

# **Report to the Swift County Board of Commissioners Regarding Options for County Administrative Redesign**

Submitted by Jim Mulder

The Swift County Board of Commissioners contracted with Jim Mulder to review and make recommendations regarding options for redesigning Swift County administrative services in light of the pending retirement of County Auditor Byron Guise (April, 2012) and Chief Deputy Auditor LoAnn Hagen (April, 2012). The county has a long term vacancy in the County Administrator position, a position in the County Recorder's office that has not been filled, and the position of County Assessor is vacant. These vacancies allow flexibility in considering organizational options. The purpose of this evaluation and recommendation is to provide the County Commissioners with organizational options that meet the following goals.

1. The administrative structure for Swift County should be of value to the citizens of Swift County and meet their needs.
2. The administrative structure for Swift County should operate efficiently, be effective in completing its responsibilities, meet state statutory requirements for service delivery, and be accountable to the County Board for all actions.
3. The administrative structure for Swift County should be transparent and user friendly for Swift County citizens.
4. The administrative structure for Swift County should be as cost efficient as possible while providing quality services.

### **Option 1: Continue current organizational model; fill County Administrator position**

Option 1 maintains the status quo for how the county is administered. The county Board would appoint a new County Auditor. The new County Auditor would continue to be elected as would the County Treasurer and County Recorder. The Auditor's non-statutory duties would be transferred to a newly hired County Administrator. The County Board would hire a County Assessor. The vacant administrative assistant position in the Recorder's office could be assigned to the county administrator and also be cross trained to support the County Recorder, the County Treasurer, and the information technology dept. (See Option 1 Org. Chart)

#### Positives:

- a. Option 1 is the simplest option to adopt with few other changes in the county's administrative structure.
- b. Option 1 does not require a referendum or is it subject to a reverse referendum.
- c. Option 1 allows citizens to continue to vote for the office of County Auditor.

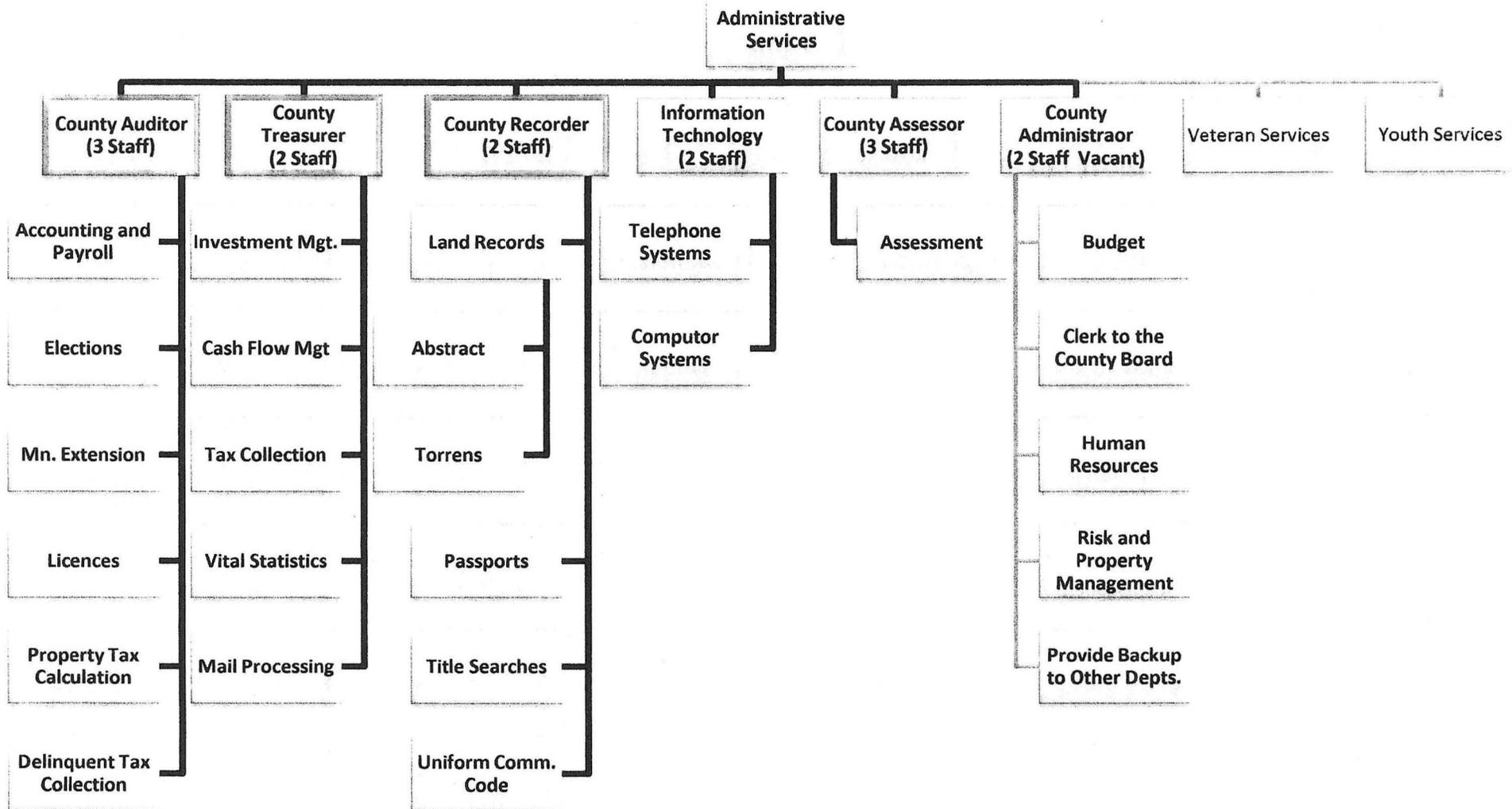
#### Negatives:

