So you want to be a road commissioner

The qualities, tasks and responsibilities of serving as a county road commissioner in Michigan
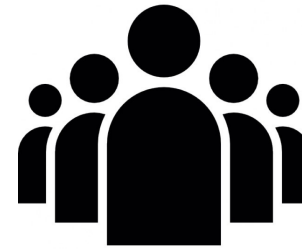
Road Commissioners Terms of Office

For regular six-year seats on a road commission, the term of office begins January 1st. Each time a commissioner is elected, re-elected, appointed or re-appointed, he/she must complete an Oath of Office form within 10 days after being elected/appointed and file it with the county clerk.

Every other year, one seat on a three-member board, and up to two seats on a five-member board are up for appointment/election.

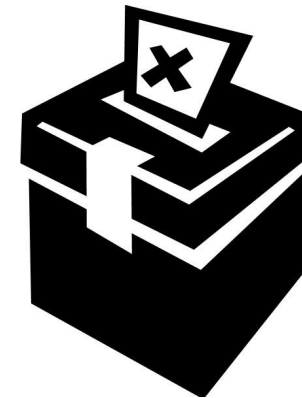## Michigan Road Commissioners by the Numbers:

29

Five-member boards

48

Three-member boards

42

appointed boards

35

elected boards

The handbook for county road commissioners is found at micountyroads.org/Commissioners-Handbook

Overview of the County Road Commission

Michigan is unique among all states in its creation of the county road commission to develop a seamless local network of roads and bridges. The state adopted the County Road Commission Act in 1909, at the urging of townships, agriculture, local residents and the Michigan Legislature.

While other states do address roads at a county level, only Michigan has a county-level "board of directors" called a road commission.

As of 2017, Michigan has 77 county road commissions. In six other counties, the county commission has opted to directly supervise the county road agency.

The county commission has the responsibility to set compensation for road commissioners, determine the number of road commissioners and decide whether they will be appointed or elected.

If the road commissioners are appointed, the county commission makes the selections.

Qualities of a Road Commissioner

The best candidate to serve on a road commission will understand and respect his or her role to represent road commission policy, receive public input and act as an ambassador for the road commission in the community.

Personal qualities that make a good road commissioner include:

➡ A good reputation in the community;

➡ Strong interest in learning and listening;

➡ Willingness to be policy oriented and not entangled in day-to-day management;

➡ Ability to look beyond budget oversight at the bigger picture;

➡ Good interpersonal skills and inclination to engage in the community;

➡ Willingness to look beyond traditional tasks and policies to new ways of doing things; and

➡ Demonstrated ability to look to the future and advance the road commission in its mission to maintain a safe and efficient transportation system, including the public right-of-way.

Road Commissioners Responsibilities

Road commissioners have a responsibility to ensure their road commission achieves what it should and avoids unacceptable situations.

Commissioners' duties include:

➡ Approving high-level operations policies such as personnel and union negotiations;

➡ Approving position classifications and compensation but not managing staff;

➡ Cultivating a philosophy of transparency, honesty and avoiding conflicts of interest;

➡ Building relationships in the community and with local state legislators;

➡ Ensuring a fiscally healthy road commission including budget approval;

➡ Prioritizing projects and future strategic planning;

➡ Authorizing major purchases, acting on bids and awarding contracts; and

➡ Hiring and evaluating the chief administrative officer, who is responsible for all other positions at the road commission.

Specific Tasks of a Road Commissioner

➡ Attend all board meetings in person and know the responsibilities of the position;

➡ Abide by the laws and rules that protect the public interest;

➡ Continue education by attending County Road Association of Michigan programs;

➡ Consider what is best for the road commission, as well as the community; and

➡ Be able to explain the responsibilities of the road commission.

Policy Making Body

Today's governing environment requires that commissioners think like a policy-making body, rather than a managerial, decision-making body.