



Washburn County Employee Survey

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Executive Summary

During October 2008, Washburn County employees were asked to complete an on-line survey as part of the County's strategic planning efforts. The survey was a traditional "strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats" (SWOT) analysis. Strengths and weaknesses refer to internal factors that would help or impede the County's attempts to achieve its strategic objectives of becoming more effective and efficient. Opportunities and threats are supposed to focus on external trends or events that might help or impede progress toward strategic objectives.

Eighty-one percent of the 32 supervisors and 39% of the 170 staff provided input, primarily via an on-line questionnaire.

More than 70% of Washburn County employees were satisfied (48%) or very satisfied (23%) with their place of work; only 6% were dissatisfied and none were very dissatisfied. In short, Washburn County government is seen as a good place to work.

Key strengths of County government identified by Washburn County employees include a high quality, responsive, caring, efficient, and well-led workforce.

The largest number of comments on a weakness with which the County needs to deal to become more efficient and effective focused on concerns about the County Board. Some of the concerns about the board revolved around what some see as its excessively large size, the personal agendas of some board members, or a tendency to micromanage departments.

Opportunities presented by the external environment that Washburn County employees think could be exploited to improve efficiencies were not as obvious. The best opportunity for improving efficiency and effectiveness identified in this survey is to improve collaboration across County departments and with local, state, and national governmental bodies. Working to expand economic development in the County, diversifying funding sources, broadening participation in decision-making, and reviewing internal cost structures and staffing needs were also seen as opportunities to consider.

The threats uppermost in the minds of County employees focus on funding issues. There is fairly deep concern about both funding levels from state and other sources and the impact of unfunded mandates with which the County has to wrestle. Another threat identified by County workers is that they expect service demands by residents to increase in number and complexity and become more costly to deliver.

The results of this survey seem to point to a need for improved communication between key stakeholders in County government: the County Board, supervisors, and staff.

Survey Description

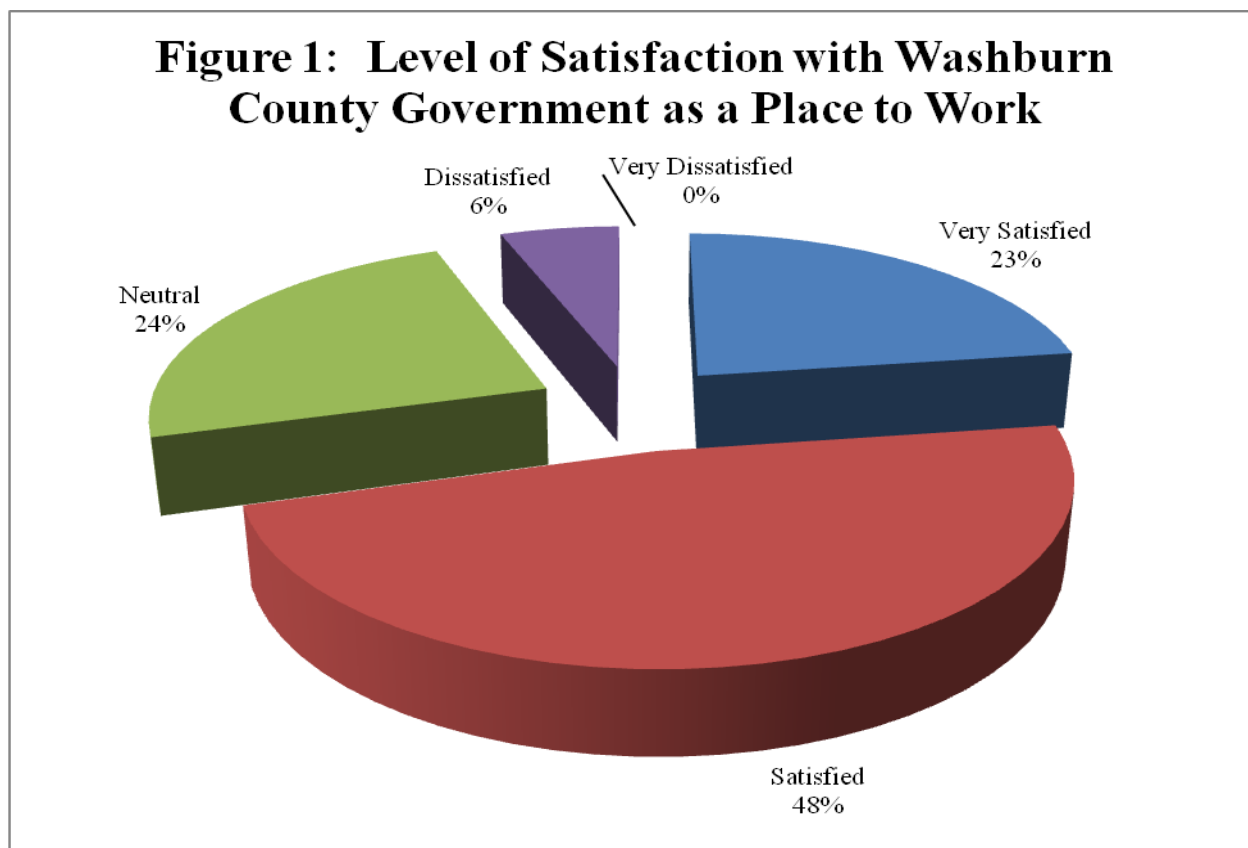
During October 2008, email invitations were sent to 32 supervisory employees and 128 staff employees asking them to complete an on-line survey as part of the County's strategic planning efforts. In addition, 42 staff without ready access to computers at work were mailed paper surveys with self-addressed, pre-paid return envelopes. A total of 26 supervisor employees (81%) and 65 staff (51%) completed the on-line survey; only 2 of the paper surveys (4%) were returned.

The survey was a traditional "strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats" (SWOT) analysis.

Strengths and weaknesses refer to internal factors that would help or impede the County's attempts to achieve its **strategic objectives of becoming more effective and efficient**. **Opportunities and threats are supposed to focus on external trends or events** that might help or impede progress toward strategic objectives.

Overall Satisfaction with Washburn County as a Workplace

Figure 1 summarizes the results of a question that asked employees to rate their overall satisfaction with Washburn County government as a place to work. The chart shows that more than 70 percent said that they are satisfied or very satisfied with Washburn County as an employer, nearly one-quarter are neutral and only 6 percent are dissatisfied.

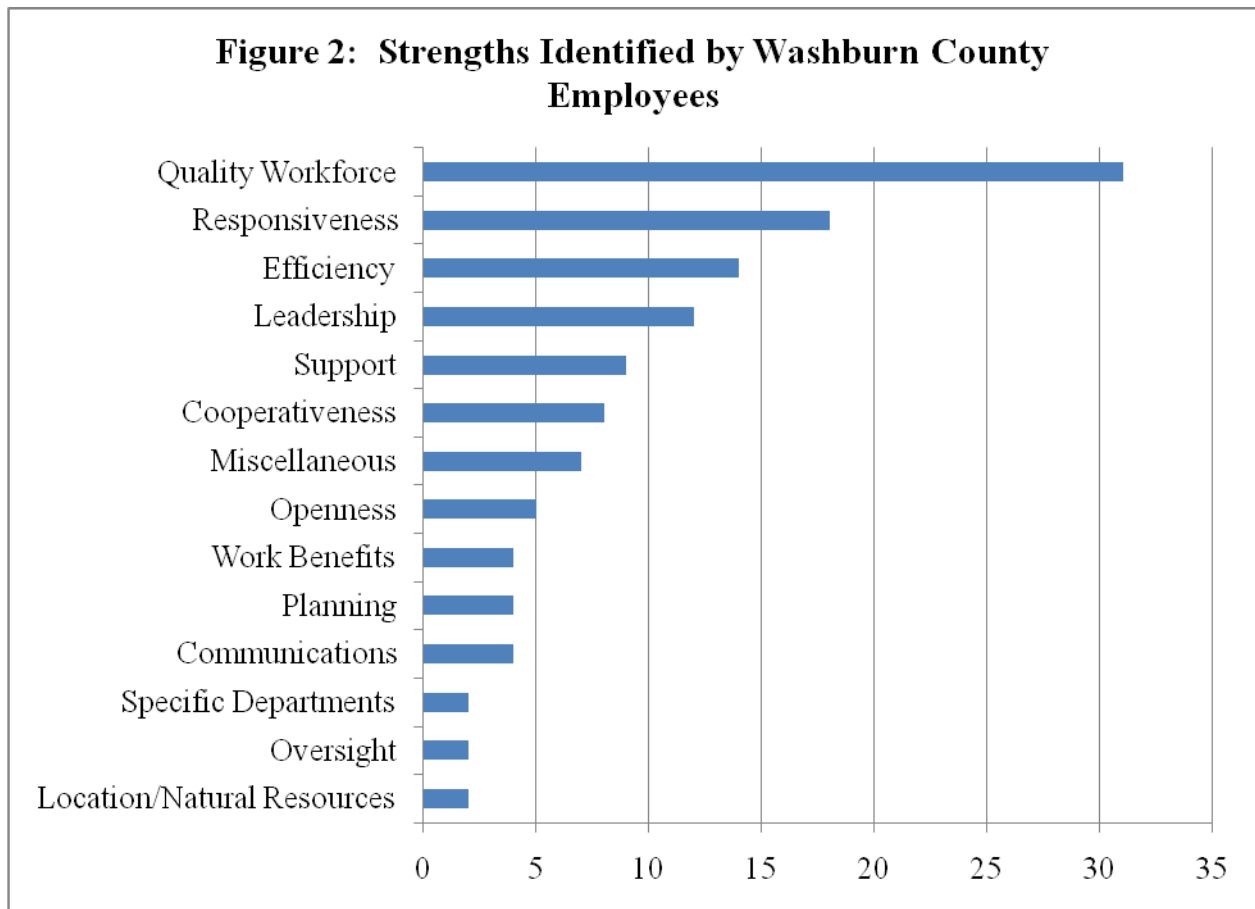


Of the 88 people who answered this question, 26 were supervisory employees and 62 were staff employees. Washburn County supervisory employees and staff had similar evaluations of the County as a place to work:

- 69% of supervisory employees satisfied or very satisfied with Washburn County as a place to work as were 71% of the staff
- Only 8% of the supervisory employees were dissatisfied and only 5% of the staff.