- a. Option 1 maintains the status quo and does not position the county to redesign systems and services.
- b. Option 1 is the least flexible option from the perspective of the county board.
- c. Option 1 creates a potential for administrative tension and non-accountability within the delivery of administrative services.
- d. Whoever the county board may appoint to the auditor position would be subject to election in eighteen months.
- e. This option leaves much discretionary decision making to the elected officials.

#### Board Actions for this option:

1. Hire a County Administrator prior to January 1. The earlier the better.
2. Interview and appoint a new County Auditor to replace Auditor Giese. (The Board may want to hire someone before year end for training and then make the appointment after the official retirement.)
3. Interview and hire a County Assessor.
4. Interview and hire an individual trained as an accountant or a CPA to replace the Deputy Auditor.

**Option 1: Current Structure**  
**Model Total Staff-14**  
**(2 Vacant)**



**Option 2: Combine County Auditor and County Treasurer positions; new Auditor/Treasurer position continues to be elected and fill County Administrator position**

Option 2 combines the offices of County Auditor and County Treasurer. The current County Treasurer would assume the new, elected office of County Auditor/Treasurer and be responsible for all statutory responsibilities of County Auditor and County Treasurer. The County Recorder would continue to be elected. Some non-statutory duties currently delivered by the County Auditor would be transferred to a newly hired County Administrator. The County Board would hire a County Assessor. The vacant administrative assistant position could be assigned to the county administrator and also be cross trained to support the County Recorder and the Information Technology department. This option does not require a referendum but would be subject to a reverse referendum after the appointment is made. (See Option 2 Org. Chart)

**Positives:**

- a) Option 2 is also simple to adopt as the action of the Board to combine the auditor and treasurer offices would only be subject to a reverse referendum.
- b) Option 2 allows citizens to vote for the office of County Auditor/Treasurer.
- c) Option 2 is endorsed by the current County Treasurer.

