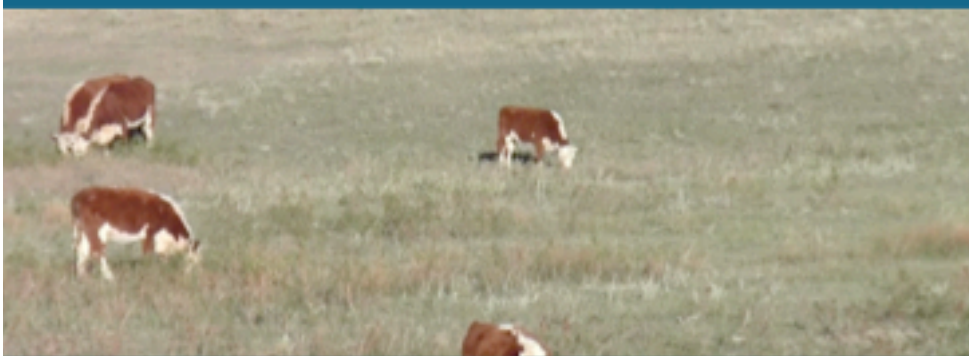




**A Study and Report
Concerning the
Organizational
Leadership Issues
facing The Elbert
County Board of
County
Commissioners**



**Elbert County
BOC**

***Presented by
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History

Elbert County has long been a county in which much of the politics focuses on the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC). As the county has grown and the demand for increased services has increased, citizens comment that as far back as 1994, there were serious problems growing in the county over how it was run. This means that for almost twenty years the county has been struggling to reach some sort of consensus over management of county services, resources and employees. The most recent economic downturn exacerbated the finances of the county, resulting in diminished revenues and reductions in services and county offices only being open four days a week. With this, there was also a decline in county employee morale and organizational stability.

As a result, the most recent election for county commissioner saw two incumbents unseated, with one republican being replaced by a challenging republican and another republican being replaced by a Tea Party candidate. The election was contentious and the hope was that this would usher in a new era of leadership for the county, which would bring it out of the financial and organizational problems it was experiencing. This hope was short lived and soon the problems began to escalate.

The BOCC was back to its old ways of dysfunction, which were quite evident to all their staff and the public. The animosity between the commissioners was growing, and continues to grow, and the confidence of the other elected officials and department heads in the BOCC's ability to lead the county forward was diminishing. While the newest members of the BOCC had campaigned on financial reform and correction, their understanding of the magnitude of the problem was lacking. Once they assumed their new positions, they were unable to correct the financial direction of the county as they had hoped.



Faced with insufficient revenues to run the county effectively, growing conflicts and distrust within the BOCC, diminishing confidence from many elected officials and department heads, and growing attacks from political factions within the county, I was engaged by the BOCC to assess the increasing challenges and provide actionable solutions. I recommended three primary courses of action.

Course of Action A - The BOCC needed coached in organizational leadership and effective team strategies. At the time of engagement, the BOCC was not working well within itself and there was little confidence from the team they lead in the county. This part of the contract was the majority share of the work and time spent for which the consultant was paid. There were three parts to this course of action.

First, an anonymous 360 survey was done on the BOCC by administering a survey to the department heads and other elected officials of the county. This would provide the BOCC with the written feedback they needed for improved leadership, and give a voice to those who were frustrated and disillusioned with the climate and leadership of the BOCC.

Second, interviews were done with the commissioners, elected officials, and department heads regarding the state of their departments, their feelings and assessments of the issues facing the county, and suggestions of what needed to be changed in order for progress to begin in the county. This also allowed for the exploration of topics the respondents identified as important in the feedback process.

Third, the BOCC and department heads were coached as they ran into various issues. The response on this was instrumental in identifying the areas and degree of dysfunction and frustration in the county – most of which was aimed at the BOCC. Many hours were spent in impromptu and



unscheduled conversations addressing how to cope with various issues in a professional and effective manner.