Strengths of Washburn County Government

Eighty-one of the 93 people who provided some input on the survey identified strengths they feel exist in the Washburn County Government. The complete list of their comments are included in Appendix A of this report. In some instances a respondent identified a single strength and in others numerous strengths were identified. The SRC divided comments containing multiple strengths into individual comments. This produced a total of 122 comments or ideas that we grouped into 14 categories.



About one-quarter of the comments focused on the quality of the workers in County government as a strength. Roughly one-third of both supervisory employees and staff identified the quality of the employees as a strength for the County. Typical of their comments are:

The majority of the support staff are hard working people who truly care about the clients/customers they serve.

I believe the quality and work ethic of the employees are the biggest asset to Washburn County.

The front line (represented) employees and their willingness to offer ideas, adapt to change, and go the extra mile for the citizenry and their departments.

Good people. Trustworthy and competent administration. Honesty, and integrity.

The greatest strengths of Washburn County government are its employees. They are the work force that carry out the orders from the supervisors and dept. heads to the best of their ability. A strong, good attitude, willing to get the job done employee is worth their weight in gold. Washburn County should be willing to recognise those employees and reward their dedication.

Figure 2 also indicates that County employees feel that their strengths include being responsive to the needs of residents and efficiency with which they use the tax dollars that fund them. Typical comments about the responsiveness of the County included:

They have the ability to see the needs of the community, and implement the programs to fulfill those needs.

The county is small enough and the government is small enough to make services feel personal and approachable.

The majority of employees believe in customer service and trying to help the customers.

In terms of efficiency, respondents said,

To make the best of what we have available and good fiscal planning internally

Overall I think the County is fiscally responsible and I prefer the "don't spend even if we have the money" mentality.

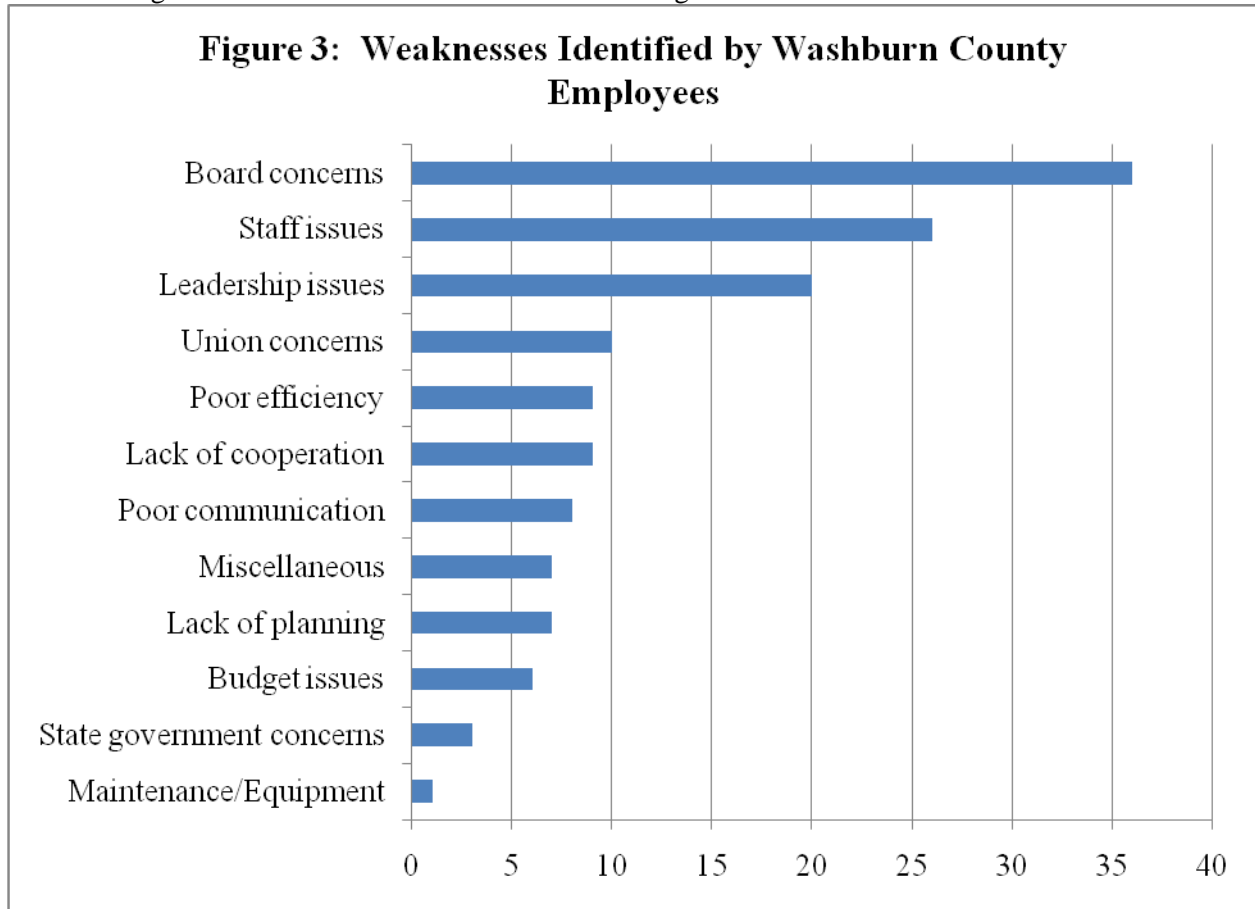
When we look at who identified the various strengths included in Figure 2, some interesting patterns appear.

- 17% of the supervisory employees comments identified leadership as a key strength compared to only 4% of the staff
- 11% of the supervisory employees comments identified a supportive environment as a strength compared to 4% of the staff
- Only 11% of the supervisory employees comments identified responsiveness as a strength compared to 17% of the staff
- Only 19% of the supervisory employees comments identified the quality of the workforce as a strength compared to 30% of the staff

Weaknesses of Washburn County Government

Eighty-four of the 93 who responded to the survey included a comment in the weakness segment of the survey. The complete list of their comments is included in Appendix B of this report. As was true with the strengths, some individuals provided multiple weaknesses in their response. The SRC split comments

with multiple ideas into separate lines; 142 ideas were identified. We grouped these 142 lines of data into a dozen categories and have summarized the results in Figure 3 below.



By a wide margin, concerns about the County Board were the weakness identified by the highest number of respondents. One-quarter of the respondents registered concerns about the board. Some of the comments focused on the size of the board others on what the writers see as a tendency to micromanage departmental activities. The following comment captures several elements common in other submissions:

“One of the greatest weaknesses is the Boards are too large. Grandstanding is happening. Special interests of board members take up too much time and wastes time. Admin has to spend countless hours satisfying board members when other work needs to be done. Board members interfere with UNION issues and staff relations. Board member's conduct is sometimes unprofessional, embarrassing and demeaning to Admin staff. The greatest weaknesses stem with lack of general support and respect given to Admin staff by Board members and the in-services aimed to educate Board members has not helped much. Bullying by Board members continue to upset general functioning of departments.”

Eighteen percent of the respondents identified staff issues as a key weakness. The nature of concerns about the staff ranged from poor customer service, to the increasing challenge of attracting quality candidates to fill openings, to the failure of the County to take advantage of the skills and abilities of the staff. Typical comments about weaknesses include:

“The greatest weakness of Washburn County government is also its employees. That would be employees with an attitude that feel they are owed a job and a living. Do little, get paid a lot. An

“I don’t care attitude” by some employees, dept. heads needs to change or they need to find a job more suited to their needs, abilities, and attitudes. It should not be so hard to get rid of these employees. With our current methods, an employee can come in here and do a rotten job and you can’t get rid of them because of the union that runs the county. I have had a horrible experience with this type of employee and found out how protected they are. Yet the good employee that goes above and beyond does not get rewarded for their efforts. This needs to change.”

“Harder for local governments to recruit qualified employees.”

“Not utilizing the many strengths and skills of their employees.”

Finally, 14% of the comments in the weaknesses section focused on leadership concerns.

“Employees' lack of trust in certain management members.”

“Although they are a minority, those department heads who have content knowledge but lack managerial skill resulting in them not dealing with personnel issues in a timely and decisive manner.”

There are two areas in which the views of supervisory employees and the staff diverge with respect to weaknesses. While concern about the County Board is relatively widespread in both groups, supervisory employees (34% of their comments dealt with the Board) are more so than are staff (21% of their comments). With respect to unions, 10% of the supervisory employees comments focused on unions compared to only 5% of the staff.

Opportunities

Seventy-eight of the 93 who responded to the survey identified an external opportunity Washburn County could take advantage of to pursue its strategic goal of becoming more efficient and effective. The complete list of their ideas is included in Appendix C of this report. The SRC split the opportunities identified into 96 ideas. We grouped these 96 into sixteen categories and have summarized the results in Figure 4 below.

