

County Administrator

Polk County, Iowa

(Population 430,640 - the 152nd largest County in the United States)

THE COMMUNITY

If you still think of Iowa as the land of corn, colleges, and caucuses, you have not been to Polk County lately. The County has become a regional business, educational, residential, and recreational center, and it is growing. It is the third largest insurance center in the world, and its downtown is undergoing revitalization with the construction of new housing, businesses and entertainment venues. A few examples are new condominium developments, the events center, a science center and a library. Its schools get very high marks, housing is reasonably priced, and the County is viewed as a great place to raise a family. Traffic is minimal, and the commute to work for most people is less than 20 minutes. Compared to many larger metropolitan areas, its problems are still very manageable. Better yet, its elected officials are eager to solve them. All in all, Polk County is a great opportunity for a committed professional.

HISTORY

Polk County and its County Seat, Des Moines, have a long and rich history. The area's recorded history began in 1673 when Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet became the first Europeans to settle in Iowa. In 1803, the area joined the United States as part of the Louisiana Purchase. Westward expansion and settlement began in earnest after the end of the War of 1812 and in 1820 Indian resentment over the settlers' actions caused the start of the Black Hawk War. 14 years later the war ended and by 1840 the white settler population of Iowa had grown to 10,000. In 1842 the Iowa Territory signed a treaty with the Sac and Fox Indian tribes paying about ten cents per acre for their land.

In 1843, Fort Des Moines was constructed and shortly thereafter, a general store and trading post opened. Polk County, named after then President James K. Polk, was established in 1846, and in 1851, Fort Des Moines is incorporated as a city. At the time, land was selling at \$1.25 per acre, a double log cabin could be erected for \$70 and butter was ten cents per pound.

In 1855 Governor James W. Grimes signed a bill moving the State Capitol from Iowa City to Des Moines and a group of local citizens built a temporary Capitol. In 1857 ten yoke of oxen hauled the archives from Iowa's first state capitol in Iowa City in two bobsleds and the city's name was shortened to Des Moines.

In 1866, the first railroad was completed connecting Des Moines to Keokuk. In 1867 the first insurance company is organized. Drake University opened in 1881. In 1884 the first General Assembly session was held in the new capitol building. The Governor Office was completed in

1885, and the Supreme Court completed in 1886. The total cost was \$2,873,295. About that time a fire destroyed the old, temporary capitol. In 1903, a U.S. Cavalry post was dedicated on the south side of the city. The post was subsequently used during WWI as a Negro officers training camp and during WWII the original home of the Women's Army Corps.

Over the next 100 years Des Moines evolved into the regional business, educational and cultural center that it is today.

COMMERCE

The principal employers in Polk County are: Wells Fargo (11,600 employees), the State of Iowa (8,900 employees), Principal Financial Group (8,170), Iowa Health Des Moines (6,470), Des Moines Public Schools (4,745), Mercy Hospital Center (4,650), Nationwide/Allied Insurance (4,400), MidAmerican Energy Holdings (3,650), CDS Global (3,000) and the City of Des Moines (2,211).

GEOGRAPHY, DEMOGRAPHICS AND WEATHER

Polk County covers 592 square miles and is right in the center of Iowa. The County is bisected by the Des Moines River and characterized as relatively flat with very gently rolling hills.

Polk County's population grew 15% between 2000 and 2010 and now stands at 430,640. As such, is more than twice the size of the next most populous county in the state and ranks 152nd among counties nationally. Approximately 87% of the population is of European ancestry with African Americans 5%, Asians 3% and the remainder either being some other race or more than one race. The 2009 Census estimate for median household income was \$55,915. One third of the population has a Bachelor's degree or higher. 91% are at least high school graduates. 28% of the population was under 20 years old, 37% was between 20 and 45, 24% between 45 and 65 and the remaining 11% are over 65. Of the County's total population, 27,000 residents live in unincorporated areas, while the rest live in one of the County's 17 cities. Just under half the population lives in the City of Des Moines, which is both the state capital and the county seat.

Located very near the center of North America and far removed from any major bodies of water, the climate may be characterized as humid continental with hot, humid summers and cold snowy winters. Summers bring average high temperatures in the mid 80's and lows in the mid 60's. The average high temperatures in the winter tend to be in the 30s with lows in the upper teens. The County gets an average annual precipitation of 35 inches with the heaviest rainfall being in the spring and summer (averaging 4.0 inches/month) and the least in the winter months (averaging about 1.2 inches/month).

THE GOVERNMENT

Polk County is governed by a full time five-member Board of Supervisors, all of whom are considered progressive. They are all professionals in their own right and serve with the common goal of making the community a better place. While three are Democrats and two are Republicans, there is a lack of partisanship in their deliberations. The Board members take their politics seriously, but they are friendly, collegial, and respectful toward one another. The governmental structure is typical of most counties in that the Board oversees the budget, but a number of key positions – the County Sheriff, County Recorder, County Auditor, County Treasurer and the County Attorney are chosen directly by the electorate. The Board of Supervisors appoints several other Boards and Commissions that oversee significant components of the County's operations, such as Mental Health (which alone commands 20% of the \$200,000,000 operating budget), Emergency Management, and Veterans Affairs. In addition to the traditional revenue sources, the county-owned racetrack and casino (Prairie Meadows Racetrack & Casino) contribute significantly to the County's coffers.

