

Vernon County Board of Supervisors
RULES OF THE BOARD

County Board Supervisors

- Are dedicated to the democratic ideals of honesty, openness and accountability in all matters involving county government;
- Are willing to accept responsibility for decision-making that can affect many;
- Understand the county's mission, priorities, challenges, needs and demographics;
- Understand the difference between governance and management and accept that their role is to set policy while management carries out policy;
- Understand the importance of distinguishing between personal opinions and county board positions when communicating with the public and the media, exert a good faith effort to communicate the full truth about county matters and avoid structuring information to achieve a personal advantage;
- Are good listeners and will speak to issues, but also recognize when discussion must conclude, and a decision must be made;
- Are committed to building community partnerships;
- Actively practice and support stewardship of the county's fiscal and natural resources by supporting public policy for the best use of land, water and air consistent with the public interests, community need and a vision for the future and adopt fiscal policies that promote the most effective, efficient and ethical use of public funds;
- Perform the duties of their office with fairness and impartiality to build public confidence in government;
- Support the principle of equal employment and oppose discrimination in all county operations;
- Strive to seek and consider citizen input; and
- Strive for excellence through continuous learning, seek opportunities to acquire skills and knowledge, and dedicate the time necessary to adequately attend to the assignments and duties of the office.

Chapter One: County Board Officers

The County Board officers shall be elected by a board majority at its organizational meeting after the spring election. The County Clerk will run the meeting until a board chair is elected.

Board officers are Chair and Vice Chair.

The duties of the board Chair and Vice Chair are defined in state statute 59.12.

A few examples follow:

- The Chair will appoint supervisors to committees and select officers.
- The Chair will set the agenda and run the county board meetings.
- The Chair will expedite all measures directed by the board.

- The Vice Chair will assume the duties of the Chair if the Chair is unable to perform them.

The board officers may be removed anytime by a majority vote of board members.

Committee chairs and members may be removed anytime by the board Chair.

Chapter Two: Organization of the Board

The following standing committees shall be appointed by the chairman:

- Aging Advisory
- Building & Facilities Planning
- Emergency Government
- Finance
- Health
- Hidden Valleys
- Land Information
- Land Sales and Valuation Study
- Law Enforcement
- Legal Affairs
- Library Systems
- Personnel
- Revolving Loan
- Solid Waste Management
- Technology
- Tourism, Promotion and Economic Development
- Veterans Services
- Zoning
- Zoning Board of Adjustment

The Chair shall also appoint members of several boards and commissions on which the board is entitled to representation, and such special committees and advisory boards as may be required or the board may direct.

When a County Board member is elected or appointed to a committee, board, or commission as a representative of the County Board, and leaves the County Board prior to the expiration of the normal term on such committee, board, or commission, that individual's membership on such committee, board, or commission shall expire on the date he or she ceases to be a County Board member. The resulting vacancy on the committee, board, or commission shall be filled by another County Board member, for the unexpired portion of the regular term, in the same manner as the original member was chosen. In the event this rule conflicts with any state or federal law or requirement, the state or federal policy shall prevail.

Members may serve on only one elective committee. Duties of elective committees shall be as follows:

- **Highway:** This committee is required by Wisconsin Statutes Section 83.015, and shall have responsibility for all matters pertaining to county highways as specifically detailed in the above designated statute. The committee shall consist of five members. There shall be at least one member from each of the East, Central, and Western districts of the county and two at large members.
- **Land Conservation:** This committee is required by Wisconsin Statutes Section 92.06, and shall also function as the Agricultural and Extension Committee. It shall have responsibility for all matters pertaining to land conservation, as outlined in the above mentioned statute, and all matters pertaining to the University Extension program in the county. This committee shall also have responsibility for the administration and governing of the county park system and recommending improvements and budgetary requirements to the county board. The committee shall consist of five members of the Board and one member appointed by the Farm Service Agency pursuant to Ch. 92, Wis. Stats.
- **Human Services/Aging:** This committee is required by Wisconsin Statutes Section 46.23 (4) and shall have responsibility for all Human Services programs as specified in the several subsections of the above mentioned statute. Supervision of all county programs for senior citizens, including nutrition and transportation. The committee shall consist of six Board members and three citizen members. Two Board members and one citizen member shall be elected each year for a three-year term, with no one serving more than two terms without a one year absence before another term.
- **Vernon Manor:** This committee shall oversee the operation and management of the Vernon Manor County Nursing home. The committee shall consist of three Board members and two citizen members. They shall serve three year terms which expire on the third Tuesday in April.

