

County Commissioners: *Duties and Responsibilities*

Each county in Oklahoma has three County Commissioner districts, which are approximately equal in population and are numbered as districts one, two, and three. One County Commissioner is elected by the electors within each district, and the three together comprise the Board of County Commissioners.

The members of the Board of County Commissioners are the principal administrators and business managers of the county. Many citizens perceive a County Commissioner as primarily being responsible for maintaining and constructing county roads and bridges. However, this is only one of many duties and responsibilities of this office. As members of the Board of County Commissioners, they also have the power to make orders and authorizations, to inspect and approve county programs and facilities, to supervise the financial affairs of the county, to develop personnel policies, to investigate the performance of other county officers, to make agreements affecting the welfare of the citizens of the county, and much more.

As the chief fiscal entity of the county (except in Budget Board counties), the Board of County Commissioners is in charge of receiving and expending funds and, therefore, must make major financial decisions and transactions, prepare budgets, award contracts, and act on claims. Annually, the Board must consider the estimated needs of each county office for the next fiscal year and publish these estimates. Another important function of the Board of County Commissioners is to ensure fiscal responsibility on the part of all officials who handle county funds. The Board, therefore, not only submits its own annual financial report, but also has the power and the duty to audit the accounts of all officers who receive, manage, or distribute money belonging to or appropriated to the county.

The Board of County Commissioners also provides various community services within the county such as rural fire protection and assisting small towns with street maintenance. County Commissioners also serve on other county boards, interact with other county offices and departments, and have the power to create public trust authorities.

The Board is required by law to hold a regular meeting on the first Monday of each month and to execute a wide range of legal and fiscal duties. Because of the large amount of business confronting county government, meetings are often held more frequently and an agenda for each meeting is posted in advance at the courthouse. The Board of County Commissioners' business meetings are open to the public and must comply with the Open Meeting Act.