**Negatives:**

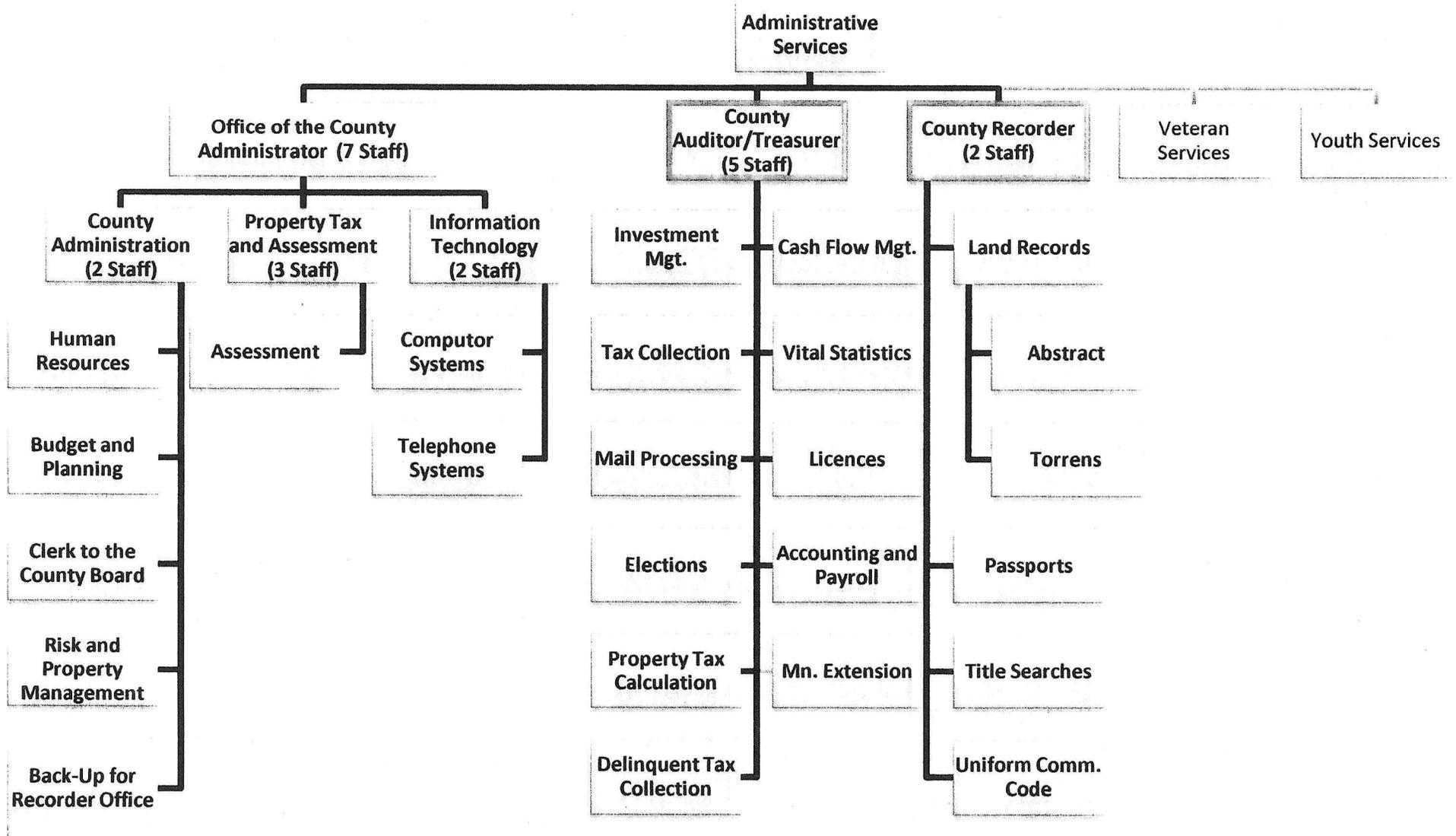
- a) Option 2 maintains an extra layer of administration in the finance area as compared to options 3 and 4 and therefore is less efficient than those options.
- b) Option 2 is equally as un-flexible as Option 1 and leaves issues of authority and accountability in question. Flexibility is left to the discretion of the Auditor/Treasurer.
- c) Since the Auditor/Treasurer position is elected, long term strategies are difficult to plan and operationalize.
- d) Option 2 is estimated to require 14 staff, one more than Options 3 or 4.
- e) This structure carries the risk of a potential conflict environment between the Administrator and the Auditor/Treasurer.
- f) Option 2 leaves a future County Board asking the same organizational decisions as the current board.

**Board Actions for this option:**

- 1. Hire a County Administrator prior to January 1. The earlier the better.
- 2. Interview and hire a new County Assessor.
- 3. Work with the expected Auditor/Treasurer to create transition plan for the new office.
- 4. In April of 2013, pass a resolution adopting the Auditor/Treasurer plan.

**Option 2: Elected  
Auditor/Treasurer Model**

**(Total Staff-14)**



### **Option 3: Total redesign of administration, fill County Administrator position, and hire/appoint Auditor, Treasurer, and Recorder**

Option 3 is the most aggressive redesign option for the County Board to consider. Under this option, the offices of County Auditor, County Treasurer, and County Recorder would be eliminated and the functions currently delivered by the three offices would be provided through a redesigned administrative structure that would include hiring a county administrator and adopting an organizational model that would be organized into five divisions; finance, land records, human resources, Information Technology, and property management. This option would require a referendum in November of 2012 or special legislation during the 2013 Legislative Session that would make the decision subject to a reverse referendum. (See Option 3 Org. Chart)

#### Positives:

- a) Option 3 creates the greatest flexibility to the county.
- b) Option 3 makes the elected county board accountable for county administrative decisions.
- c) Option 3 is both the most efficient and has the greatest ability to make changes quickly.

