Combined City Detail and County Detail (2015)

Local Government

Real Democracy, Where the Rubber Meets the Chip-seal Road

***City Government***

City Government in Arkansas

Big Three City Budget:

25-30% Police

15-20% Fire

20-30% Streets

Balance:

Administration, Health, Parks, Sanitation, Libraries, EMS

Water and Sewer

Big Bucks, but

Accounted for Separately

User Fees

Paying for actual service rendered

A relationship between services and costs

Very popular as a way to keep general tax levels down

Revenue

Local Option Taxes (ex. Temporary Sales Tax for the Fire Station)

Franchise Taxes (White County Cable)

Fees

Ad Valorem Property Tax

“Turn-Back” funds – revenue sharing from the state

Federal Grants and Aid

Arkansas Cities

No home rule

School Districts are Separate

Elected Officials may run as party nominees or file as independents

Citizens have initiative and referendum

Classified according to size:

1st Class – 2500+

2nd Class – 50-2500

Incorporated towns have less than 500

Three structures available:

* Mayor/Council
* City Administrator w/ Board of Directors (3)
* City Manager (5)

Remember This?

**Isaiah 33**  
22 For the LORD is our judge,   
the LORD is our lawgiver,   
the LORD is our king;   
it is he who will save us.

How do you translate 3 branches to the local level? Some local structures combine all three functions into one body!

Structure is NOT Neutral

“Different structures tend to favor different interests in the political struggle by making it easier or more difficult to attain office and mobilize a constituency. Thus structures not only shape and constrain conflict, sometimes structure itself is the issue.”

Gray and Eisinger

Citygovernment **structures**:

* **Commission**
* **Council/manager**
* **Strong mayor/council**
* **Weak mayor/ council**

http://www.searcy.com/city/city-hall/city-aldermen

Whether it is a council or commission:

They are the policy making body for your city.

Resolutions (bills) are passed and become codified into local ordinances (laws)

These have the force of law in the incorporated boundaries of the city (and sometimes even a little bit further!)

What City Councils and Commissions Do:

Money

* Pass Budgets, Set Tax levels

Human Resources

* Approve Appointees
* Hire and evaluate employees, including City Managers

Provide Oversight and Management

* Program Reviews
* Contact with Administrators

Constituent Services

* A point of contact with your local government: “MY” alderman, “MY” Councilwoman

**Forms of City Government**

Commission

* Dead bodies on the beach at Galveston…
* 3-9 members
* Elected at large
* Act as both legislative and executive
* Some models have elections to head a specific agency
* This structure is more common in county government; only 2% of cities have a Commission form
* Challenge: NO separation of appropriation and spending, difficult to fix responsibility.

Council

* Classic “citizen” style legislature
* Part time/ Low pay
* Small or no staff
* Monthly meetings
* Only the biggest cities operate with large staff and committees
* Challenge: A willing and capable pool.

Manager

* Policy Making is in the hands of an elected Council
* Administration is in the hands of a hired, professional administrator
* Thank you, Staunton, VA (1908)
* 40% of all cities have managers
* Wouldn’t Woodrow Wilson be proud?
* Manager may propose
* Budget
* Resolutions
* Personnel appointments
* Average Tenure? 4 years
* Challenge: Are managers responsive and accountable? Can you really separate politics and administration?

Mayor:

Again, a structural question

Strong mayor or weak mayor?

* Veto power
* Budget power
* Appointments
* Ballot length as an indicator
* Separate, independent boards and commissions

Some mayors are strictly “ceremonial”

* Challenge: To balance responsiveness and responsibility with control.

**Local Politics**

It’s all local…

logrolling, horse trading, back scratching

Urban Political Machines

Civil War to mid 1950’s

Material Incentives

Patronage appointments

Contracts

**“**Vote Early and Often…**”**

“Boss” – machine leader

* Boss Tweed –

NYC 1866-1871

NOT an elected official

* Chicago’s Mayor Daly Machine

1955-1976, and then junior…

**Progressive Reforms of City Government**

Going Strong:

Strong Mayor System

* Centralized authority with accountability and control

Non-Partisan Elections

* Most cities hold NP elections (only ¼ use labels)
* “Not a Republican or a Democratic way to pave a road…”

Professional City Managers

* An attempt to professionalize and rationalize the administrative side of government

Not so much…

Commission form of government

* Voting Rights Act

District vs. At Large Elections

* Since 1982, “results tests” have decreased at large elections

Let’s Go to the Web

* http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk
* http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/governments/cb12-156.html

***County Government***

3139 Counties as of 2012 Census

may have Board of Commissioners

may have elected manger

may have an executive selected by the Board

* Connecticut and Rhode Island don’t have county government
* Alaska has boroughs; Louisiana has parishes

County Government

What Counties Do:

LOTS!

Some are MUST

Some are MAY

County Government Statistics

Texas has 254 counties

Delaware has 3

LA county has 9.5 million people

Loving County, TX has 67 people

Average population is 83,075

201 Counties have more than 250,000

71.8% have less than 50,000

The Big Picture

Arkansas Counties

Historical Setting:

1874 – Little Rock has 12,380 people

Four other cities with more than 1000:

Fort Smith, Pine Bluff, Camden, Hot Springs

County Government is primary government

Home Rule!

1977 Amendment 55

Gave counties home rule

Restructured Quorum Courts

Strengthened Legislative functions; weakened County Judge

Cut number of JP’s to between 9 and 15

**Pulaski County (Little Rock) went from 458 JP’s to 15!!!**

“…May exercise legislative authority not denied by constitution or by law.”

(Remember: cities are creatures of statute; counties are creatures of the constitution)

Quorum Court

Governing body for Arkansas County

Justices of the Peace – elected officials from each district – part time

County Judge – Chief Executive Officer of the County – full time

Quorum Court

* Fixes number and compensation of deputies and county employees
* Appropriates public funds for county expenses
* Levy taxes
* Fill vacancies of county elective office

Typical County Budget

25-30 % Roads and rural services

25-30% Law Enforcement

10-15% Courts

Balance:

Administration, buildings, health services, elections, emergency services

County, District and Township Elected Officials

Who’s Who and What Do they Do…

County Judge - Chief Executive Officer

Presides over the quorum court, holds primary administrative responsibility for the county. Basically acts as county administrator.

Mike Lincoln

Sheriff

Principle peace officer of the county, makes arrests for violations of laws, and has custody of the county jail

Ricky Shourd

County Clerk/Probate Clerk

Official bookkeeper of county records, registers voters, issues marriage licenses, and keeps records of the Quorum court.

Carla Ervin

Circuit Clerk

Keeps the records of the circuit, chancery and juvenile courts. Also records deeds, mortgages, liens and bonds.

Tami King

County Collector

Collects municipal, county, school and improvement district taxes and turns them over to the county treasurer.

Sue Liles

County Assessor

Determines the value of real and personal property.

Debra Lang

County Treasurer

Is responsible for the custody and disbursement of all funds collected by the county.

Janet Hibbits

County Coroner

Signs death certificates if there is no doctor present, holds inquests into cause of death.

David Powell, Jr.

District Officers

Justice of the Peace (JP)

* There are thirteen JP’s, elected from single member districts (often a holdover from townships), who serve a two year term as part of the Quorum Court, the general legislative body for the county.
* http://www.whitecountyar.org/#!quorum-court/comn

Township Officials

Constable

* A constitutional township official charged, by law, to conserve the peace in his township.