

The County Administrator in a District (Beat) System County

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Overview: “Section 19-4-1 *et seq.* of the *Code* establishes the office of county administrator and prescribes the duties and responsibilities of the office. Counties that operate under a ‘beat’ system are authorized to employ a county administrator; ‘unit’ counties must appoint (or hire) someone as the county administrator. The county administrator has general administrative authority over the operations of the county. Specific areas of responsibility include inventory, building maintenance, budget preparation, purchasing, solid waste management, zoning, etc.” (*County Government in Mississippi: A Handbook for Supervisors*, 1996, p. III-4).

The board of supervisors in a district (beat) system county may employ a county administrator. Section 19-4-1 of the *Mississippi Code 1972 Annotated* (hereafter designated *Code*) requires that “the person employed as county administrator shall hold at least a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university and shall have knowledgeable experience in any of the following fields: work projection, budget planning, accounting, purchasing, cost control, personnel management and road construction procedures.” The county administrator works under the policies determined by the board of supervisors and is subject to the board's general supervision and control. He or she “shall administer all county affairs falling under the control of the board and carry out the general policies of the board in conformity with the estimates of expenditures fixed in the annual budget” adopted or later revised by appropriate action of the board.

Section 19-4-3 of the *Code* states that the county administrator “shall hold office at the pleasure of the board of supervisors and his employment may be terminated at any time by a majority vote of the board of supervisors.” The county administrator’s salary is set by the board of supervisors and is paid out of the county general fund, special funds from taxes levied by the board for any particular unit of county government (except hospitals and schools), or other funds available “to pay the financial administration expenses of county government.” The board of supervisors is required to provide travel, transportation, and office expenses necessary for the county administrator to perform the duties of the office. Travel and transportation expenses are to be paid on itemized vouchers in accordance with section 25-3-41 of the *Code*.

Section 19-4-5 of the *Code* authorizes the board of supervisors to establish, by action recorded in the minutes, “the general policies to be followed in the administration of the county.” The county administrator is authorized to “have such duties and responsibilities as set forth in sections 19-4-1 through 19-4-9” of the *Code*.

Section 19-4-7 of the *Code* delineate the duties and responsibilities that the board of supervisors may delegate and assign to the county administrator. These duties and responsibilities may be assigned

in whole or in part and other duties may be assigned as the board wishes so long as they are not contrary to the laws and the Constitution of the State of Mississippi or are not already assigned by law to other officers. This section of the *Code* specifically lists nineteen (19) duties and responsibilities that may be granted a county administrator:

- (a) Maintain an office and employ an office clerk and other assistance for the board of supervisors and prepare a budget for this office.
- (b) Prepare and maintain a current inventory, including the location and condition, of all personal property owned by the county.
- (c) Prepare and maintain a list of all buildings and real estate owned by the county.
- (d) Carry out the board of supervisors' responsibilities regarding janitorial services and maintenance of county-owned buildings and property, except in areas that have been specifically assigned to some other person or office.
- (e) Supervise the purchase clerk and inventory control clerk and the boards and other divisions of county government. The county administrator may serve as purchase clerk or inventory control clerk.
- (f) Assist the board of supervisors in preparing the budget and the tax levy.
- (g) Investigate the use of funds appropriated by the board of supervisors and used by any person or group and report the findings to the board.
- (h) Supervise county sanitary landfills and refuse collection procedures.
- (i) Supervise county-owned parks, playgrounds, and recreation areas.
- (j) Supervise and administer zoning and building code ordinances adopted by the board of supervisors.
- (k) Supervise airports owned by the county.
- (l) Act as a liaison with the various agencies and divisions of county government "to see that county-owned property is properly managed, maintained, repaired, improved, kept or stored."
- (m) "See that all orders, resolutions and regulations of the board of supervisors are faithfully executed."
- (n) Report on the affairs of the county to the board of supervisors, especially financial conditions and future financial needs.

- (o) Keep the board of supervisors informed of federal and state laws and regulations affecting the county and the board; advise the board of possible state or federal grants and assistance for which the county may be eligible; assist with preparation and submission of plans for acquiring such grants and assistance; and be the “administrating officer” of state and federal grants to the county.
- (p) Be responsible for securing a plan of insurance coverage, with minimum premiums, on county property that the board of supervisors deems necessary to insure or the law requires be insured.
- (q) Hear and investigate inquiries and complains from county citizens involving the operation of county government and report his or her findings to the board of supervisors and the supervisor from the district in which the inquiry or complaint originated.
- (r) “Meet regularly with the board of supervisors and have full privileges of discussion but no vote.”
- (s) “Do any and all other administrative duties that the board of supervisors could legally do themselves and that they can legally delegate without violating the laws of the state nor impinging upon the duties set out by law for other officers.”

Section 19-4-9 of the *Code* requires the county administrator to take “the official oath of office” and to “give bond to the board of supervisors, with sufficient surety, to be payable, conditioned and approved as provided by law.” The amount of this bond must equal “three percent (3%) of the sum of all the state and county taxes shown by the assessment rolls and the levies to have been collectible in the county for the year immediately preceding the commencement of the term of office for such administrator.” This bond, however, must not exceed \$100,000. The bond premium is to be paid “from the county general fund or other available funds of the county.”