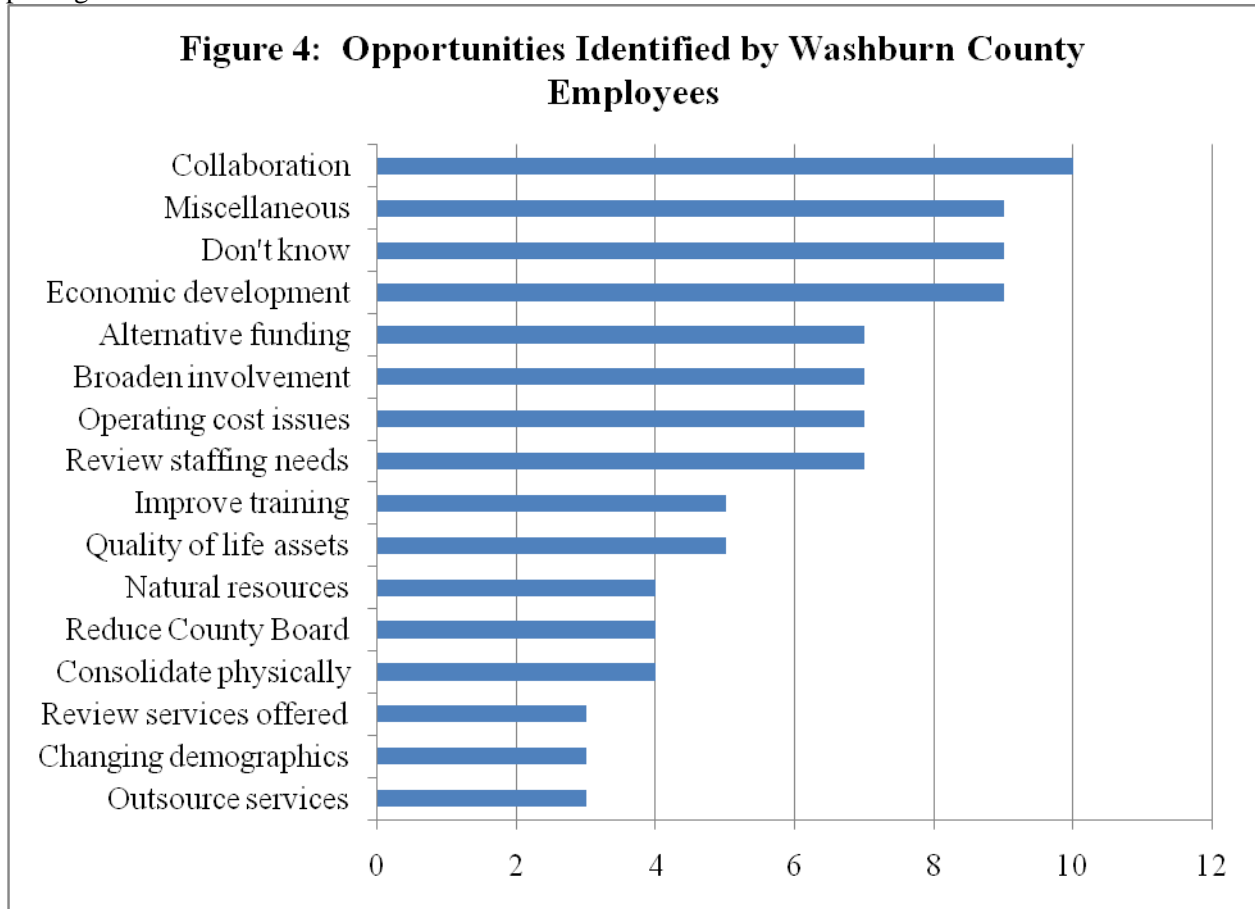
Compared to the sections dealing with strengths and weaknesses, there are no opportunities that were identified by a large proportion of the respondents. The most often-cited opportunities focused on efforts to improve collaboration between departments in the County and between the County and state and local governments. The focus of this category is on providing comparable or better service at, perhaps, a lower cost. Only 10% of the respondents identified this option. Typical comments include:

“More integration with departments and outside agencies such as the municipalities. There is only so much / efficiency to be gained with in a department of county and then you need to look outside those boundaries to find more. This could improve services to customers and help provide a more flexible work environment for staff.”

“Stress better communication between the departments and committees and work together to attain goals”

As the category implies, the miscellaneous category contained a number of ideas that were difficult to place into a category. Many of them, however, actually dealt with internal issues rather than external ones.

For instance, some identified the good people who work for the County or the quality of the benefits package.



Likewise, the “Don’t know” category doesn’t contain useful ideas.

The next two items “Economic development” and “Alternative funding” focus on ways of increasing the revenues available to County government. Economic development could increase the size of the pie by increasing the tax base. The alternative funding source most commonly identified was an increased effort to secure grants. Typical comments in these categories include:

“Allowing more industries into our areas. By doing that, we give our young people a reason to stay in the area, and not seek larger cities. And also to keep some of them off the street, because they have no real jobs to go to.”

“Hire a grant writer, to be able to write grants from the Federal Government for all departments.”

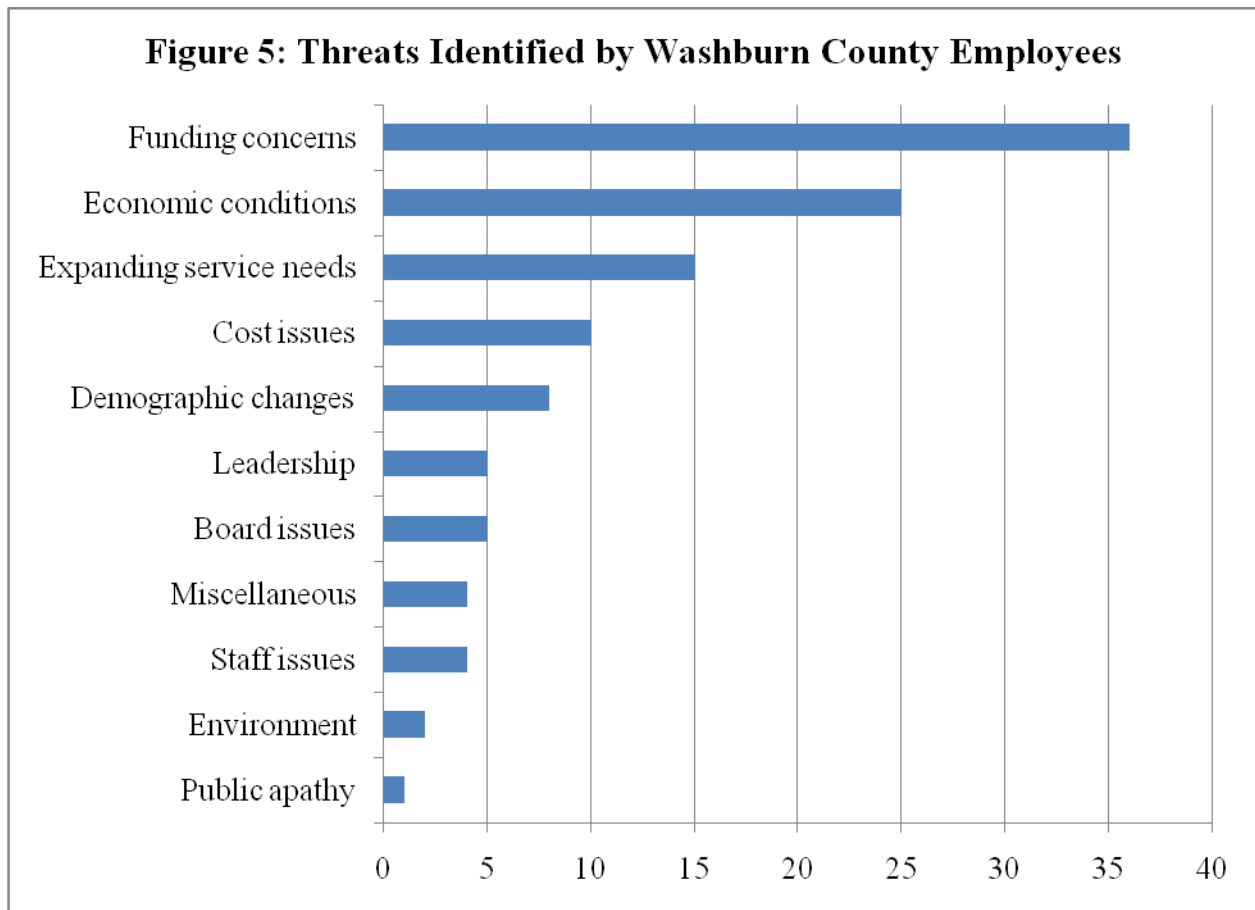
The category “Broadening involvement” includes increasing the level of engagement by new and part-time County residents, increasing efforts to listen to clients of County departments, and listening to a broader variety of voices within County government.

The perspectives of supervisory employees and staff diverge in a number of areas:

- 12% of the supervisory employees comments suggested physically consolidating County departments (not truly an external opportunity) to increase efficiency, none of the staff suggested this option
- 18% of the supervisory employees comments had something to do with review staffing needs (again, not an external opportunity), only 2% of the staff identified similar opportunities
- 9% of the supervisors noted opportunities associated with changing demographics in the County (e.g. aging population), none of the staff did
- None of the supervisory employees identified broadening involvement or listening to more voices as an opportunity but 11% of the staff did so
- 3% of the supervisory employees said that economic development was an important opportunity to pursue, 12% of the staff did so.

Threats

Seventy-nine of the 93 who responded to the survey identified an external threat Washburn County needs to address in order to become more efficient and effective. The complete list of their ideas is included in Appendix D of this report. The SRC split the opportunities identified into 115 ideas. We grouped these ideas into eleven categories and have summarized the results in Figure 5 below.



By far the most important threats identified by Washburn County employees revolve around funding for County services. The top item, funding concerns, addresses this issue directly and was identified in nearly

one-third of the comments. Economic conditions, to the extent that they affect tax revenues, also speak to concerns about funding. Concern about economic conditions comprised 22% of the total threats identified by participants. Typical comments focused on funding and economic conditions include:

“Levy cap. State or Federal mandates that make us spend money without providing some funds to help. “

“A number of studies have been done in the past but few of the recommendations made have been acted on, mostly due to lack of funding. Levy limits will challenge the county's ability to maintain the quality of programs it provides.”

“The national economy. Low incomes in area in relation to high taxes. “

“Also, Washburn County needs to work to create more jobs to sustain itself through this period of a weakened economy through its natural resources and renewable energy.”

The third most commonly identified threat, expanding service needs, focused mainly on an aging population in Washburn County that are expected to need more and more expensive services in the future. Typical comments include:

“One of the greatest threats facing Washburn County is the amount of needs/services that will be required for the public vs the ability of that public to pay for those services. . . Our population is aging, low income and mostly less educated than one would want. We will have to prioritize and that will be difficult.”

“Needs to the elderly and young families is great and services need to continue, not decrease.”

“When the economy is bad crime rates tend to climb and County law enforcement will be busier. More officer time, more jail time, more court time and out of pocket money to victims. As more young people are affected by drug use, there also comes more expense to help the children and treat the parents who are not paying into the tax base so there ends up being more served by fewer. We also have a generation that feels less responsibility or accountability than in the past. Their mistakes are our fault. You need to fix me.”