Duties of standing committees shall be as follows:

- **Finance:** To audit all accounts of the county not otherwise provided for, to make the tax levy, to formulate a tentative annual budget, to present recommendations on matters involving county finances, to review and authorize, in cooperation and consultation with the County Treasurer, all investments of county funds, and to perform such other duties as the County Board may from time to time prescribe.
- **Land Sales and Valuation Study:** To assist the county treasurer in the collection of delinquent taxes, to sell at public or private sale all the lands and properties acquired by the county by tax deed or pension liens, all deeds to be made by the county clerk. To review the equalized valuation of both real and personal property in the several towns, villages and cities of the county upon the recommendations of the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, to determine the correctness of such recommendations, and to recommend to the board such actions as may be appropriate.
- **Personnel:** To consider all matters of labor relations regarding county employees, and to maintain the various necessary insurance programs its employees, and to enter into negotiations with the unions representing said employees, if any, with respect to wages and working conditions, and to recommend a scale of salaries for county officers and other non-union county employees.
- **Law Enforcement:** To act with the Sheriff relative to matters pertaining to the Sheriff's office, to have the right and power to employ and discharge traffic officers and a radio

operator, with the consent of the approval of the Sheriff, and to recommend a budget annually to provide for proper maintenance and repair of equipment, purchase of necessary additional or replacement equipment, and provide salaries for department personnel.

- **Emergency Government:** Supervision of all matters pertaining to county emergency government.
- **Building & Facilities Planning:** To supervise upkeep, repair, renovation, disposal, or construction of county governmental buildings and adjacent grounds: and to make recommendations to the Board regarding county owned land, buildings and facilities, and programs and related matters.
- **Tourism Promotion and Economic Development Committee:** To work with other public and private entities to promote the County in a coordinated manner and to oversee the budget and accounts of the Vernon County Tourism Council or other entities working in the areas of tourism and economic development. Supervisors appointed to federal state or regional committees shall report to this committee a minimum of two times per year.
- **Health:** To supervise matters pertaining to all areas of county health. This committee also acts as the County Board of Health pursuant to sec. 251.04, Wis. Stats.
- **Zoning:** To consider matters pertaining to county zoning, make recommendations where appropriate and to deal with such other zoning matters as the board may from time to time direct.
- **Legal Affairs:** To monitor the county's legal affairs and consult from time to time with the county District Attorney and courts as the committee and/or board deems necessary. To make changes in the rules of the county Board from time to time as may be needed or directed by the Chair or the Board. To maintain the various necessary insurance programs for protection of the county. This shall also be the home committee for Corporation Counsel.
- **Aging Advisory Committee:** To assist and make recommendations to aging committee.
- **Veterans Service:** To supervise the work of the Veterans Service Officer and monitor proper administration of all programs of benefit to veterans in the county.
- **Solid Waste Management:** Develop and administer a county wide solid waste management program.
- **Zoning Board of Adjustment:** To act pursuant to Section 59.694, Wis. Stats.
- **Land Information:** This committee is organized pursuant to sec. 59.72 Wis. Stats. The committee provides general guidance, oversight, and planning for land record modernization and related GIS development activities. The committee ensures that the County is complying with its Land Record Modernization Plan as required by the Wisconsin Land Information Program (WLIP). The committee establishes and recommends County policies pertaining to land records, approves budgets and expenditures from WLIP retained recording fees, related grant funding and other land record and mapping funds that may be available. The committee shall also coordinate all activities with other county departments which may be affected by the land information system. The committee shall deal with other concerns involving land information or records which may arise or be assigned. The committee shall consist of five supervisors, the Register of Deeds, Treasurer, Zoning Administrator, Sheriff, County Conservationist and a citizen member. The named department heads may designate an alternate from their department to serve in their position.

- **Revolving Loan Fund:** To administer and approve loans which are the subject of state and federal programs or grants awarded to the County.
- **Technology Committee:** To provide supervision and oversight of the Vernon County Technology Department. To coordinate and maintain the use of technology within county departments as well as interfacing electronic systems to the public in a fiscally responsible manner, including but not limited to computers and related hardware devices, software, technology services and telecommunications.