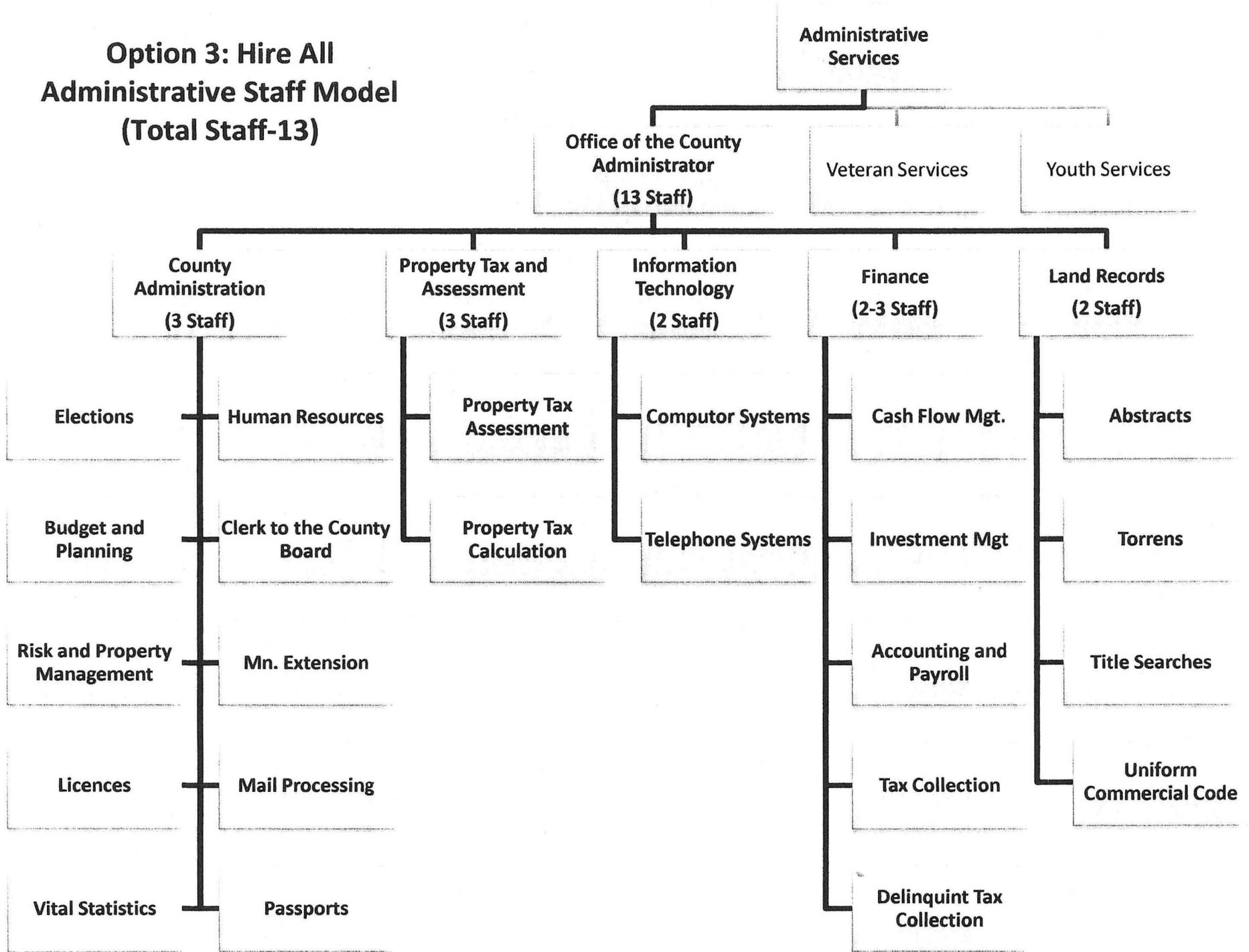
#### Negatives:

- a) Passing a referendum to appoint all three positions is problematic as one of the incumbents opposes being appointed.
- b) Requires more rearranging than other options.

#### Board Actions for this option:

1. Pass resolution to put appointment/hire question on the ballot.
2. Begin information campaign to pass referendum.
3. Hire a County Administrator ASAP. The earlier the better.
4. Interview and appoint a new County Assessor who is able to be trained to spread property tax calculation.
5. Interview and hire an individual trained as an accountant or a CPA to replace the Deputy Auditor by the first of the year.

**Option 3: Hire All  
Administrative Staff Model  
(Total Staff-13)**



**Option 4: Hire and appoint the County Auditor position (finance manager) and assign tax calculation to the new Assessor, both positions would report to the newly filled County Administrator position**

Option 4 is a less aggressive redesign than Option 3. Under this option, the County Board would hire a County Administrator and the elected office of the County Auditor would be replaced with a hired accountant or CPA. The Assessor's office would be part of Property Tax department in which both the assessment of property and the property tax calculation would occur. A new county Assessor would be responsible for property tax calculation in addition to property assessment. No changes would be made in the County Treasurer's office or in the County Recorder's office. Because of the willingness of the County Recorder to change the Recorder to a hired/appointed position, the County Board could consider that option. This option would require a referendum on the Auditor's position or special legislation subject to a reverse referendum. (See Option 4 Org. Chart)

Positives:

- a) Option 4 is a compromise between options 1 and 3.
- b) Option 4 creates more flexibility to the county than options 1 or 2 but less than option 3.
- c) Option 4 respects the desire of the County Treasurer to remain elected and makes no changes to the operation of the County Treasurer's office.
- d) Option 4 streamlines administrative functions.
- e) Option 4 is efficient and has the ability to make changes quickly.
- f) Option 4 positions the county to make additional design decisions in the future.