The threats identified by supervisory employees and staff differed significantly. Supervisory employees were much more concerned about funding issues (45% of supervisor comments expressed concerns about funding) than were staff (24%) and were more likely to see the aging of the population as a concern (13% for the supervisors vs 6% for the staff). Staff members were more likely to mention economic conditions in the County as a threat (29%) compared to supervisors (9%). Threats are supposed to focus on external conditions but more staff (7% of the comments) identified a concern with leadership in the County than did supervisory employees (0%).

Conclusions

A substantial percentage of both supervisors and staff completed the Washburn County SWOT survey as part of an on-going strategic planning effort. Several themes emerged from our analysis of the survey:

- Most people who work for the County are fairly satisfied with their work environment; nearly three out of four said that they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with Washburn County as a place to work (Figure 1)
- One reason for this relatively high level of job satisfaction is that they feel that the County has a high quality, committed and responsive workforce (Figure 2)
- The weaknesses identified by the employees focused on concerns with the County Board of Supervisors (micromanagement, personal agendas), staff issues (attitude concerns, recruiting challenges), and leadership concerns (lack of trust, concerns about competence). (Figure 3)
- The opportunities identified by Washburn County employees were more diffuse than the other three topic areas. The most significant opportunities identified focused on increasing collaboration between County departments and with local, state, and national agencies that have related missions, improving the local economic base, diversifying County government’s funding base and expanding participation in County strategic and tactical decisions. (Figure 4)
- The threats recognized focused primarily on funding issues either directly (concerns about state support, unfunded mandates, etc.) or indirectly (stresses caused by the current economic downturn and, more generally, a relatively weak local economy). There are also concerns about the evolving needs of County clients and the effect of anticipated increases in the number and complexity of those needs on the County’s costs. (Figure 5)
- There are some significant differences in the way that supervisory employees see the world and the way the staff sees it. In all four areas (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), there are substantial differences of opinion between these groups.
 - In terms of strengths, each group tends to see themselves more positively than does their counterpart (supervisory employees are more likely to cite leadership in the County as a strength, staff are more likely to cite the County workforce as a strength).
 - In terms of weaknesses, supervisory employees are more concerned with the County Board and the role of the union than are staff members.
 - In terms of opportunities supervisory employees tended to focus on County cost structures (physically consolidating County offices and reviewing staffing needs), while staff were more likely to talk about broadening involvement in strategic decisions and promoting economic development in the area.
 - In terms of threats, supervisory employees were more likely to note funding concerns and changing client needs, staff were, again, more concerned about the perceived lack of vibrancy in the local economy

The results of this survey provide insights into a number of factors of strategic importance to the County. From an outsider’s perspective, communication issues seem to be of substantial importance to the County going forward. There are, apparently, unresolved issues between County employees and the County board and between supervisory employees and staff that improved communications might alleviate. There appears to be a strong foundation upon which to build an improved communication effort in that most people appear to like their work environment, suggesting that the differences noted in this analysis are bridgeable. The biggest area of unease revolves around the uncertain fiscal environment. Given the prominence of the economic downturn in daily news bulletins and widespread awareness of large expected state budget deficits, it would be peculiar if funding concerns were not front and center in the opinions of County employees.

Appendix A - Strengths

- One of the greatest strengths of WC Gov is the leadership abilities of the Directors and Supervisors. Administration supports Department Directors and Supervisors. Administration responds to all concerns and requests from Directors and Supervisors. Internally there is very good communication between Admin staff.
- The strength lies in the people who work for the County who are committed to excellence. Unfortunately, this does not include everybody.
- 1 - The high quality of the management/supervisory staff, especially the department heads. The majority not only have content knowledge, they are good people managers too. / 2 - The majority of the support staff are hard working people who truly care about the clients/customers they serve. / 3 - The support for the county leadership program by allowing county employees to be involved both as participants and as coordinators of the sessions. / 4 - The open quality of the governance, allowing citizen input on many issues and making decisions in open forums/meetings. / 5 - Those elected officials who serve with the unselfish goal of making the county a better place for their constituents. / 6 - By and large, the efficient use of tax dollars - the overstaffed sheriff's department would be the exception to this.
- A genuine interest and caring attitude for the county residents / Skilled and knowledgeable employees / Vision for the future of the county / Watchful of spending / Active committees / Opportunity for input and feedback / Development of strategic plan
- Ability to have up to date equipment and a sound work force to operate it.
- BEING A RESOURCE FOR PEOPLE W/NEEDS
- Being rather small is both a strength and a weakness. As a strength, the smallness means that many of the county workers and supervisors are probably more connected to the people who live here vs. a large county. Our location and natural resources can be a great asset as well.
- belonging to Wisconsin Retirement / / Management tries to make it a good environment
- close proximity of the court, coc and DA's office creating accessibility to each office, coupled with the fact that these offices work very well together, which makes the system more efficient.
- communication between departments
- Communication is good
- Concerned, caring people.
- County employees and Board Supervisors are: dedicated to doing the best possible at their jobs/positions and capable
- Dedicated employees
- Dedicated employees. Supportive County Board Supervisors.
- Definitely the employees. Most I deal with like their jobs, take them seriously and offer a high level of public service.
- Department of Administration is very supportive of Management staff. Communications is easy and there is an atmosphere of trust and respect. The union supports staff thus creating an environment that seems secure.
- Don't really pay attention.
- Employees' dedication to their clients in the community
- forest assets, department heads

- Good people. Trustworthy and competent administration. Honesty, and integrity.
- GREAT EMPLOYEES FOR THE WAGE THEY RECIEVE
- Greatest strengths are caring, extremely knowledgeable, and competent management staff. There is a lot of experience and knowledge to draw from. Most management staff work together very well. They have the ability to see the needs of the community, and implement the programs to fulfill those needs.
- Have no idea.
- Highway department and forestry
- Highway department runs very efficient. Sheriff department has good employees that work well with other departments.
- Home rule.
- I believe the quality and work ethic of the employees are the biggest asset to Washburn County.
- I can only speak about the Courthouse, but I believe the Departments are running extremely efficiently, particularly as compared to other Counties I am familiar with. In addition, the staff generally gets along with each other, and an atmosphere of cooperation with other departments is commonplace.
- I really can't say. I have never been involved in any of the county services. I have had dealings, minimally with a few individuals and all seemed fine.
- I think that we try to work together to make the County a better place to live and it has wonderful people working for the County.
- I think there are strong leaders among our County government. I believe that that is helpful when trying to obtain an objective, such as county costs, budgets, etc
- In my opinion, the Washburn County government maintains a high standard of county board oversight. I mean that the county board seems ready to question any department on spending that might appear questionable, even if it turns out to be legitimate and cost-effective.
- ITs Department Heads and staff.
- It's employees
- It's employees
- I've worked in much bigger counties so I like the small size of Washburn, I like to know and have access to all the key stakeholders. The County for the most part encourages departments to work together for the common good. I also like that it generally operates conservatively.
- Knowledgeable and committed staff; continuing education for employees; strong union leadership; good health benefits
- Listening to the public point of view, do not micromanage departments, keep abreast of issues, openness, pride in our county.
- Local representation.
- Most of the C
- Most of the Committees appear to work good together to accomplish what needs to be done.
- Most of the employees at the County
- No comment
- One of the greatest strengths of Washburn County is having County Supervisors that take an interest in the issues that concern our citizens while maintaining responsible management of resources for the taxpayers. / / Washburn County also supports union employees. / / / /
- Overall I think the County is fiscally responsible and I prefer the "don't spend even if we have the money" mentality. There is strong leadership in some areas and we are encouraged to work with other Departments for the betterment of the County.
- Providing and serving the people of Washburn County with the necessary services

- small county with dedicated employees
- SMALL LOCAL ORGANIZED
- Smaller County and close working relationships with other county employees will often solve a problem or potential problem by networking within.
- Spending money
- That they have realized that they need to engage in the strategic planning process. Management is strong within the county structure....highly skilled department heads who are leaders in their fields.
- The county is small enough and the government is small enough to make services feel personal and approachable.
- The customer service that is provided for clients I think is a great strength of Washburn County government.
- The employees that provide the services to our community.
- The employees.
- THE EXPERIENCED EMPLOYEES. /
- The front line (represented) employees and their willingness to offer ideas, adapt to change, and go the extra mile for the citizenry and their departments.
- The greatest strength is a diverse and talented staff. There is a tremendous amount of expertise and general knowledge associated with all levels of staff.
- The greatest strengths of Washburn County government are its employees. They are the work force that carry out the orders from the supervisors and dept. heads to the best of their ability. A strong, good attitude, willing to get the job done employee is worth their weight in gold. Washburn County should be willing to recognize those employees and reward their dedication.
- The involvement of the citizens of Washburn County in the process of the government and to be allowed to question the strengths and weaknesses of same.
- The law enforcement sector does a very good job
- The overall quality of the staff.
- The oversight the county board maintains keeps people honest and budgets to a minimum.
- The qualified and dedicated employees that work there.
- The sheriff's department has enough people to run smoothly and efficiently.
- The strengths for the Washburn County government is the working people, the employees!
- The strength is that it is a good place to work as far as benefits and pay comparable to the private sector. The majority of employees believe in customer service and trying to help the customers.
- There are strong and competent leaders in management. / There are some board members with a strong desire to learn their area of the committee they are on.
- They do support their workers and do everything in their power to make sure they all have jobs.
- They have good people working for them with a very few exceptions.
- They seem to have a majority of people on the County boards who actually care about what goes on in the County and want to help.
- They seem to really care about the PEOPLE in Washburn County. It's not all about taxes and roads.
- To make the best of what we have available and good fiscal planning internally
- Trying to help the taxpayers, citizens of the county.
- Washburn County has some good Administration. I see County Board micro managing this, in turn, it filters down to management staff. This makes our jobs very difficult.
- Washburn County takes EXCELLENT care of its employees in regards to fair wages and health insurance coverage.
- We focus on our clients and serve them to the best of our abilities. We are always trying to come up with new ways to assist more people.

