

Columbia County 4-H Local Government



Project

Developed by:

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Portions of this handbook were adapted from the Dodge County 4-H Government Education Program.

2004 Columbia County 4-H Local Government Project

Why are we doing this project?

Nationally, 4-H is focusing on Youth in Governance. This is an election year. Columbia County 4-H Vision to Action participants noted a need to 'get the word out' about all that 4-H offers. 4-H prides itself on leadership development and community service. This is an educational effort to help 4-H families understand another role they can play in communities.

Timeframe:

Interviews and club visits by elected officials should be completed by **August 1, 2004**. If you are not going to be able to complete your assigned tasks by that time please call Karen to make arrangements.

Reserve September 15, 2004 on your calendars:

Everyone interviewing County Board Supervisors should mark their calendar for Wednesday **September 15** from 6:00 – 9:00 PM. We will host an open house for the Supervisors prior to the County Board Meeting. Each interview team will be asked to create a display board with information about the Supervisor, information about what you and your club do in 4-H and it will include the photo taken of you and the supervisor. Display boards will be provided and some work times will be identified.

Parent/Leader Note:

While it will be helpful for you to be involved in this process with your child or members from your club, **it is important for them to do the actual calling, interview and follow-up thank you themselves**. This is to be a learning experience and doing it themselves will be the only way that it can really help them learn and grow. They should also plan to attend the local government body meetings.

Clubs may want to pair an older youth with a younger youth for the interviews. A family may want to be assigned to a specific elected official, however, youth should take on the primary roles. Parents are welcome to be present at the interviews but should stay in the background. Parents are encouraged to attend local government body meetings with 4-H members.

Packet Content:

General:

- Your Wisconsin Government – County Handout – Town Handout – City/Village Handout

City, Town, Village Component

- Guidelines
- Sample letter to invite presenters
- Sample Interview Questions
- City, Town, Village Presentation Notes Form and Board of Council Meeting Notes Form

County Board Component

- Guidelines/Interview Format
- Sample letter to confirm interview appointment
- Interview Notes Form
- County Board Meeting Notes Form
- County Board Interview Sample Newsletter Article

Your Wisconsin Government - County

Name of Governing Body (Representative Government)

County Board of Supervisors
Individual members are called Supervisors.
The body selects a Chair
and Vice Chair.

Responsibility

The county serves two purposes: (1) it provides certain services at the local level for the state, and (2) it is a unit of local self-government. The Columbia County Board of Supervisors passes ordinances (laws) and resolutions, and has the main responsibility for running county government. There is not a county executive or administrator in Columbia County. The Board divides into committees to handle their duties.

Minimum Age Requirement

18

Elections/Term

Each supervisor is elected from a supervisory district. The county's population is divided about equally among the districts. They are elected in Columbia County on a nonpartisan basis for 2 year terms in April.

Number of Meetings

Every two years a reorganization meeting is held in April to elect its officers and appoint committee members. In November, a public hearing is held, and the Annual County Budget is adopted. Columbia County holds 10 meetings each year.

Number of Members

The minimum and maximum numbers are based on population. Columbia County currently has 31 County Board Supervisors

Officials

Each county is required by the state constitution or state law to elect the following officials: district attorney, sheriff, clerk, treasurer, register of deeds, clerk of circuit court, coroner and surveyor is appointed in Columbia County.

Taxing Authority/Revenue

Counties are allowed to adopt a 0.5% sales tax. Other revenues include changes for public services (nursing home fees), state and federal aids (social services, mental health and highways) and the county property tax.

How You Can Be Involved

- ✓ Stay informed
- ✓ Vote in county elections
- ✓ Run for office
- ✓ Participate in county public meetings
- ✓ Contact county officials on issues that concern you
- ✓ Volunteer to serve
- ✓ Write a letter to the editor

Source: *The Framework of Your Wisconsin Government—A publication of the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance (16th Edition)*

Chart developed by:
UW-Extension Columbia County.

