departments and functions?
- Does your county have County Board Rules?
- The million dollar question – if you answered yes to any of the above questions, do you distribute these materials when individuals take out nomination papers? When they are elected? Before the Organizational Meeting?

Potential Areas for Education

- County Board Rules
- Roles and Responsibilities within county government
- Parliamentary Procedure
- Open Meetings Law
- Public Records Law
- Presentations from Department Heads
- Presentations from Constitutional Officers

Education Resources

- Your internal experts
 - Administration
 - Department Heads
 - Constitutional Officers
 - Corporation Counsel
- Your external experts
 - WCA
 - UW-Extension
 - County Officials Workshop (Sarah will provide more information)
 - Other counties
 - A law firm that will not be named, but just so happens to love working with counties and county boards...

QUESTIONS?



THANK YOU!



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