- Willingness to change ideas and attitudes if the facts seem to point in a certain direction. / Usually looking at a bigger picture when deciding details.
- workers that work here
- Working for Florence county and just "moonlighting" for Washburn County for a very short time my responses will represent initial opinions. Strength's would be that you have a Human Resources department where everything at least for employee's seems to be centralized. Also staffing level seems to be very good.

Appendix B – Weaknesses

- 1 - Although they are a minority, those department heads who have content knowledge but lack managerial skill resulting in them not dealing with personnel issues in a timely and decisive manner. / 2 - Those county support staff who the work they do is just a job for them so that they demonstrate little, if any, care for meeting the needs of their clients/customers. / 3 - Those elected officials who serve for their own selfish purposes without considering the greater good. / 4 - The budget constraints placed upon the county government by the state. / 5 - The overstaffed sheriff's department capturing an unsustainable amount of the county levy dollars. / 6 - Uniformed decision-making by county board supervisors. They either don't do their homework, learning about all aspects of an issue before making a decision related to it, or they don't understand the ramifications of their decisions, or they are serving with such a single purpose/issue in mind, they simply don't care about the other issues to be addressed and decisions to be made. / 7 - The inconsistency of county board decisions - giving away money to constituents in outrageous non-mandated or court-ordered settlements, as well as to the Fair Association (ex. \$3,500 for a clown/magician!), etc. and then nickel and diming the county departments making it difficult for them to achieve their department goals/mission. / 8 - The power of the support staff union. No one should be able to post out of a job in order to avoid disciplinary action (this is not allowed in most counties). No one should be able to post into a job more than once a year (this is the rule in many counties) rather than the job-hopping that occurs in Washburn County. When levy limits are set at 2%, we shouldn't be giving them 3% wage increases!
- 1) Hiring incompetent non-represented staff and rewarding them for doing their job (which should be an expectation as they are paid). 2) Not adequately moving in to the age of technology (recording meetings and offering them on public access channels [like many other government organizations], webcasts on their website, updating websites timely). 3) County board supervisors not investigating issues and simply taken what they are told by management as "Gospel", when in fact it is not. 4) County board supervisors not talking with front line employees about issues - many front line employees have been here longer than those supervising them and have great input that is not always accepted/welcomed by management. 5) Paying more than one person to do the same job function. 6) Not observing the true definition of "salary" and compensating those on salary for hours worked after the traditional office hours with time off? 7) Lack of willingness by the board to try new things instead of doing things the way they've always been done: things that worked in the 60's, 70's, 80's and 90's don't always work well now. 8) Requiring training on computer systems and paying an outside instructor who is not well versed and proficient in it. Use internal resources - we have an IT Dept. They should be able to train staff and take care of all IT issues. If the director can't, cut him loose! 9) The utilization of back door politics and personal agendas by the County Board. 10) Some county board supervisors not sharing information with their constituents and not remembering that they represent their constituents, and should be voting as such not just voting the way the supervisor thinks. 11) Allowing the Administrative Coordinator to act as a County Administrator. 12) Not utilizing the many strengths and skills of their employees. 13) Meeting minutes being very vague so that no one can tell really what happened at the meeting, options discussed or what was decided. Discussion should include what was discussed, not just noted as "discussion". 14) Allowing things to be discussed and basically decided by a few before committee meetings are even held. 15) Holding committee meetings during the day which prohibits average citizenry from attending as they are working and cannot leave their job or afford to take time off to attend. 16) Failure to enforce rule by committee with some non-represented employees. 17) Utilization of too many layers of management - remember program income is then spread over all of them also and less goes directly to providing services.

- 1.A "good ole' boy" County Board. / 2.A County Board that really isn't qualified to "run a corporation", which in a sense is like running a county. Credit is due however because at least they cared enough to run for office. Most are "older" and retired and tend to govern based on emotion or personal experience from 50 years ago. / 3.A general disregard by the Board for the employees. /
- A few of the county board members do not vote in the best interest of the county. Need less committee meetings and more productivity out of the meetings. Sheriff's department needs to stay within their budget - no take from other departments (slush fund)
- A few that are not knowledgeable of the process of the government to help it to run well. Like a vehicle, when one piston is not working, the whole vehicle can be damaged.
- A weakness of Washburn County government might be that some departments might not work as well together as they should.
- Again the smallness. Some individuals want to micromanage certain parts of the system that doesn't benefit the people who receive the services. I'm afraid that some supervisors are more concerned about personal agendas instead of what's best for everyone.
- Are Union membership is very fragmented. Our Union higher-level union positions (Union President in particular) are filled with people that are very negative individuals. This presents a lack of cooperation between union members and management which I feel leads to ineffective and inefficient government.
- backwards thinking and failure to look at the big picture /
- Being a Union shop, because excellence isn't tangibly rewarded, only longevity. That being said, I think a Union is necessary to protect the employees, because I don't think counting on the good will of your employer works too well.
- Communication internally / Miss guided truths externally
- County board has too many members
- County Board itself
- County Board members continue to disrespect management and try to micro-manage departments and staff. This climate of disrespect is well documented and well known within the county and yet has not been successfully addressed despite board trainings. There is no consequence to offending management staff.
- County Board Supervisors do not know how to think outside the box, make decisions or think long range when making decisions.
- **DECISION MAKING AND EXPENDING OF FUNDS AT THE COMMITTEE LEVEL IS SOMETIMES WASTEFUL. / EXAMPLES: MONIES EXPENDED ON STUDIES & NOT FOLLOW THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY / PAY FOR PLANS TO BE DEVELOPED AND NOT PROCEED WITH THE PROJECT / / ADVICE OF DEPARTMENT HEADS NEEDS TO BE GIVEN MORE WEIGHT (THEY ARE YOUR ADVISORS) / DECISIONS BY THE COMMITTEES ARE TOO OFTEN PERSONAL AND NOT INFORMED / / ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES TRAINING WAS GREAT, BUT THERE ARE STILL SOME SUPERVISORS THAT ARE NOT CLEAR AS TO THEIR ROLE. THEY SHOULD NOT BE INVOLVED IN THE DAILY ACTIVITIES WITHIN A DEPARTMENT.**
- Decrease in employee benefits - hence losing good employees. The union protecting employees that don't perform their jobs effectively and efficiently.
- Department rivalry and infighting are the biggest weaknesses. Instead of working together, it appears that departments will try to work harder at getting some funds transferred from one department to their own than work on bringing reasons to the table to increase their own budget.
- Different departments having to fight over funding causes inter-departmental rivalries.
- Don't really pay attention.
- Employees need to be more involved in the decision-making processes. Top down is OK, bottom up isn't there.

- Goals and priorities that are not clearly defined, poorly communicated and inconsistently followed. Employees who respond rudely to citizen questions or concerns. Citizens who do not employ attorneys, even in the face of increasingly complicated law and regulations. County board members who are interested in only a narrow range of issues and department matters. Employees' lack of trust in certain management members.
- Harder for local governments to recruit qualified employees. Confusion with committee jurisdictions.
- Helping the taxpayers in the most economic way - seems to be lots of time to gossip at the courthouse, not an effective way to help the taxpayers.
- I believe that there is a lot of micromanagement occurring which I don't see as being an effective use of time.
- I personally dislike it when County Board members micro manage staff. It is disrespectful...You either hire me to do a job or you do it yourself and it also makes us inefficient dealing with the politics involved. This kind of thinking seems to ebb and flow more strongly after elections and is probably rampant in all levels of government, which is why I won't ever go into the game of politics.
- I see a glaring need for some Administrative re-organization. As a Department head, I have found that I have nowhere to turn for information on County policy matters, if any exist, or to provide me with an opinion or advice on any number of subject matters, including personnel and budget. While our former Administrator (Michael Miller) may have been somewhat known for micro-managing, I found him to be an extremely valuable resource, and I could have used his input on many issues since his departure. Several other Department heads have made similar comments, and this concern should be addressed.
- I see the need to return the Administrative Coordinator position to that which Mike Miller held. As a Department head, I (and others) have nowhere to turn for advise on matters such as Budgets, County Policy, or Personnel issues. We are left to figure things out on our own, and this leads to inefficiencies and errors.
- I think that Washburn County government might be more effective if all of the county departments were housed in one location, it would make maintenance more effective for one; I would also streamline service for those who need to connect with more than one service during a visit to the government center, currently if a person needs to access human services, veteran or aging and the health department they need to stop at 3 locations. Government is of the people, by the people and for the people. Not political interests on a particular person, town etc. While services should be centralized, I think crucial services should be offered in outreach locations as well.
- I think the county board is our weakness. Too many on the board. Too many that do not have a clue as to the workings of county government. Too many that are on special committees that have no idea what the particular dept. is about or the workings there in. Too many with their own "agendas". Too many that need outrageously priced surveys and strategic long term plans for the future; obtain the results and have no way to implement or pay for the recommendations.
- I think there are too many personal agendas internally for staff.
- I think they spend money where it doesn't need to be spent so often. There is a lot of machinery for the Highway Department that has many great years left and we buy new to often when the old is still in great working condition.
- Inability to value strength and needs of employees. Too much bean counting, too many chiefs and not enough indians so to speak.
- Lack of communication between departments and management and employees.
- LACK OF EVENING AND WEEKEND HOURS, THERE IS 3 TO MANY SUPERVISORS IN THE HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT, COUNTY BOARD IS TO LARGE FOR THE SIZE OF THE COUNTY, COUNTY CLERKS OFFICE, FINANCE AND PERSONNEL SHOULD BE COMBINED AND THE SIZE OF THE STAFF REDUCED, IT DEPARTMENT SHOULD BE

ELIMINATED AND THE SERVICE CONTRACTED OUT AS THE SERVICE WE RECEIVE IS NOT TIMELY, NOR IS THE SUPERVISOR QUALIFIED FOR THE SALARY HE RECEIVES. THE SAME WITH MAINTIANCE AND HOUSEKEEPPING SERVICES SHOULD BE ADDED AS ALL COUNTY BUILDING ARE VERY DIRTY. THE WORK STUDY SHOULD BE DONE FOR ALL POSITIONS NOT JUST MANAGEMENT.