The County's general fund budget is approximately \$100 million and its total budget is \$243 million. The principal sources are property taxes (\$128 millions), intergovernmental (\$73 million). The latter includes mental health tax replacements (monies paid by the State to replace what was previously collected in property tax), road use tax, federal prisoner reimbursements, grants and so on. The revenues from the Prairie Meadows Racetrack and Casino amounted to \$20,262,000 in FY 2009 - 2010. The County's functional areas of expenditure are: public safety and legal services (\$64.3 million) mental health (\$51.6 million), administration (\$31.1 million), physical health and social services, (\$29.3 million), education and environment (\$14 million), debt service (\$13.3 million), capital projects (\$10.8 million), roads and transportation (\$10,7 million) and government services to residents (\$7.6 million – these include elections, motor vehicle registration, document recording and so on). Overall, the County has 1,300 employees and 500 are under the direct control of the Board of Supervisors. These employees are viewed as dedicated, capable, and friendly. Typically, they will make their careers with the County.

THE CHALLENGES AND PROJECTS

The County is fiscally sound, but as with most other local governments in the current economic downturn, funding is a challenge. For the past several years, it has covered the budget shortfall of \$3.8 million with gaming revenue from Prairie Meadows. It is anticipated that it will not be able to use money from this source after FY 2013/2014 to supplement the budget. Hence the Board of Supervisors wishes to review the County's operations to optimize the way it does business. Second, under Iowa law, the County is responsible for providing space for the state run court system. The current courthouse was built in 1906 for four courtrooms. 28 courtrooms now operate in that space plus 9,000 additional square feet of leased space. Further, the Clerk of the Court has had to lease an additional 14,705 square feet for records storage. The voters rejected a bond issue in 2008. A new plan is being developed which will need to be presented to the voters for approval. Third, the lease for Prairie Meadows expired at the end of 2010. The parties have agreed to mediation. It is anticipated that the lease will be resolved before the new

Administrator begins but it may not be. Fourth, the Board of Supervisors' districts will need to be realigned based on the 2010 census. It is not clear what the impact will be and it is not an issue that the new Administrator will be involved in. Fifth, the County is remodeling the Veteran's Memorial Auditorium so that it can be used in conjunction with the Iowa Events Center. The Convention Center will then be closed and its events will be transferred to the Events Center. The schedule calls for completion in January 2012 so that the Iowa Caucuses can be held there in February. The challenge will be to make sure the project is delivered on budget and on schedule. Other challenges will be to: 1) manage effectively in an environment where much of the budget is outside the County Administrator's direct control, and 2) rapidly win the confidence of the Board and the community.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The County Administrator position receives its operational authority from the Board, and the amount and extent of that authority has evolved and increased over the past ten years. The Board is looking for a strong, experienced professional with a stable employment history. The individual will have excellent financial, management and people skills. The Board wants someone who is comfortable in the community and representing the County. Given the organizational complexity, negotiation skills are critical. The individual must treat the Supervisors equally, and must possess a high degree of honesty, integrity, flexibility, and creativity. He/she will be achievement oriented, a doer, a problem solver, and a leader. The Administrator will be thick skinned and understand (but not participate in) politics. The successful candidate will believe in lean, efficient, and effective government and bring an analytical approach to reviewing County operations. She/he will win the confidence of the Board, other elected officials and the public. The County has very good relations with the 17 cities located within its boundaries, and they work collaboratively. Experience in intergovernmental relations will be an important asset. The ideal candidate will have ten years experience as a County Manager or Assistant Manager, a Masters degree in an appropriate field, and a demonstrated commitment to the public sector. Recognition as an ICMA credentialed manager is a plus.

COMPENSATION

The anticipated salary range is \$140,000 to \$200,000, and the actual salary will depend on qualifications.

THE MOST RECENT ADMINISTRATOR

The most recent County Administrator left on his own accord to accept a position as the City Manager of Corpus Christie, Texas.

HOW TO APPLY

Resumes should be e-mailed to ***Recruit26@cb-asso.com*** by June 3, 2011. Printed and mailed resumes, and faxed resumes, will not be accepted. Questions should be addressed to Colin Baenziger of Colin Baenziger & Associates on his cell phone at (561) 707-3537.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Candidates who wish confidentiality should indicate that desire in their cover e-mail, or in the heading of their resume. All documents can remain confidential until the five finalists are selected. At that time, the finalists' names (but not the names of other applicants) will be released, along with any background material compiled during the search (except comments by references).

THE PROCESS

It is expected that interviews will be held on July 21st and 22nd with the next Administrator selected on July 25th. Spouses will also be invited to visit and participate to a limited degree in the process.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Polk County is an Equal Opportunity Employer and minorities are encouraged to apply.