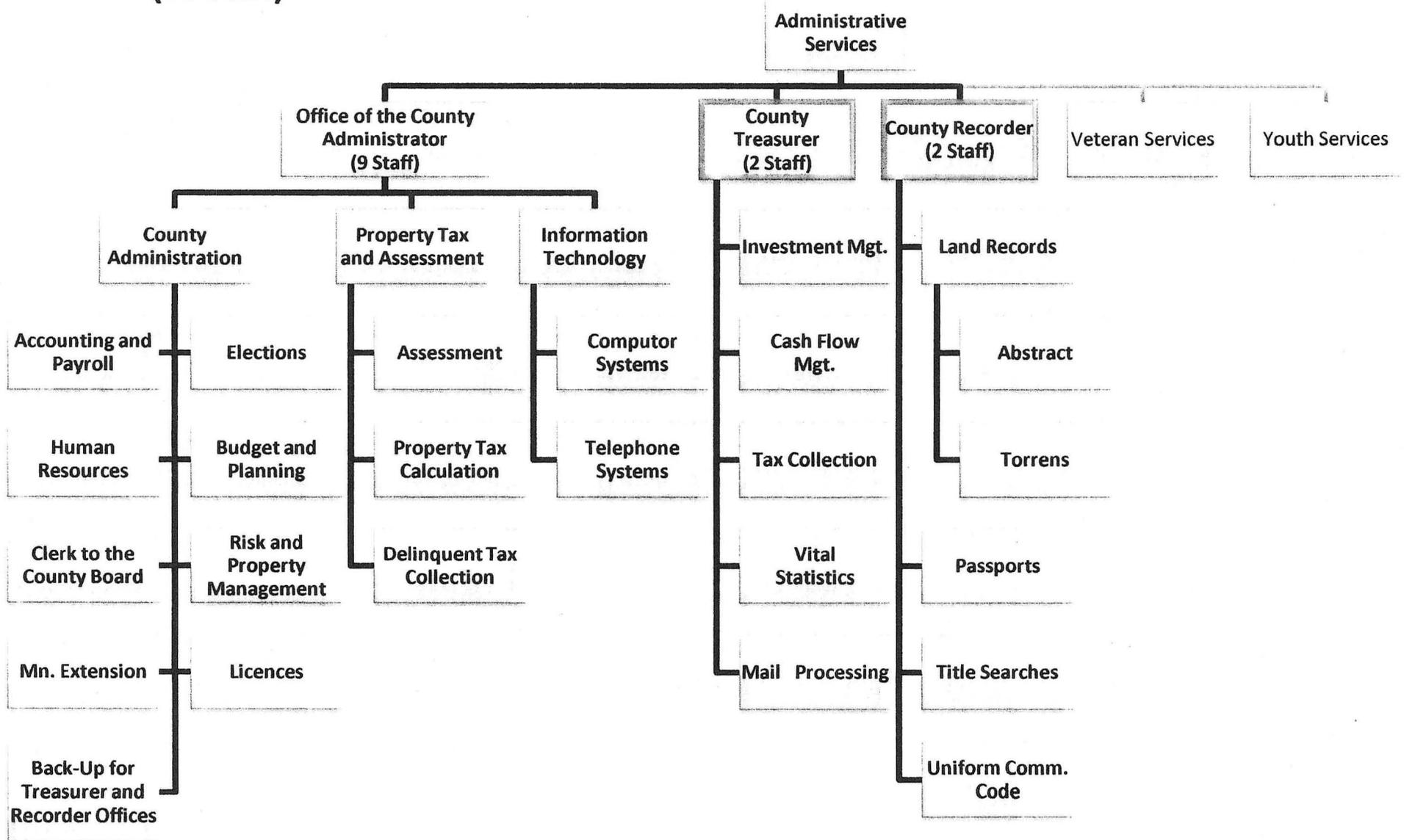
Negatives:

- a) Option 4 requires the county to pass a referendum or seek special legislation to have the county auditor position hired/appointed.
- b) The County Treasurer may not support this option.