- Lack of long-term thinking about the environment.
- Lack of nerve to follow through on some issues, inefficiency of some employees and the red tape needed to get rid of them, afraid to stand up to the union, lack of understanding on the part of some County Board members of how the county functions, the purchase order system, unfunded state mandates.
- Lack of organization, realistic thinking.
- Lack of support to day to day operations of each unit of government
- Management not trusting the employee will do the job and do the job well without having to be micromanaged. / Also, that top management (personel,county board, etc) has a duty to act on behalf of the employees the same as they do for the managers/supervisors. / I find it very frustrating as an employee and a tax payer that we continue to reward incompetence by automatically giving salary increases/step increases to the very management/supervisors that have proven to be unable to work well with the employees and in return create a very tense and hostile work enviornment, plus costing the county money by being sanctioned by the state due to their incompetence. Also there is a definite presence of treatment that is not fair and equal. I believe that as a former supervisor that you should lead by example. The employee is truly not the enemy as they seem to be treated. There is a hopeless feeling by employees that they can not put their faith in the county and depend on the management/board listening to their concerns and ideas. It appears that once a manager/supervisor is given a little authority or power they tend to become power hungry and abuse their power by inflating their ego with this power. We are a team and we deserve to be treated as a member of that team and deserve to be listened to instead of being met with indignance and revenge. The employees are the ones who would know best what makes things work and the best way to get the job done. / Please listen to the employees once in a while and please do not always believe/trust what management says is the truth.
- MANY BOARD MEMBERS WHO ARE OUT OF TOUCH W/REALITY OF RUNNING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS. SOMETIMES LEADERSHIP THAT CATERS TO EMOTIONS & EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF PEOPLE RATHER THAN WHAT WOULD WORK BEST FOR BEING A FUTURE RESOURCE.
- Many departments and staff are very protective of their tasks and resist attempts to integrate and/or redistribute these tasks. This is most often true of long time employees who wish to continue to do things as they always have. This is also apparent in their resistance to become proficient in their use of technology to streamline tasks.
- Many of the County Board Supervisor's are working against each other with hidden agenda's affiliations that are not necessarily in the best interest of the County. This is very harmful and unproductive. These kinds of behavior's are also being seen between Washburn County Agencies which really keeps the County from moving ahead.
- micro mngt. and personal agendas of ct. brd. supervisors. some depts. over staffed due to lack of building. One facility has 16 employees 5 of whom are receptionists.
- no opinion
- Not enough monetary input. Big business has often either been turned away, or presented with so many obstacles that the business will choose to go elsewhere. Examples are Oceanspray Cranberries who wanted to open a business in Spooner but were a threat to local business and were turned away, 3-M who chose to go elsewhere are two that I know of who tried to come in to Spooner. Don't know yet what Wal-Mart will choose to do.

- Not enough money to go around -- and step increases and raises that are not earned.
- Not helping outside people at times.
- Not planning for future trends or needs which will adversely affect our way of life and our finances. Inability to make decisions quickly when needed. Some in county government need to set aside their personal agendas and move towards what is best for our way of life and our future generations. Some in county government need to understand and know their role and stay within those boundaries. Too much I and not enough "we". Every decision should be what is best for Washburn County as a whole.
- Office hours. I was at some offices first thing in the am a few times and could not find the people I needed at their desks so I had to come back later.
- One of the greatest weaknesses is the Boards are too large. Grandstanding is happening. Special interests of board members takes up too much time and wastes time. Admin has to spend countless hours satisfying board members when other work needs to be done. Board members interfere with UNION issues and staff relations. Board member's conduct is sometimes unprofessional, embarrassing and demeaning to Admin staff. The greatest weaknesses stem with lack of general support and respect given to Admin staff by Board members and the inservices aimed to educate Board members has not helped much. Bullying by Board members continue to upset general functioning of departments. / Our buildings look dirty and our maintenance staff is required to do housekeeping. They do a poor job of it because they are not housekeeping. We have asked for years for something to be done but we have not seen any improvement.
- One weakness is the pay is low compared to adjoining counties. They make decisions based on immediate circumstances and not the long term effect. The decisions they have been making are only going to make jobs inefficient. The lack of intelligence of some county board members makes for some inefficient decisions, when the decision makers really don't have a clue what happens in each department.
- Periodic personality conflicts between board members that spill over into monthly meetings. Some board members (including those in leadership positions) who listen to and believe unreliable gossip that is unfounded and without merit.
- Personal agendas of some board members, too large of board, weak personnel department and County administrator.
- politics, communication between management and employees and all of the rules and paperwork for each of the programs that we provide services too.
- Politics. My answer in the first response goes along with this. When board is not in balance this is what happens to the politics. Too many County Supervisors have their own agenda. They manipulate and distort the truth and sometimes out and out lie. As usual in politics these days, those elected to serve the public often worry more about acquiring the favor of other elected officials in order to push their own agendas or to ensure reelection. Many do not understand the issues that are discussed at meetings even when it is explained to them over and over. They will continue to push items that are lost causes and waste time at meetings trying to change something that can not be changed or should not be changed. / / Another weakness is the productivity of some employees. Historically, management has not been supported by the County Board Supervisors. They have been quick to give an ear to disgruntled employees without hearing the other side from management. Employee issues are confidential. Management can not discuss these issues. But Supervisors will side with the employees to the point of harassing management. Many long-term employees waste time and resources. They do not want to stay abreast of new technology to maintain efficiencies and productivity. This is to the detriment of the county. We pay high wages for staff who do not earn their pay. A new employee could do the job of 2 of them. Because of the union and the fear of the union that is held by many on the Board of Supervisors, this continues unabated. There is little management can do. What a waste of taxpayers dollars. / / / /
- resources. Additional staff.

- Short sightedness of the long range goals. Too many Board members are influenced by hearsay non-factual information.
- SMALL
- Some of the department heads and a certain few employees--I think they are way over paid--contract the work out and still get paid a lot of money--yet can't help you with things--makes no sense--I also feel there are way too many studies that are done--and never looked at again- training and testing for employees then the system gets changed in a year and we have to pay for more training / some of the county board supervisors
- Some weakness in communicating with each other, and being accept when there are problems that need long range financial attention or long range planning.
- Supervisors who are not held accountable. / / Times change but too many live in what used to be. This is no longer a railroad town, that was the past, get beyond it and look for a future. Try some new innovative things, listen to the young people, it's great that some elderly want to be involved with running the county but then they need to look forward. /
- The attitude by management of not trusting the employees to do their job without micro managing.
- The county board not sticking to their own business. Personnel director does not address issues properly. The budget is not big enough to keep construction equipment up to date.
- The greatest weakness is a general lack of advocacy for all the departments. Support from Admin is inconsistent. Admin operates too often below the radar, which creates a general lack of trust.
- The greatest weakness of Washburn County government is also its employees. That would be employees with an attitude that feel they are owed a job and a living. Do little, get paid a lot. An "I don't care attitude" by some employees, dept. heads needs to change or they need to find a job more suited to their needs, abilities, and attitudes. It should not be so hard to get rid of these employees. With our current methods an employee can come in here and do a rotten job and you can't get rid of them because of the union that runs the county. I have had a horrible experience with this type of employee and found out how protected they are. Yet the good employee that goes above and beyond does not get rewarded for their efforts. This needs to change.
- The inability to ignore unfunded mandates from the state and not good communication between departments to brainstorm problems
- The obvious personal agendas of some of the board supervisors, the size of the board is too large, weak personnel department, the County administrator is too timid and works for the board rather than the county.
- The perception that most county employees are inept.
- The Union promotes mediocrity and seems to protect those union employees not meeting the standards. The county needs to stand up to the Union and take a strong position. / / Enmeshment of some roles and boundaries of board members with county employees. The result has been interference with management on the day to day functioning. / /
- The weaknesses I can identify in Washburn County are: 1. Too many supervisors in the HHS department. 2. Too many County Board Supervisors (21) for a small population as Washburn County. 3. The lack of communication between the departments (the supervisors meet regularly, however, the information is not communicated to the staff personnel. 4. In-services for the staff to build teamwork. 5. Supervisors in other departments who sleep in the supply room during working hours, supervisors who think that they can take county property home to their private property without disciplinary action (this employee does not work for the county at this time). Management not setting a good example of work ethics to their employees, such a breaks, lunch hours and leaving early. /
- The willingness to learn and use new technology to become more efficient in their jobs. / They tend to do things the way they have always done them and do not want to look for change. / /
- The workers do not feel very appreciated by the county. They are continually expected to pick up

the slack and give 100%. But when a worker doesn't feel appreciated it is hard for them to give 100%.

- There is a sense of separation between managers and employees. A "them and us" mentality which diminishes trust and collaborative effort.
- There seems to be a lack of foresight in the creation of new ordinances/regulations by the Board. For example, creating new, more restrictive zoning regulations requires having resources available to administer and enforce these regulations. At the same time the Board is trying to think of ways to cut hours and cut expenses within departments to balance the budget. It's kind of like lighting a forest fire and trying to find the cheapest way to put it out.
- Those few exceptions
- Too many Committee members have too many different Ideas and aren't willing to work together to get things accomplished.
- Too many County Board members. We should try cutting them in half and allowing Administration to do there job. I see it all the time where Board members are voting with tax payers dollars and have no idea what's best for the County.
- Too many elected officials come to the table with personal agendas and decisions are not made in the best interests of the people they are suppose to serve. Elected officials are allowed to interfere in the daily operations of county departments, which makes it extremely difficult for a department head to do an effective job. The Union is allowed to have too much control over what happens in the county.
- Too many supervisory employees in some departments. There is plenty of incentive through salaries for supervisory positions with the salary and added financial incentives that they receive. Their need to be the same type of incentives for wage-earning employees.
- Too much time spent on "union" issues. There is a lack of drive, initiative and good work ethic with the union staff. Absenteeism is a problem as is productivity. Management has to walk around on eggshells because of veiled and often outright threats that employees will grieve issues if they don't get what they want.
- Turf issues / Board members not always getting enough or correct information on issues / Hidden or personal agendas / Lack of trust / Communication / /
- Union reps fighting for the rights slackers and losers - and not making sure the diligent, hard working employees have a fair shake.

