



Stafford County Government

Overview of Form and Structure

Like most governments, Stafford's has three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial. The judicial branch is an independent branch in local, state, and federal government. Unlike state and federal government where the executive and legislative branches are independent, Stafford's Board of Supervisors is the legislative branch **and** shares control of the executive branch of government.

Legislative Branch

The Board of Supervisors is elected by districts, serves four-year staggered terms, and its legislative responsibilities include:

- Adoption of the County budget and appropriating funds
- Setting tax rates
- Appointing members to authorities, commissions and committees;
- Constructing County buildings and approving a Capital Improvement Program
- Adopting the County's Comprehensive Land Use Plan, Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance and considering land use matters generally
- Adopting ordinances for law enforcement, sanitation, health and other regulations permitted by state law

Executive Branch – Traditional Form of Government

Under Virginia's Traditional Form of Government established in the Constitution of 1870, citizens of the County elect five Constitutional Officers: Clerk of the Circuit Court, Commissioner of the Revenue, Commonwealth's Attorney, Sheriff and Treasurer. The Board appoints two officers: (1) a County Administrator as the chief administrative officer of County government and Clerk to the Board and (2) the County Attorney. The County Administrator, the Constitutional Officers, and the County Attorney share responsibilities for County government operations. The Board approves budgets and appropriations for all County agencies.

Executive Branch Structure: Council-Manager Government

Based on the Virginia and Stafford County Codes governing the authority of the County Administrator, the International City-County Management Association (ICMA) recognizes Stafford County's structure as a Council-Manager¹ government. This means Stafford's government has a legal framework conducive to the practice of professional management and this recognition is earned because the County Administrator:

- Is appointed by the majority of the Board for a definite or indefinite term and is subject to termination by the majority vote of the Board at any time.
- Has direct responsibility for policy formulation on overall problems.
- Has responsibility for preparation of the budget, presentation to the Board and direct responsibility for the administration of the Board's approved budget.
- Has responsibility for the appointment (with the concurrence of the Board), supervision, and removal of the heads of principal departments and serves as the appointing authority for all other positions.
- Qualifies for the position based on education and experience

¹Unlike any other state, Virginia's counties are independent of cities and therefore function as full-service municipalities. "Council-manager" reflects the highest professional management designation afforded to any local government and is an umbrella term for counties, towns, cities, villages, boroughs, etc.