Your Wisconsin Government - Town

Name of Governing Body (Direct Democracy)

Town Board of Supervisors
Individual members are called Supervisors.
One is elected town chairperson.

Elections/Term

Supervisors are elected in odd-numbered years for two-year terms.

How You Can Be Involved

- ✓ Stay informed
- ✓ Vote in town elections
- ✓ Run for office
- ✓ Participate in town meetings
- ✓ Participate in town board meetings and public hearing
- ✓ Contact town officials on issues that concern you
- ✓ Volunteer to serve
- ✓ Write a letter to the editor

Minimum Age Requirement

18

Number of Meetings

Most hold a monthly meeting.

Number of Members

Usually 3 but some have 6.

Responsibility

A unit of local government that serves primarily rural areas. Because they are usually rural, residents often do not request the number of services cities/village residents desire. Any area in the state of Wisconsin that is not in a city or village is part of a town. The proper name is "town" not "township". Some decisions are made by direct action of qualified voters. The town meeting is a "direct democracy" because voters directly make town decisions rather than allow elected representatives to make decisions for them. Towns may only do things state law lets them do.

Officials

Other elected town officials include: a town clerk, a treasurer, an assessor (unless appointed) and, in some cases, a constable.

Taxing Authority/Revenue

About 37% of revenue comes from the state in shared revenues and state aids. About 42% is raised through local property taxes paid by homeowners, farmers and businesses. There are also charges for services and other income.

Source: *The Framework of Your Wisconsin Government—A publication of the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance (16th Edition)*

Chart developed by:
UW-Extension Columbia County.

Your Wisconsin Government - City/Village

Name of Governing Body (Representative Government)

City: Common Council (Individual members are called Alderpersons) Most cities have a mayor who is not a member of the common council but presides over the council and votes in case of a tie although the mayor may veto council actions.

Village: Board of Trustees (Individual members are called Trustees) Villages also have a village president who votes on matters before the board but cannot veto actions.

Responsibility

Created from an area that was originally a town. Villages and cities are incorporated. Cities and villages are more independent than towns. City and village governments have been given wide-ranging powers to deal with problems such as traffic, sidewalk and street lighting, underground pipelines to supply water and sewer, crime and solid waste. They have been given "home rule" which means that they may do things their own way unless the state constitution prohibits it or the activity is something of statewide concern that the legislature should handle.

Minimum Age Requirement

18

Number of Meetings

Most hold one monthly meeting.
Some hold two.

Number of Members

City: Varies among cities. In Columbia County ranges from 6 – 9.

Village: If 350 or less population – 2 trustees and larger villages elect up to 6.

Taxing Authority/Revenue

Villages and cities receive money from sources such as federal aids, shared revenues and state aids. The remaining funds to pay for services come from property taxes.

Elections/Term

City: Alderpersons are usually elected for two-year terms. Usually the city is divided into aldermanic districts. People only vote for the candidates running in the district where they live. Most cities have a mayor who is usually elected for two-year terms.

Village: Trustees are usually elected for two-year terms in the spring elections. Usually elected at-large (chosen from the village as a whole rather than from election districts.) A village president is also elected.

How You Can Be Involved

- ✓ Stay informed
- ✓ Vote in city/village elections
- ✓ Run for office
- ✓ Participate in city/village public meetings
- ✓ Contact city/village officials on issues that concern you
- ✓ Volunteer to serve
- ✓ Write a letter to the editor

Officials

City: Other officials may include a clerk, treasurer, assessor, engineer and attorney, help the mayor run the city. They may be elected by the people, appointed by the council or appointed by the mayor.

Village: Other elected village officers may include a clerk, treasurer, assessor, constable and municipal judge.

Source: *The Framework of Your Wisconsin Government—A publication of the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance (16th Edition)*

Chart developed by:
UW-Extension Columbia County.