Coarse of Action B - The BOCC needed to get out into the community to communicate the problems they were having financially. The extent of the BOCC's connection with the community was only at daytime meetings at the county building. There was no push attempt to get information out into the community. Citizens could not make informed decisions unless someone was making a proactive effort to get them the information they needed.

Course of Action C – The BOCC needed someone to moderate the public meetings. The overwhelming animosity and aggression shown in many of the BOCC public meetings was not healthy for general communications. The public meetings would most likely bring out those in aggressive opposition to the sitting commissioners and consequently the BOCC would be more of a distraction from the discussion by taking the lead in the presentation. The other factor was that since the BOCC did not have a history of conducting public informational meetings, then they would not be the best source to prepare or deliver it.

The remainder of this report is to communicate how these courses of action were fulfilled and provide action items and recommendations going forward. Since Course of Action A was the majority part of work that the consultant did, it will be the final part of the presentation. Also, since Courses B and C are interrelated, they will be discussed together.



Meeting Preparation and Process

The purpose of the town-hall meetings was to inform the people about the actual financial state of the county in a department-by-department review. In order to do this, the consultant set up interviews with the heads of each of these departments, whether they were county employed department heads or elected officials. The departments that were interviewed were:

- Billie Mills, County Assessor, elected
- Shayne Heap, Sheriff, elected
- Dallas Schroeder, Clerk and Recorder, appointment to the remainder of an elected office
- Brandon Linderink, Director Elbert County Emergency Management, interviewed via email due to his work in northern Colorado due to floods
- Jerri Spear, Director Elbert County Health and Human Services
- Ed Ehmann, Director, Public Works
- Jen Grote, Director, Information Technology
- Rick Pettit, Treasurer, elected
- Former county finance employee no longer with the county
- Kyle Fenner, Director Community and Development Services

These interviews were used to multi-task the gathering of information for this project. The information regarding the organizational issues was discussed without a firm format in order to allow the individuals to relate their perceptions without the prejudice of what the interviewer thought would be important. A request was sent to them prior to the interview via email which in part read:

The following are the items I need (feel free to add any information you feel is pertinent to your department or area of responsibility at the end). Please use the last five years for trends if possible.

- Funding History



- Demand for services trends
- Statutory duties or requirements (if applicable)
- Present Department Status
- Cuts made over the last 5 years
 - [Cuts] In Staff
 - [Cuts] In Services
- Employee leakage due to low wages
- Resulting staffing shortages
- Maintenance delayed or canceled
- Pending cuts in the next 12 months

The staff was very cooperative and appeared to welcome the opportunity to tell their side of the story in finances, morale, and the impact of the BOCC infighting on themselves and their teams. The information gathered was used as collected for the meeting presentation materials for each department. Many departments provided the consultant with printed reports or spreadsheets and additional notes were taken during the interviews. A systems approach was used to tie the financial, leadership, employee, and morale issues together during the interview.

The consultant added his academic and professional expertise to the end of the presentations in the form of trend analysis, S.W.O.T. analysis, and scenarios. This was done to draw all the different elements gathered from the interviews together in a cohesive projection and analysis of the state of the county.

Once the presentation was ready, it was submitted to different officials in the county for fact checking prior to being shared in public.

Town-Hall Meetings

Prior to the town-hall meetings, the consultant recommended that the first presentation be made to the county employees so they could be aware of what was going on in the community. The BOCC agreed and the feedback from the employees was astounding to the consultant. It was reported that there had never been a meeting like this where the employees were brought into the loop, and often they had to hear of things second handed. It seemed appalling that the BOCC historically did not have a good, or even considerate, communications policy with the employees. This meeting was also used for a final fact check for cross-departmental lines.

The goal of the meetings was to deliver accurate information to the citizens of the county. All meetings were conducted with strict instructions and interpretations of campaign law from County Attorney Alex Beltz. This was a very tardy communication attempt on the part of the BOCC. The consultant informed the BOCC at the beginning of the project that they should have made a decision to proactively communicate the financial problems of the county as soon as the previous June. Their last minute attempt to reach out to the community with current information was not enough to reach a majority of the people before they would be required to make a decision on the mill levy. The goal was to reach as many people as possible, in the best format, given the time constraints.