Appendix C – Opportunities

- new elections.
- 1 - Using the levy limits as an opportunity to explore doing work more efficiently with increased technology. / 2 - Co-locating some departments so that underutilized support staff can be shared across departments / 3 - Managing the scheduling of existing staff more effectively / 4 - Stop competing with the private sector and get the highway dept. out of the road building business. Hire snowplow staff as seasonals. / 5 - The redistricting opportunity that will be triggered by the 2010 census and the resulting opportunity to reduce the county board by at least 6 supervisors primarily to provide a greater pool of candidates from each district for the county board supervisor position, but also as an efficiency and cost-saving move.
- 4 DAY WORK WEEK TO DECREASE UTILITY COSTS. HIRE A GRANT WRITER TO WRITE GRANTS FOR THE COUNTY AS A WHOLE AND BE AVAILABLE TO ALL DEPARTMENTS. EXPLORE PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS, IE HOUSEKEEPING MAINTANCE TOGETHER WITH THE HOSPITALS OR CLINICS. REDUCE CARS BY HAVING ALL EMPLOYEES REPORT TO WORK IN THEIR OWN CARS, IE SHERIFF, HWY AND MAINTANCE NO ONE SHOULD BE TAKING COUNTY CARS HOME EXCEPT THE SHERIFF. FINANCE DEPARTMENT AND COMMITTEE TO COMPLETE THE BUDGET, NOT THE INDIVIDUAL DEPARTMENTS.
- Advances in technology. Need to keep up with rapid changes.
- Allowing more industries into our areas. By doing that, we give our young people a reason to stay in the area, and not seek larger cities. And also to keep some of them off the street, because they have no real jobs to go to.
- As part of the strategic planning process there exists the opportunity to take a look at what is we do well and look at how "business as usual" can change despite the lack of state and federal fiscal support. We need to look at this as a positive opportunity and not the end of the world!
- At present, with the economic downward trend, potential opportunities are limited.
- Being able to utilize its managers more and better, to start thinking long range planning like this project of strategic planning - it may help Washburn County determine what it needs to do in the future to be better and more efficient with less.
- Better communication with the providers we serve to find out what they feel the needs of the community are.
- Better Tourism or making Washburn County a place where you would want to live. It don't seem like the County wants to grow, like in population.
- Bringing outsiders into the process. Heavy tourist area, with many second homes. These people are being left out. Tend to under-value their input, as being outsiders, even though they're an important part of the economy.
- Businesses such as Wal-mart wanting to come here. / The people dedicated to staying here. / The beauty of the county.
- Certainly the greatest opportunity is the ability to affect the future of this county.
- community growth--their ideas if they make sense and can be done
- Contacting and meeting with state and federal legislators on a more regular basis to inform them of our needs, issues, etc. Invite them to meet with you face to face and make accommodations so this can occur and you can have their undivided attention. / / The utilization of the age of technology. / / Getting Wal-Mart in to Spooner. I don't mean having the County pay 100% for this, but supporting them in coming in. This will offer more jobs and generate more revenue. / / Actively seeking more businesses to make their home here. / / Actively engaging and listening to the citizenry. / / Actively

engaging and listening to all categories of employees, without retaliation/ramifications for honest, open communication. / / Utilizing our county's resources: natural, human, etc.

- Continue to find additional ways to help the community while working with reduction in funding and increasing need in the community, especially with the economic times we're in.
- Could be in change of what tasks are performed at the state level verses county and local levels.
- cut it size down to 11
- Cut the board down to 12 so it gets something done.
- Don't know?
- Down sizing for greater efficiency.
- Educate members so they can make a better informed decision.
- Expand tourism - reasonable distance from metro areas. / continue to attract new businesses /
- Extending Washburn County services to unemployed people regardless of their qualifications or own self motivation; Giving them more of an incentive to help themselves by offering, education or programs that will enable them to become responsible human beings of our community.
- Finding ways to boost the local economy. Something other than local "drunk" fests should be explored. Be creative and attempt to bring in legitimate companies with legitimate job opportunities. The fear of "smoke stacks on the horizon" has led to a county with one of the lowest average household incomes in the state.
- Fortunate to have many volunteers available. Quality of life. Good school systems and medical facilities to help economic growth.
- Generally, wages in Washburn County continue to be on the lower end of the spectrum. This, combined with the efficiency of the existing staff, should allow Washburn County to weather these trying times without wholesale changes or layoffs.
- Grants
- Grants available out there that we don't even apply for.
- Great benefits and retirement opportunities.
- Great communities with lots of volunteers
- Hiring qualified employees for each position. The union contract allows for bumping and posting into other positions that the individual may not be the most qualified for.
- I am not here enough to know what opportunities are available.
- I believe the greatest opportunities are to Washburn County government is to combine services with other agencies. I believe the "campus" type buildings all over the county are doing us a disservice. The secretarial work force here could be streamlined and combined into a central pool in one main building that would eliminate several people doing the same type of work. I believe we could combine with similar agencies within the county and be able to work together to achieve an end. How about the city's highway and maintenance crews combining to do the work thru the county as a whole? How about the hospitals, clinic's, nursing homes, home care agencies, unit on aging, veterans service, HSD, etc.... all combining to offer the best possible services to our citizens? How about our police forces, sheriffs' depts, probation officers, etc... combining? How about our townships combining forces with our county offices to streamline work. Everyone is so protective over their individual areas and job security that no one is even willing to look at combining services. I felt the two main schools in this county (which are only 6 miles apart) should have combined years ago to provide our children with the best education they could get instead of smaller individual schools having fewer classes available.
- I don't know.
- I HONESTLY DONT KNOW I AM FAIRLY NEW /
- I really don't know

- I think that finding ways to be less dependent on State and Federal funding or lack there of, is going to become a necessity for us to stay solvent.
- I think that there are a lot of services through the state that if utilized more, would be make things more resource-rich.
- I think we are good at spending within our means, we didn't even increase the tax level last year to the extent allowable. Our overall debt service is low too and will have our salt shed paid off relatively soon.
- In this economy I'm not sure how many opportunities there will be out there but grants would be a place to look and getting someone who is very good at grant writing could be a help.
- In times of reduced resources (time, money and other resources) it is important to work together more efficiently.
- Increasing elderly population / Wal-Mart / Long Term Care Redesign - bringing more jobs /
- Internet use, videoconferencing abilities, education and training opportunities.
- Law enforcement
- More integration with departments and outside agencies such as the municipalities. There is only so much / efficiency to be gained with in a department of county and then you need to look outside those boundaries to find / more. This could improve services to customers and help provide a more flexible work environment for staff. / /
- New Family Care seems to be a really good opportunity for this area and has the potential to not only employ more people, but to reach out and help many people in need of direction and resources.
- No idea.
- no opinion
- No opinion
- Now we have the opportunity to consolidate our buildings and lower our operating costs.
- Seek grants for more opportunities. Don't hire out of county to write grants.
- Stress better communication between the departments and committees and work together to attain goals
- Support management in their efforts to increase productivity and efficiencies in staff. / /
- Technological advances that are in other business that may help our government run more smoothly and effectively.
- Technology
- The County government needs to listen to their employees. Hire a grant writer, to be able to write grants from the Federal Government for all departments. The County board needs to be accountable for the taxpayers and decrease the county board to 7 members!
- **THE FACT THAT WE HAVE A GOVERNMENT & EMPLOYMENT, THAT WE HAVE GOOD PEOPLE TO RUN PROGRAMS.**
- The mentality of much of the county and its citizens is keep it the same, keep out those that aren't like us and protect my rights and property. There needs to be a new attitude of "hey, come to this county, we have opportunity and we will create more". It is a great place that is not allowed to realize its potential.
- The natural resources we have for tourism (such as ATV trails that are being built and expanded) and renewable energies.
- The opportunities are seeing that everyone is treated fair and equal. Sometimes I feel concerns are falling on deaf ears and that when the opportunity was available to rid the county of a cancer that has been growing from within they avoided and missed the opportunity. They could have been cancer free if they had restructured when the opportunity was there. Who really has made Washburn County the county that it is if it is not for the employees that do the front line work. Without these employees and

having only management, what kind of reputation do you think Washburn County would have.

- The opportunity to save money on Highway equipment and use it where it really is needed.
- The people who work in county government and strive to do what is right. Even though they get frustrated with county government that fail to see what is ahead of them, they continue to strive to do what is best.
- There is only so much efficiency to be gained within a department or county. I believe there is opportunity to work with municipalities to streamline these interactions. This will however require crossing some political boundaries which in many cases will also be meet with resistance.
- This county is the home of some of the most stubborn, independent, and creative people I've ever met, and this is reflected in conflicts between local town governments and County government from time to time. Washburn county has a unique opportunity to tap into this braintrust, to work WITH the people, and work WITH the towns, when creating future regulations, or to modify existing regs, and to not just copy what some other county is doing, in order to meet their responsibility to protect everyone's well being without stifling the individual's right to peacefully exist.
- This is a time of great challenge. Opportunities will arise to work more closely together. However, we have already consolidated staff, downsized to bare staffing and now is the time to put county gov. in one building to reduce AMSO costs. We cannot continue to absorb these costs in each little divided department. This cost is all we have to cut right now and still provide services that we need to provide. / Retirements will occur and reviewing Maintenance staffing is needed. Maintenance is NOT housekeeping. Our buildings look dirty. Hire cleaning services and keep maintenance staff to a minimum. Those doing maintenance should not be scrubbing floors.
- To continue serving the County citizens with the best possible service making maximum use of tax dollars.
- To establish better communication between departments, state and local governments and the citizens.
- To give conscientious thought before irrevocable decisions are made.
- To hire people within the county to do county jobs.
- Unknown.
- Utilize data and recommendations of many past survey's to streamline county activities, and reduce costs. Address energy costs by considering reduced business hours, efficient temp. setting's, sharing of county vehicles and encouraging cost saving's ideas.
- Washburn County has always been a place people love to visit, and live. This allows the County to attract qualified Professionals at somewhat less than average wage rates. Combined with the income from timber sales and taxes from the many lake properties, we may be in a better position than the average Wisconsin County.
- We have a different kind of economy "up north". We can have more impact as citizens if we think creatively. More opportunities for small businesses.
- We have very good people in the majority of our departments. Well trained, good work ethics, longevity, and dedication to the job at hand.
- We need Industry. Not big Industry, but industry that would employ 50 - 60 people. And we need to keep promoting tourism.
- With the costs of oil and petroleum products skyrocketing, renewable energy in the form of wood and more hydroelectric power should be considered. Also, recreational use of ATV's has increased exponentially and Washburn County needs to capitalize on this quickly, so tourists don't find another county to establish as their ATV recreation playground and will spend their money here.