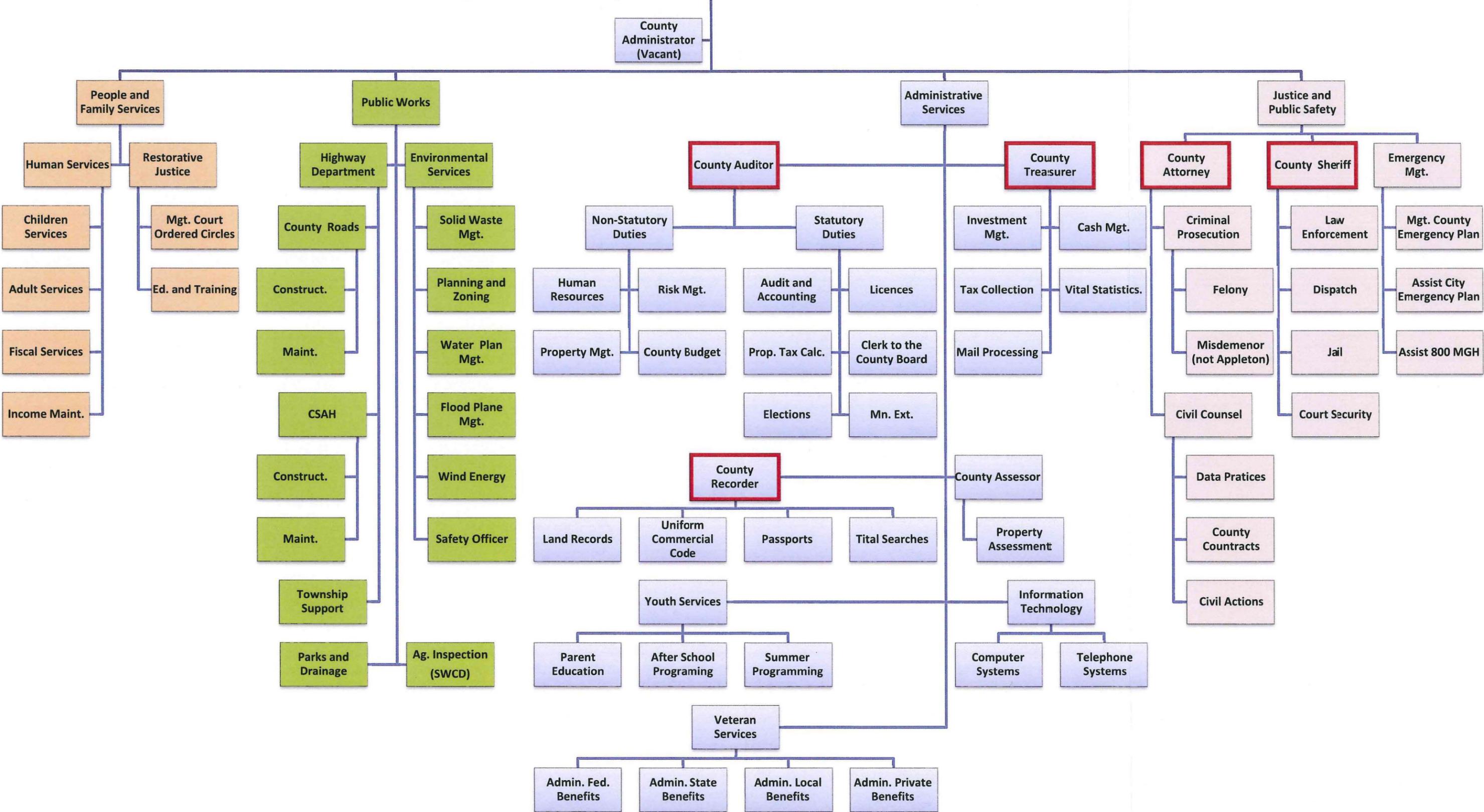
Board Actions for this option:

- a) Pass resolution to put appointment/hire of the County Auditor question on the ballot.
- b) Make decision regarding County Recorder status.
- c) Begin information campaign to pass referendum.
- d) Hire a County Administrator ASAP. The earlier the better.
- e) Interview and appoint a new County Assessor who is able to be trained to spread property tax calculation.
- f) Interview and hire an individual trained as an accountant or a CPA to replace the Auditor and Deputy Auditor by the first of the year.