Advisory Committees:

Advisory committees shall be used from time to time to assist the board Chair, other committees, or departments. Advisory committees shall not have the authority to bring matters before the Board without going through the Board Chair, the oversight committee or department home committee.

Every committee designated herein shall follow these rules of public participation and conduct for that committee. These rules will be posted on the clerk’s bulletin board and available at committee meetings and printed on their agendas.

Guidelines for Public Participation at Committee Meeting

1. Public participation must be limited to the “Audience to Visitors” agenda line unless a request is made at that time to speak during a different agenda line and is authorized by the Committee Chair.
2. Please state name and address.
3. Please limit comments to 4 minutes.
4. Please state subject to be presented.
5. Personal attacks or comments are out of order and will be so ruled by the chair.
6. Questions may be presented and become part of a discussion or agenda item at the next committee meeting if requested and appropriate for committee discussion and action.
7. No action will be taken on public participation comments during the “Audience to Visitors” agenda line. Items for discussion may be placed on a future board agenda.
8. Committee members may respond to questions or information requests personally or in writing following the meeting

Chapter 3 — Procedural Rules

At the appointed time the chair shall call the board to order, the clerk shall call the roll of members in order by districts, marking the stated times. In the absence of the chair, the vice chair shall perform the duties of that office. Should it appear that no quorum is present, the board shall adjourn until a stated time. In the absence of both chairman and vice-chairman, the board shall elect a chairman pro tem.

A majority of the members of the board shall constitute a quorum to conduct business. A number less than a quorum may adjourn from time to time in the event of absence, excused departure or other circumstances.

A special session of the board may be called on petition of a majority of the members to the county clerk or by the County Board Chair.

The board shall be the judge of the election returns and qualifications of its members.

The order of business shall be as follows:

1. Roll call of members.
2. Reading/waiver of the reading/approval of the minutes of previous meetings.
3. Presentation of petitions.
4. Presentation of resolutions.
5. Presentation of ordinances.
6. Presentation of remonstrance and memorials.
7. Report of standing or elective committee.
8. Report of special committees.
9. Consideration of unfinished business.

All petitions, resolutions, ordinances, remonstrance, and accounts shall be read at length, **or displayed on screen**, when presented, unless otherwise ordered.

All appropriations for moneys shall be voted upon by ayes and nays by roll call of the clerk. The ayes and nays may be called for on any question by any member present. The ayes and nays when taken on any question shall be entered at length in the proceedings of the board.

Any member excused from voting shall not participate in any discussion on the matter.

Every member present, when a question is put, or upon roll call, shall vote, unless for special cause the board shall excuse them, but it shall not be in order for a member to be excused after the board has commenced voting. A member shall be excused by the Chair based on absence, conflict or abstention and the request should be made prior to the commencement of discussion or as soon as the conflict or need for abstention becomes apparent.

Every member, previous to speaking, shall address the chairman and shall not proceed until recognized by the chairman. They shall confine themselves to the question under debate and avoid personalities. They shall not be interrupted except by call to order. Each speaker shall be limited to four minutes.

When a member is called to order they shall take their seat and not proceed except in explanation, until it shall have been determined by the chair whether they are in order or not. The chairman's decision, on points of order shall be subject to an appeal to the county board.

All amendments to any document before the board shall be reduced to writing by the Clerk before the board action is taken.

All meetings will be conducted using parliamentary procedures as defined by Webster's New World Robert's Rules of Order Simplified and Applied, 2nd Edition.

The official postings for meetings shall be in no less than three (3) of the following: WVRQ radio station, bulletin board on the first floor of the courthouse annex, the city halls of Westby and Hillsboro as well as the village hall of Stoddard, the Vernon County website

(www.vernoncounty.org) and the Vernon Broadcaster. All board and committee meeting agendas and approved minutes will be posted on the Vernon County website. Agendas, and all amended agendas, shall be sent to agendas@vernoncounty.org for posting to the website. Approved meeting minutes, along with the next scheduled meeting date shall be sent to minutes@vernoncounty.org for posting.

When possible all resolutions, petitions, ordinances, shall be reduced to writing and presented to the County Clerk at least fourteen days before the published meeting date of a county board meeting. Resolutions from committees need only the signature of the committee chair and/or their designee and a report of the vote by the committee.