2004 Columbia County 4-H Local Government Project Guidelines

City, Town and Village Component

Step One: Contact Town Board Chair, City Alderperson, or Village President of assigned bodies

- Introduce yourself as a Columbia County 4-H member. (Be sure to tell what club you are in.) Let them know if you live in their voting district.
- Say why you are calling. *Columbia County 4-H members are participating in a program this year to learn about the role local government plays in their lives. We want to learn how we can be more involved in our communities. We also want to share information about 4-H with elected officials.*
- Tell them what you would like from them. *We would like to invite someone from the (town board, city council, village board) to attend our club meeting on _____ at (time and place) to give a short presentation about the body you represent. We would like to know a little bit about you, why you chose to be a public official and what role you play. We have prepared some interview questions to ask so we can learn more about the kinds of decisions you make and the job you do. We would also like to share some information with you about our 4-H club and the things we do for our community.*
- If your club meeting day falls on the same day as the city/village/town meeting assigned to your club, consider asking if club representatives can interview the body at their meeting.

Step Two: Send a letter to the person attending your club meeting. (Personalize from the example provided.)

Step Three: Prepare for the club visit.

- Choose someone to introduce the speaker(s) to the group.
- Select some interview questions from the list provided (or make up your own) and decide who will ask the questions.
- Have someone lined up to take a club photo with the representative.
- Be sure you have enough copies of the "Your Wisconsin Government" sheets for each family.

Step Four: The Club Visit

- Hand out "Your Wisconsin Government" sheets to members/parents.
- Introduce the speaker to the group and ask the official to share some brief overall comments with the group.
- Have your interview panel ask their questions. (If the speaker has already covered a specific question, you will want to skip to the next one.)
- Ask the speaker if they have any additional comments they would like to share with the group.
- Have selected members share information about your club with the speaker through a display or some type of presentation. You might think about using a scrapbook, photo display board, or just have 3 or 4 members share a 4-H experience that is meaningful for them. Try to focus on what the club does that helps the community.
- Ask if they are willing to join the club for a photo. (If you have more than one body represented, they can be in the same photo.)
- Be sure to thank the official for attending your meeting.

Step Five: Follow up the presentation with a thank you note within a week of the meeting.

Step Six: Members from your club attend a meeting of the assigned town board, village board and/or city council.

Step Six: Report your experience.

- Discuss the process at a club meeting. Share information about the meeting you attended.
- Be sure to take notes during the presentation at your club meeting. Take notes at the town board, village board or city council meetings you attend. Send a short report to the Extension Office with a copy of the photo.
- Send the City/Village/Town Board or Council Meeting Notes to the Extension Office.

2004 Columbia County 4-H Local Government Project

Sample City, Village Town Letter

***Personalize this letter to fit with your circumstances.

Month/Day/Year

(Official's Name)

(Address)

Dear (Mr./Mrs./Ms.) _____,

Thank you for agreeing to attend the (Month) meeting of the (club name). Our meeting begins at (time) at (place). We are looking forward to learning more about how decisions are made by elected officials at the local level.

Our club will have a short business meeting, followed by your presentation as an invited speaker. In some cases, clubs will be inviting representatives from several towns, cities or villages. We are interested in knowing what decisions are made by each body and how they operate.

We hope you will begin your presentation by briefly sharing some general information about the (city council/village board/town board). Our club has selected a panel of interviewers to ask you some questions about your role and important issues facing local government bodies today.

We would like to take a photo of you with our club members for our scrapbook and for publicity purposes.

Please feel free to call me if you have any questions. My phone number is (###-###-####).

Sincerely,

(Name)

(Address)

**2004 Columbia County 4-H Local Government Project
City, Town and Village Possible Interview Questions**

Town

How are decisions made in town government?
What services are provided to town residents?
How many people usually attend town meetings?
Why were you interested in serving on the town board?
What are specific issues that concern the town board and residents at this time?

What is your impression of the Columbia County 4-H program?
How does 4-H and other youth organizations affect communities?
Why should 4-H members be aware of the activities of town boards?
What can 4-H clubs, their members and families do to become involved in their town?

Is there anything you would like to know about our 4-H club?

