

How Carroll County Government Operates

In Maryland, county governments may be organized as charter counties, code counties or non-home-rule counties. All act under limitations legislated by the State government. Carroll is a non-home-rule county governed by an elected three-member Board of County Commissioners (beginning in December 2006, there will be a five-member Board of County Commissioners) where each member is allowed one vote and they elect their own officers. The Board exercises the powers conferred upon it by the General Assembly of Maryland, including authorization to issue debt to finance capital projects.

The County Commissioners are elected for four-year terms (non-presidential election years). All are elected by the entire County voting population (pending legislation, in FY 07, each Commissioner may be elected from one of five newly created election districts). All County Commissioners must live within Carroll County.

Among the Commissioners' duties are: establishing policy direction, adopting the operating and capital budgets, setting the tax rate, levying and collecting taxes, appointing commissions and boards, approving ordinances and resolutions, and recommending legislation to the State Delegation. Positions at the cabinet level are appointed by the Board of Commissioners. These positions represent the top level of management for Carroll County who report directly to the Board. The Commissioners also appoint residents to various county advisory boards that make policy recommendations. In addition, the County Commissioners purchase and maintain County property, approve road construction and maintenance, and serve as the County's chief elected officials in dealing with other counties, the State and Federal governments.

The Board of County Commissioners approves the County operating and capital budgets after each agency submits its requests and after a series of public hearings have been conducted. The budget ordinance must be adopted before June 1.

Federal and State funds contribute a percentage of the cost of education, social services, health-related activities, aging programs, emergency services, agricultural extension services and various other programs.

Carroll County's eight incorporated municipalities function as autonomous units of local government. They are Hampstead, Manchester, Mt. Airy, New Windsor, Sykesville, Taneytown, Union Bridge and Westminster. The towns provide police protection and other vital services, and (with the exception of Hampstead and Sykesville) operate their own water and sewer systems. The municipalities derive operating revenues from water/sewer user fees, town taxes (rates are set by the councils under state guidelines), fees for miscellaneous permits and assessments, and Federal revenue sharing programs.