All requests by the general public to have an item placed on the agenda shall be reduced to writing and presented to the Clerk at least fourteen days before the published date of a county board meeting.

Non-County Board Persons (except staff) shall not be allowed to address the Board unless such person has made a request in writing to the Board Chairperson at least one day before the date of the meeting of the Board. Or if the board chair feels the information the non-board person has is germane to the question before the board. The request to speak shall state the subject to be addressed.

Speakers approved under this rule shall be limited to three minutes. This rule shall not apply during public hearings conducted while the Board is acting as a committee-of-the-whole.

The Vernon County Board of Supervisors, upon Motion made by the Board Chair, shall review any action taken, any approval of action to be taken or any failure to act, by any Committee of the Board so long as said Motion is made within fourteen (14) days of the Committee Meeting wherein such action, approval of action or failure to act occurred. The Board may, retract, reverse or modify, as it sees fit, any such action, approval of action or failure to act, so reviewed under this Rule. The Board may act on any such matter reviewed under this Rule as it sees fit. This Rule shall not apply to approval of any action taken by a Committee with regard to payment of debts of said Committee.

The Committees of the Vernon County Board of Supervisors may, at the election of the respective Committee Chair, request of the Chair of Vernon County Board of Supervisors that the Chair comprise part of the quorum of the respective Committee at any Meeting of said Committee. If such a request is made, the Chair of Vernon County Board of Supervisors shall have all authority conferred to any regular member of said Committee for purposes of said Meeting.

The Committees of the Vernon County Board of Supervisors shall provide a written draft of the Minutes of a Committee Meeting to the Vernon County Clerk's Office within seven (7) days of said Committee Meeting.

Electronic Attendance at County Board Meetings

1. County Board members MAY NOT attend the Full County Board by electronically/telephonically.

Electronic Attendance at Committee Meetings

Teleconference calls are an acceptable means of participation by committee members in committee meetings but are not the preferred means of participation. Teleconference calls may not be used by any members in meetings that require public input or when complex plans, drawings, and charts are displayed and explained. Teleconference call participation in meetings should be used sparingly and is limited by the rules set forth herein.

1. Unless an emergency, a committee member shall make a request to the committee chair person to participate electronically/telephonically no later than three (3) days in advance of the meeting.
2. Only one committee member may participate electronically/telephonically in a meeting.
3. Because electronic/telephonic participation may be interrupted at any time with no notice, a committee member participating by this means cannot be counted to achieve a quorum.
4. When a committee member participates electronically/telephonically, votes must be made by roll call.
5. The chair of the committee is authorized to sign the participation sheet with the phrase “participated electronically/telephonically.”
6. A committee member who participates electronically/telephonically shall be solely responsible for the cost, if any, of such participation, and at no time shall Vernon County be responsible for payment of any such cost. The participant will receive a per diem allowance for participating electronically/telephonically.

Bonding Issues Before the Board

Under Wis. Stat. 67.04 sets forth the debt issuance requirements for borrowing of money for building projects for municipalities as well as counties.

“67.045 Debit issuance conditions. (1) The governing body of a county may not issue bonds under s. 67.05 or promissory notes under s. 67.12 (12) unless one or more of the following apply: (a) A referendum is held, following the procedures in s. 67.05 (3), that approves the debt issuance. (b) The governing body of the county adopts a resolution that sets forth its reasonable expectations that issuance of the debt will not cause the county to increase the debt levy rate, as defined in s. 59.605 (1) (b)... (f) The governing body adopts a resolution to issue the debt by a vote of at least three-fourths of the members –elect...”

Supermajority Votes of the County Board

In most cases, adoption of a motion on the floor of the county board requires a simple majority vote, i.e. more than half. From time to time, though, state statutes and parliamentary authorities subject the county board to a higher threshold. Rather than a simple majority, these motions require at least a two-thirds (2/3) vote or even a three-fourths (3/4) vote for approval.

The following tables list the actions requiring a supermajority vote. There is no attempt to describe any procedures that need to be followed prior to these actions being taken. It often takes more than simply adopting a motion at a county board meeting for board action to be legal. For example, while it is true that the vote requirement for removing certain county officers is two-thirds, the board would first need to comply with section 17.16 of the Wisconsin statutes which contains the procedures that must be followed.