Cities/villages

How many people are on your council or board?
How are decisions made in city/village government?
What services are provided to village/city residents and how do you decide what to provide?
Why were you interested in serving on the common council or village board?
What specific issues are of greatest concern to your village/city?

What is your impression of the Columbia County 4-H program?
Do you think 4-H and other youth programs are important to city/village residents?
Why should 4-H members be aware of the activities of village/city government bodies?
What can 4-H clubs, their members and families do to become involved?

Is there anything you would like to know about our 4-H club?

2004 Columbia County 4-H Local Government Project Guidelines County Board Component

Step One: **Contact Assigned County Board Member**

- Introduce yourself as a Columbia County 4-H Member. (Be sure to tell what club you are in.) Let them know if you live in their voting district.
- Say why you are calling. *Columbia County 4-H members are participating in a program this year to learn about the role local government plays in their lives. We want to learn how we can be more involved in our communities. We also want to share information about 4-H with elected officials.*
- Tell them what you would like from them. *I/we would like to set up a time at your convenience to interview you about you and your role as a county board member. I/we would like to know a little bit about you, why you chose to be a public official and what role you play. I/we would also like to share some information with you about our 4-H club and the things we do for our members and community.* Explain that the interview information will be used to develop an article in the 4-H newsletter and for display purposes to describe the project.

Step Two: **Set up your interview.**

- Pick a date and time for the interview
- Agree to meet them at a certain location. (Make sure that when setting up your interview, it is at their convenience.)
- Send a letter to the Supervisor (if there is enough time between the call and interview) reviewing the meeting plan.

Step Three: **Prepare your set of questions.**

(The Interview Format Sheet is only a sample of question ideas!)

- You are welcome to personalize the interview by adding your own questions and making changes on the sheet.
- Using the "Notes on Interview" sheet, write out or mark the questions you plan to use.

Step Three: **Prepare for the interview.**

- Practice the interview questions with someone else.
- Dress neatly. No Jeans.
- Be sure to arrive promptly on the day of the interview.
- Be sure to have your papers and a pen or pencil to take notes.
- Bring a camera to the interview.

Step Four: **Meet your supervisor and conduct your interview.**

- Remember: confidence and enthusiasm. Consider shaking their hand and make sure introductions are made.
- Keep the interview brief. (One-half hour should be plenty of time.)
- If you decide to use a tape recorder, ask the Supervisor ahead of time if this is okay. If it is, make sure the tape recorder isn't in the way.
- Allow the Supervisor to offer additional information not asked for.
- Share information with the Supervisor about your 4-H experience. Perhaps you'll want to take your record book or some photos of activities that your club does during the year.
- Be sure to be able to answer the Supervisor's questions they may have about your 4-H Club. (Such as: how many members you have, major projects, club activities and events, what you and other members get from 4-H that you couldn't get from school or other similar programs.
- Tell them again that you will be writing an article to be published in the 4-H newsletter and that you will be creating a display board. Ask them if they want to read the article before it is printed.
- Ask them if they would agree to be in a photo with you for use on the display board and with the article.
- If they agree, have someone take a picture.
- Invite them to one of your 4-H meetings.

- Let your Supervisor know you plan to attend the **September 15, 2004** Board meeting. If you would like to attend an additional meeting, that is fine too.
- Be sure to thank the Supervisor.

Step Five: **Follow up the interview with a thank you note within a week of the meeting.**

Step Six: **Report your experience.**

- Discuss the process at a club meeting. Share information about the County Board of Supervisors meeting you attended.
- Turn your article in to the Extension Office along with your "Interview Notes" sheet. Be sure to attach a copy of the photo.
- You will receive information about creating a display board for use at the September 15, 2004 County Board Meeting.
- Turn your Board Meeting notes into the Extension Office.

County Board Supervisor Interview Format

Personal Data-- Tell me about yourself...

- Family background, children
- Occupation
- Education
- Hobbies/interests
- Involvement in civic groups or clubs
- Were you or your children 4-H members?