There were four town-hall meetings set up to deliver the information gathered from the department heads and elected officials during the interviews. They were scheduled by the county and held in the east at Simla, up north at Rattlesnake Fire Hall, in Elizabeth at Legacy Academy, and finally in Kiowa at the Fair Grounds.

The town-hall meetings went as the consultant had planned and expected. It was anticipated that turnout would be light and it was. It was also



anticipated that there would be one ambush meeting by the political adversaries of the BOCC and that happened at Elizabeth. It was also anticipated that the biggest turnout would be at the last meeting in Kiowa and it was.

It seems to be common in Elbert County for public meetings to turn into attack sessions by political groups hampering the efforts of those who seek information. The national mood of cynicism for government was very evident in the public that attended the meetings and some of the press. While there are many in the public and the press that are objective and open to dialogues with public officials, there are those in Elbert County in both groups who seek to dominate the conversation with predisposed positions.

As anticipated and planned, the attacks were somewhat focused on the consultant in a “kill the messenger” mentality. Again, this was on purpose to draw fire away from the BOCC and allow them field questions. Because of the deep cynicism and critical nature of some, the information gathered directly from the elected officials and department heads was disregarded as being slanted by the consultant in favor of the county. It was evident from the questions and accusations made, based on false information, that some of those contesting were not interested in an informative dialogue, but rather sought the meetings as a platform for their own agendas. This is to be expected, even though it is unfortunate, because of its negative impact on the public’s opportunity to hear from their government officials.

Besides the important task of communicating with the public and getting the commissioners out in the open, there was another object of the meetings in the leadership coaching of the commissioners. It was to view the environment the BOCC operates in and their reaction to that environment. In the meetings, and the informal debriefings that sometimes followed them, there was the opportunity to help them improve their leadership style and effectiveness by understanding the use of their time in public interaction.



While these were not political meetings in any sense of the word, those who are elected officials are dogged by politics no matter what they do. If an elected official cannot manage politics well enough to subjugate it to his public service, then one cannot lead effectively.

There are four groups of people the BOCC needed to understand and manage better. The first group of people is those who are extremely loyal to the elected official and closely aligned with their agenda and politics. Too much time spent with this group will cause the official to become myopic and one-dimensional. While support is nice to have, leadership requires a more balanced approach.

The second group of people is those who will never see eye-to-eye with the elected official. Their intent has nothing to do with collaboration and seeks only to degrade the official in hope of replacing them with their own agenda. These people consume massive amounts of time raising issues and debates that have no intent of collaboration or joint outcome. Officials get embroiled with these types of people trying to pacify and reason with them. It is a wasted effort that comes at the expense of the third and fourth groups.

The third group is those who share the elected official's political position, but have some honest questions and don't follow them just because of their shared values or positions. They can be very valuable, but are not enough to ensure strong leadership without the engagement of the fourth group. The fourth group is those who do not share the official's political views, but are interested in an honest and productive dialogue to reach a collaborative solution.

The Elbert County BOCC has not mastered this level of leadership yet. Much time is wasted in debates and attempts at appeasement that will never come to fruition. They allow much time to be consumed by those intent on doing nothing but accusing and debating with no sincerity in a



productive outcome or end result. Many of them occupy the BOCC with an ultimatum type approach and agenda. The BOCC seems unable as of yet to move beyond these groups and seek out those who are interested in collaborative solution targeted goals.

The BOCC must lead the county beyond this endless and fruitless debate led by just a few. They have to recognize the difference in those who want to honestly explore and inquire about the facts, from those who keep changing the rules of how they use and interpret the facts just to keep making their monotone political point. The BOCC must persevere in reaching out to the county as a whole and create safe environments where those who want to be a part of the solution can be heard and participate. They have to quit catering to and indulging those whose only desire is to be combative and critical of anyone's solution but their own. The BOCC has to lead or this will be another failed BOCC term allowing the challenges of today and tomorrow to continue to plague the county.