Appendix D – Threats

- "old boy politics" / / living in what used to be and not in what could be / / Lack of competition in the retail area - Schmitz's had no problem running every other grocery store out but now that Walmart would create competition for him he gets up in arms. / / Moving employees into supervisory positions within the county even though they can't do the job.
- 1 - The aging of the county population will provide more need for some services while decreasing the numbers available in the labor pool and the lack of skills, education and training of that workforce. / 2 - The lack of engagement by county residents in the governance of the county resulting in poor turnouts at public meetings, willingness to serve on committees, willingness to run for office. / 3 - The continuing state budget woes.
- 1. The apparent void of qualified individuals to run for office. / 2. Lack of funds due to tax levy freezes. / 3. Changing demographics with young generation leaving and never coming back /
- 2nd and 3rd generation dependence on the county, lack of continuing education and few "adequate paying" jobs.
- A number of studies have been done in the past but few of the recommendations made have been acted on, mostly due to lack of funding. Levy limits will challenge the county's ability to maintain the quality of programs it provides.
- A threat outside of Washburn County's control is the drug trafficking that is full blown amongst our community.
- All the federal and state rules that we must follow to provide services.
- As budgets get tighter I see departments looking more to protect what they have. At the board level they will also look more at just the cost of / a project rather than the benefits of it.
- Big spending at the capital level, big cities, "pork barrel" ideas that waste our hard earned money.
- Budget
- Budget constraints. Aging population. Losing high school graduates when they graduate. Slow job growth.
- budget problems at the state level, continued levy increase limits.
- Clay Halvorson, Bill Allard, Bob Washkuhn, Michelle Jepson, Julie Kessler, Greg Krantz - some of these people think they are saving money by not doing something then a few years down the road, we have to do it at a higher cost. Also some of these people give Washburn County a bad name for they job they do.
- Clients using and abusing the system. The economy in general.
- Complacency!!!!
- Continuing increase in overhead and employee salaries. Employee's salaries are the major portion of any department's budget. / / The trend toward privatization of many of the services provided by county government agencies. This will eliminate funding for programs at the local level but increase the cost to taxpayers.
- Cost of Health Care. Rising costs of serving the public from heat costs to keeping up with technology.
- costs! Government desperately needs to be run as a sound business. With efficiency, customer service goals and a short and long term plan. Healthcare costs can no longer be absorbed, fuel costs absorbed, IT Dept. issues are continue unresolved.
- County Board Supervisors
- Crime, work, money from the outside.
- Cutbacks from Federal and State Govt. that trickle down to County Govt. and threatened loss of

resources or job layoffs. Recession seems to be the big threat now.

- do not know of any
- downturn in business to the point of company closings etc
- Economic conditions; aging population; extensive rural areas that make accessing services more difficult.
- Economy
- Federal and state reduction in support and funding.
- Federal budget cuts
- Federal fiscal problems will have a direct negative impact on local governments. Need to plan for a probable reduction in federal support.
- Funding sources and County Agencies, Departments and County Board not working together for the greater good of the County.
- I think that with the economy being what it is, leads to a lot of services needed from clients of Washburn Co. In addition, I think that some of the employees who have been here for a long time have lost what is needed to make Washburn County Government successful.
- Increasing elderly population / Raising cost of living / Wal-Mart / Tax freeze / Long Term Care Redesign - taking experienced staff
- it doesn't get anything done.
- Lack of funding sources other than property taxes; county forests; etc.
- Lack of State and Federal funding. Without industry paying taxes in this county and the decrease of State and federal aid we are in big trouble down the road.
- Laying off the police.
- Levy cap. State or Federal mandates that make us spend money without providing some funds to help. The inability to act as one for the good of everyone. PERSONAL AGENDAS without seeing the big picture.
- Like every county government, the lack of money and financial resources is a great threat.
- Mandated programs that are not financially supported by the Federal and State governments.
- Meeting budgets, unfunded state mandates, rising taxes, older population, cost of road and bridge maintenance, lack of tourism.
- Money, money and more money - there is less money to be utilized from the state, levy freezes and cost of living just tends to keep increasing.
- Money...what the county is most lacking in.
- Not allowing Wal-Mart to establish their business within the county. The county board needs to tell the Steve Carlson group to focus on welcoming other job opportunities with the county! The owner of Economart does have a monopoly in this county and he is as guilty of driving other business out of the county. The county board needs to address this issue. Wal-Mart = jobs = taxes = population growth = happy citizens.
- Not enough money to fund departments adequately. May be a need for shorter work week or shorter hours to accommodate economic issues.
- Not letting the Department heads run their departments
- Obviously the poor financial outlook and the inefficiencies of the State government.
- Office staffs not paying the bills, the town is sick of getting the bill 2-3 months later than the work is done.
- One of the greatest threats facing W.C. is the amount of needs/services that will be required for the public vs the ability of that public to pay for those services. Our population is aging, low income and mostly less educated than one would want. That leaves us with less resources to do more for that same population. State funding will not increase fast enough, if at all, to meet these needs. We

will have to prioritize and that will be difficult. / Maintaining a competent workforce will be a challenge as union members age and their skills are not updated. Our highest paid union employees may not be our most productive or competent. Creating new job titles and responsibilities may be the only way to cope with this and we will need Admin help to do this.

- Our population is aging and income is low. Board members are aging. Needs to the elderly and young families is great and services need to continue, not decrease.
- Pollution and a downward turn in the economy.
- Present economic conditions which affect all citizens and will have long-reaching effects.
- PROPERTY TAX FREEZE. WAGES. UNILITY COSTS. FUEL COST. HEALTH INSURANCE COST.AGEING WORK FORCE
- Rising healthcare costs and economic crises.
- SAME AS PREVIOUS /
- See answer to #3.
- some of the county board supervisors who think just saving money and don't think long term-- always want to get rid of people even though we are supposed to serve the community--they don't seem to be people oriented unless it would be for their own little click. / people out of state that are just here a few weeks out of the year--think they can do whatever they want and just pay their way out--makes it hard for everyone else
- Taking on non-county functions. Like the wayside
- Tax levy limits, shrinking tax and federal resources for daily operations of county government. The need to do more with less and still excel in what it is we do.
- The budget and having to cut jobs!
- The criminal waste of money on the Federal and State level is going to impair the Counties ability to levy taxes for efficient local services. All unnecessary Federal and State spending (including grant money!) needs to end.
- The criminal waste of taxpayer money on the State and Federal level are impacting the counties ability to fund worthy local programs.
- the economic situation
- The economy
- The economy and aging population are a huge threat and these issues need to be addressed. / / Decreased funding from the state for support of programs.
- The economy. This is not completely out of your control locally.
- The fiscal stranglehold the state has presented for all the counties and local governments
- The greatest threat to Washburn County is damage to our waters (lakes, rivers, etc...) through pollution and drought. Also, Washburn County needs to work to create more jobs to sustain itself through this period of a weakened economy through its natural resources and renewable energy.
- The greatest threats facing Washburn county government is the financial availability to achieve the goals needed for the future concerning our highways, law enforcement, health care, aging people, and an aging economy. We are currently facing the Baby Boomers starting to retire. The need for the above services will keep becoming more and more needed and necessary and less and less available because of the tremendous financial need to continue running the programs. I don't have the answers for it all, but I do feel as I stated above that the combining of services and personnel will eliminate a large part of those problems.
- The greatest threats facing Washburn County is the aging population and the poor economy. The citizen's may need more services as they age and levy freezes will not allow the growth to pay for it.
- The hiring of management/supervisors who have no experience supervising employees and are not qualified to do so. The largest threat is favoritism that protects these unqualified

managers/supervisors. It is as easy as checking and finding out and making sure they are qualified to do the job of supervising and the ability to get along with the employees. Being genuine and trusting rates as number 1. This is the very thing that is going to be the biggest threat to Washburn County. Please wake up and do a little more investigating on your own and not just listening to the management/supervisors who are giving you all the information. How do you know what is really happening if you don't investigate on your own and then you will know for sure.

- The national economy. / / Deficits in federal and state budgets. / / Low incomes in area in relation to high taxes. / / Lack of affordable housing - people live elsewhere and spend their money elsewhere. / / Lack of housing inspectors. / / High fuel costs. / Lack of employment opportunities.
- The present state of the economy is a major threat to county government, both in the sense that the County's expenses are going up, and that money is getting tighter for its taxpaying citizens. Aside from the obvious financial threat, county government must be extra careful NOT TO CUT or reduce services they provide to the public. If the people are already paying more taxes, think how they feel when they find they're getting LESS for their money than they did before!
- The rising cost of health care benefits
- The state legislature have most counties in a financial strangle hold as far as tax levies so it becomes more important now to work together to achieve how to deliver basic services efficiently and effectively.
- the tax levy freeze
- UNREALISTIC MECHANISMS; PEOPLE IN CHARGE WHO HAVE NOT WALKED IN THE SHOES OF THE WORKER, NOR THE PUBLIC.
- Wal-Mart coming here. / Lack of jobs at which residents can make a living wage.
- We don't have a lot of industry here for jobs. We don't have a good location to larger cities for jobs either to commute or work in.
- When the economy is bad crime rates tend to climb and County law enforcement will be busier. More officer time, more jail time, more court time and out of pocket money to victims. As more young people are affected by drug use there also comes more expense to help the children and treat the parents who are not paying into the tax base so there ends up being more served by fewer. We also have a generation that feels less responsibility or accountability then in the past. Their mistakes are our fault. You need to fix me.