# Option 4: Combine Auditor/Assessor Functions (13 Staff)

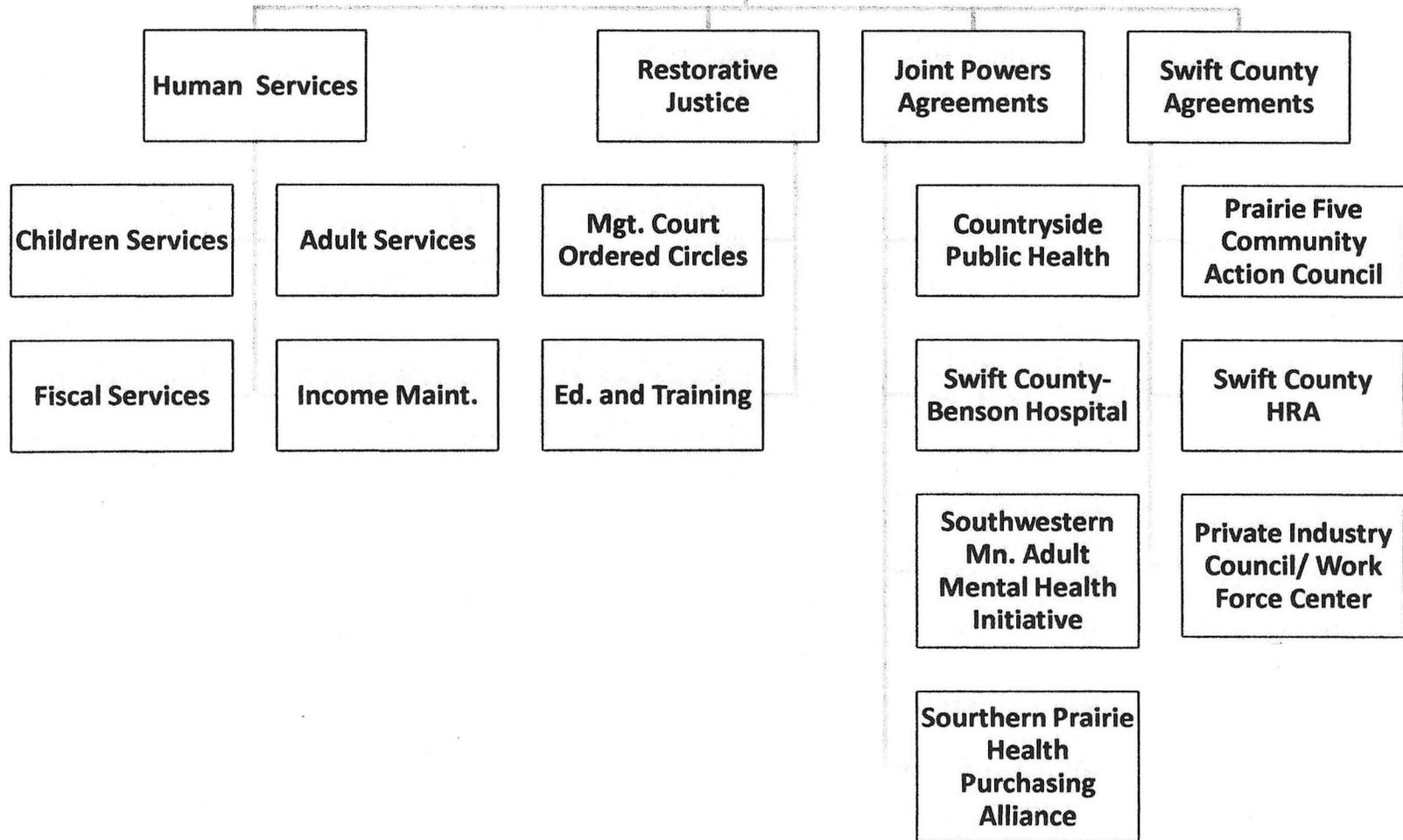


# Swift County Board of Commissioners



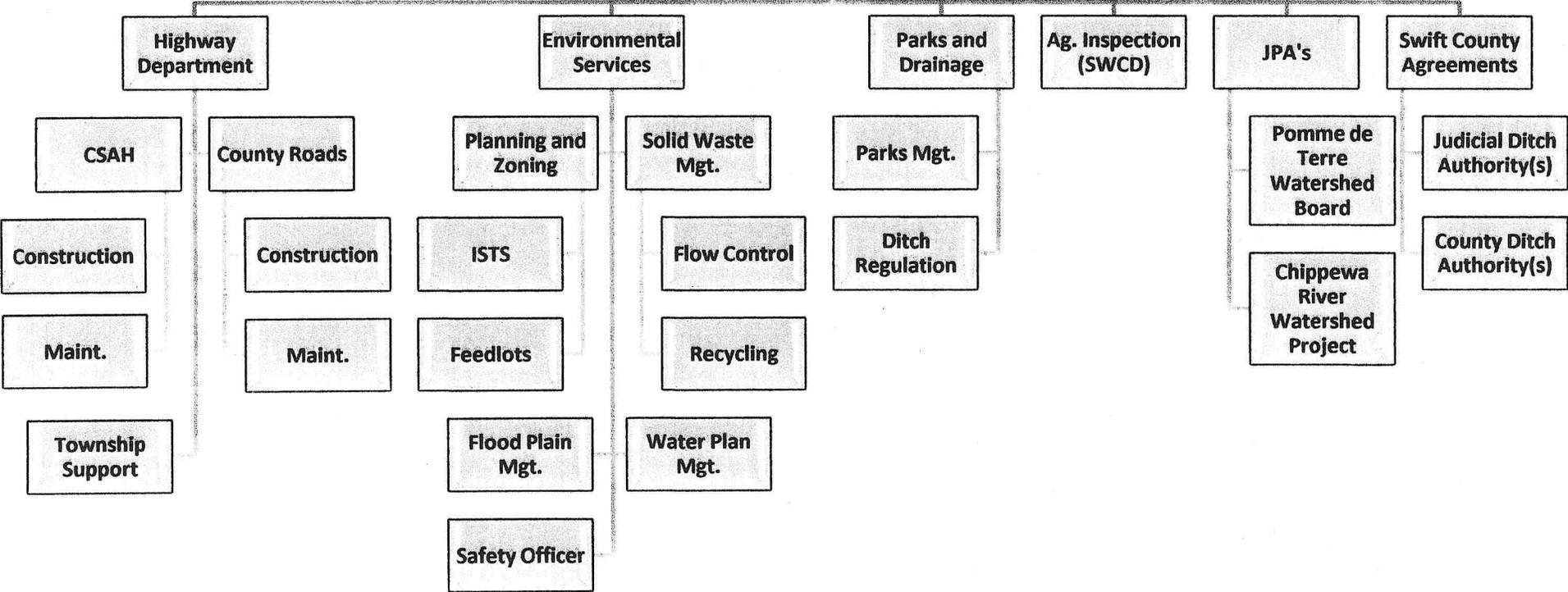
Interest Groupings