Motion before the County Board	Statute	Vote Required 2/3
Removal from office of the county clerk, county treasurer, county surveyor, or county board supervisor	17.09(1)	Not less than 2/3 of all supervisors entitled to a seat on the county board.
Removal from office of county officers appointed by the county board.	17.10(2)	Not less than 2/3 of the supervisors entitled to seats on the county board.
Make application to withdraw land from county forest program Also, if application is denied county board may appeal to a review committee. And, if application is approved, county board must approve resolution to withdraw the land.	28.11(11)(a)1 28.11(11)(a)4 28.11(11)(a)6	Not less than 2/3 of county board membership. Not less than 2/3 of county board membership. Not less than 2/3 of county board membership.

Motion before the County Board	Statute	Vote Required 2/3
Financing harbor improvements. ...assume the obligation of paying the principal and interest of such evidences of indebtedness as are then outstanding.	30.34(3)(b)	Not less than 2/3 of county board membership.
Withdrawal from a public library system.	43.18(1)(am)	Not less than 2/3 of county board membership.
Removal for misconduct or neglect of a trustee of a county institution.	46.18(3)	Not less than 2/3 of county board membership.
Removal of a county social services board member appointed by the county board.	46.22(1m)(c)2	Not less than 2/3 of county board membership.
Removal of a member of a county human services board.	46.23(4)(c)1	Not less than 2/3 of county board membership.
Removal of a member of a county community programs board.	51.42(4)(a)1.a	Not less than 2/3 of county board membership.
Removal of a member of a county developmental disabilities services board.	51.437(7)(a)1	Not less than 2/3 of appointing authority.
Fix the compensation of the board members to be next elected.	59.10(3)(f)	Not less than 2/3 of county board membership.
Override a veto of the county executive.	59.17(6)	Not less than 2/3 of the members-elect of the board.
Discontinue furnishing abstracts.	59.44(5)	Not less than 2/3 of county board membership.
Purchase membership in an association of county boards.	59.52(22)	Not less than 2/3 vote.
Authorization to take certain actions related to public transit in counties.	59.58(3)(i)	Not less than 2/3 vote of county board membership
Amending a zoning ordinance in an airport affected area.	59.69(5)(e)5m	Not less than 2/3 of the members of the board present and voting.
Removal of a member of a solid waste management board.	59.70(2)	Not less than 2/3 vote of the appointing authority.
Changes or amendments to a previously adopted budget.	65.90(5)(a)	Not less than 2/3 of county board membership.
Withdrawal from a regional planning commission.	66.0309(16)	Not less than 2/3 vote of the members elect.

Motion before the County Board	Statute	Vote Required 2/3
Authorization to expend in excess of funds available or appropriated.	66.0607(7)	Not less than 2/3 of county board membership.
Relief from conditions of gifts and dedications.	66.1025(1)	Not less than 2/3 vote of the members elect.
Declaration as premier resort area.	66.1113(2)(a)	Not less than 2/3 of the members of the county board who are present when the vote is taken.
Motions requiring a 3/4s vote		
Change in restricted use of land.	27.065(15)	Not less than 3/4 of the county board.
Financing harbor improvements through bonds or notes.	30.35(1)	Not less than 3/4 of the county board.
Amendment or repeal of previously adopted ordinance related to fixing the number of deputy sheriffs and their salaries	59.26(8)(d)	Not less than 3/4 of the members elect.
Bypassing bidding requirements for certain public works projects done directly by the county.	59.52(29)(a)	Not less than 3/4 of the county board.
When protest filed against a proposed zoning ordinance amendment.	59.69(5)(e)5g	Not less than 3/4 of the members present and voting.
One of the ways that a county can meet the conditions to issue debt	67.045(1)(f)	Not less than 3/4 of the members elect

This table includes some of the common motions under Robert’s Rules of order, Newly Revised that require more than a majority for approval.

Motion before the County Board	Robert’s Rules of Order	Vote Required
Limit or extend the limits of debate on a pending question	Chapter 15	2/3 of members voting
Limit or extend the limits of debate for the duration of the meeting.	Chapter 15	2/3 of members voting
Objection to consideration of a question	Chapter 26	2/3 of members voting
Previous question (end debate and vote on the pending question)	Chapter 16	2/3 of members voting
Suspend the rules	Chapter 25	2/3 of members voting

Compiled by Dan Hill, Local Government Specialist.
Reviewed by Philip Freeburg, Local Government Law Educator.