Role on County Board

- How long have you been on the Board?
- What areas of the county do you represent?
- Why were you interested in being on the Board?
- How does your present occupation (or past experiences) help you as a Board member?
- What, if any special committees do you serve on and what does the committee do?

Issues

- What important issues does the Board face at this time? How are these issues being addressed?

4-H Program

- What is your impression of the 4-H program?
- How do you think it affects the youth involved?
- How does it affect the communities in the area?
- Why is it important for 4-H members be aware of the activities of county government officials?
- What are some ways you think 4-H members/families could get involved in local government?

Other

- Is there any other information you would like to share?

2004 Columbia County 4-H Local Government Project
Sample County Board Supervisor Interview Confirmation Letter
*****Personalize this letter to fit with your circumstances.**

Month/Day/Year

(Official's Name)
(Address)

Dear Supervisor _____,

Thank you for agreeing to meet with (me/us) on (date) at (time) at (place). I/We are looking forward to learning more about how decisions are made by elected officials at the county level.

(I/We) have prepared a set of interview questions and would also like to share some information with you about our 4-H club and the activities we are involved in through 4-H. (I/We) would also like to have a photo taken with you to include on the display we will create. We plan to share the display boards with all county board supervisors prior to your September meeting.

(I/We) will be writing an article based on the interview. It will be published in the Columbia County 4-H Newsletter. Please let me/us know if you would like to see a copy of the interview before it is published.

(I/We) plan to attend a County Board of Supervisors meeting. I/We invite you to attend a 4-H club meeting. Our club generally meets on the (#) (day of week) of the month at the (place). Please call our general leader (name/number) to confirm the place and time.

Please feel free to call me if you have any questions. My phone number is (###-###-####).

Sincerely,

(Name)
(Address)

**2004 Columbia County 4-H Local Government Project
County Board Supervisor Interview Notes**

Name of County Board Member: _____

Date Interviewed: ___/___/___ 4-H Club: _____

Name(s) of Interviewer(s): _____

Personal Data

Familybackground/children _____

Occupation _____

Education _____

Hobbies/Interests _____

Involvement in civic groups or clubs _____

Were you or your children 4-H members? _____

Role on County Board

How long have you been on the Board? _____

What areas of the county do you represent? _____

Why were you interested in being on the Board? _____

How you're your present occupation (or past experiences) help you as a Board member? _____

What, if any special committees do you serve on and what does the committee do? _____

Ask your own question...

2004 Columbia County 4-H Local Government Project County Board Interview Sample Newsletter Article

Robert Krueger

Interviewed by Nicole Thompson, Lakeside 4-H Club

County Board Supervisor Robert Krueger, has served on the Board since 1965. As District 11 Supervisor, he represents the towns of Shields and Portland, as well as a portion of the town of Elba. Born and raised in the same house in which he currently resides, Mr. Krueger has five children, three boys and two girls. A farmer by occupation, he also enjoys fishing, hunting and woodworking (when time permits) and has also served on the council and building committee for St. John's Church and school in Waterloo.

Mr. Krueger currently served on four of the County Board's twenty-five committees. Those committees are the Finance committee (which is responsible for preparing the annual county budget), the Executive committee (which approves officer bonds and keeps the Board informed on state legislation affecting the county), the Ag and Extension Education committee (which is directly involved with the 4-H program), and the Land Conservation Committee, which he currently chairs (and which is responsible for water pollution control and protection of farmland). Supervisor Krueger believes that one of the major issues facing the county Board next year will be how to continue to provide adequate operating funds. He also believes that funding of Clearview and the 4-H program should be given high priority and that no additional county parks are needed at this time.

A strong supporter of the 4-H program, Krueger identifies Dodge County's program as one of the best. In his words, "4-H starts in the heart and molds the tree as it grows." "4-H teaches the basics, the building blocks on which young people continue to grow and develop and should be given the highest priority of any organization." He hopes that many 4-H members will serve in government as they grow older and that they will be honest and faithful in doing so. As he said, "Serving those who send me is most important."

Thank you, Mr. Krueger, for your long-time, dedicated service to Dodge County!