# People and Family Services



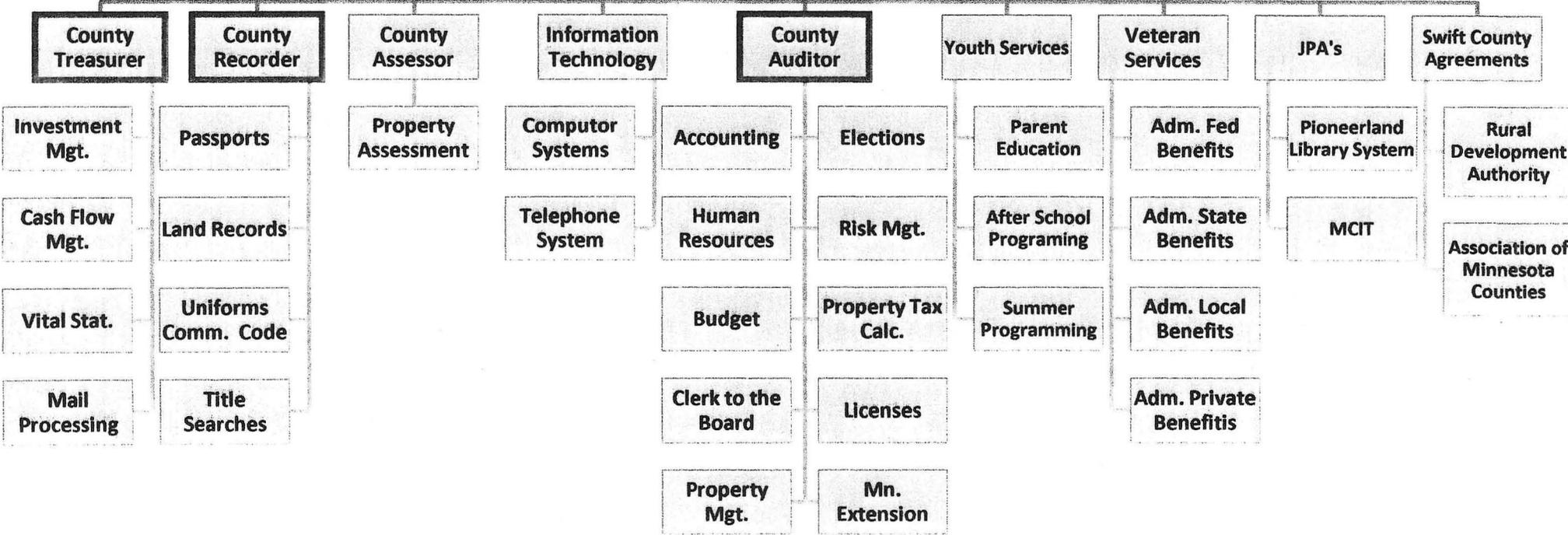
Interest Groupings

**Public Works**



Interest Groupings

# Administrative Services



Interest Groupings

# Justice and Public Safety