360 Surveys of the Commissioners

The order of this section will be to deliver the results in the following order. First, the results of a question regarding the BOCC as a whole will be answered. Second, the consultant will discuss the results for chairman of the BOCC, Robert Rowland, and then the two other commissioners will be discussed in alphabetical order of their names. The survey responses will be the random arrangement taken directly from the anonymous 360 surveys filled out by the other elected officials and Department heads. This section will end with recommendations and observations by the consultant.

It is to be noted that the consultant had to give repeated assurances that the respondents opinions would not be traced back to them, as their was great fear of retaliation for any negative comments. Some never did submit a survey for this very reason and no assurances made them safe from fear of one particular commissioner. This was not a good sign. These were all qualitative responses and are recorded as given without any editing for errors in grammar or spelling. Comments about those not associated with the county or family members will be redacted in the consultant's public presentation of this section.

It is the hope of the consultant that the transparency the BOCC has chosen to have will result in a new beginning rather than further divisions. The information contained in this feedback is already causing divisions and lack of trust in the county. Bringing it into the public light can only help if people use it for positive change. The danger always exists that there will be those who see this as nothing more than fodder for political gossip and gain. It is incumbent upon the community to reject this sort of unprofessional behavior, as it serves no positive purpose for anyone.



In your opinion, please rate the overall state of the Elbert County Government:

Very Dysfunctional

ECG is made up of many bright, energetic and talented people who are held back by monetary restrictions and leadership shortcomings.

Dysfunctional, childish and broken – leadership at the commissioner level is nonexistent. There are no common goals or direction given to staff, elected officials are left to “make it work” with dwindling budgets all the while there is overreaching by the commissioners that manifests itself in the form of micromanagement. Standards for employees vary depending on the individual, much is required of some and nothing is required of others – objective management and leadership is nonexistent.

I think that we are headed in a positive direction with a lot of work to be done. All Departments are working really hard to overcome years of poor, ineffective and inappropriate decisions by prior leadership. New department heads with appropriate backgrounds and no prior connection to Elbert County are helping to reshape our agencies. Unfortunately, it is a monumental task that can quickly lead to burnout and the loss of good talent.

Communication between the 3 commissioners is poor at best. Employees are at times getting different directions from different commissioners and are not sure on how to proceed.

Finances continue to be of great concern and will be for several years

From a budget perspective there is no reporting on what final numbers were last year or accurate year to date numbers for that matter. This makes functional budgeting and planning all but impossible.

The county needs to move forward and not stay stagnant.

[I] RECOMMEND: A facilitated Department Head and Elected Official Retreat to pull all of our work together and help us define unified goals and processes. I really think we have a good set of leaders in place right now that can make a long-term positive impact on Elbert County.

Lack of professionalism at times during meeting



The county employees have a very low self esteem. They do not feel appreciated due to the fact of no raises for many years. Some departments have rec'd raises, while others have not for well over 5 years. They are overworked and under appreciated. They feel that the Commissioner's really don't care. There is money being spent on new vehicles and many other items that the employees see as unnecessary, when there are not raised or enough help. The Commissioners want all the Department heads and Elected Officials to have a great working relationship. However, they are not leading by example when the three of them can not get along. It is very frustrating to how they act towards each other.

From an operations perspective – department heads and elected officials are delegated to run their operations as non-professionals see fit but deal with the fall out when it comes to the devastating results of knee jerk reactions and poor decision making.

Robert Rowland, Chairman Elbert County BOCC

Please describe how you view the leadership ability, style, and effectiveness of Commissioner Rowland.

Comr. Rowland means well & seeks to please. Unfortunately he often makes knee jerk reactions to complaints without first seeking all of the facts. He rushes to decision making without fully understanding the issues & facts. He only partially listens to answers to the questions he asks. Comr. Rowland attempts to direct departments in operational functions, however he is improving in this area.

Listens to people but does not hear everything that is being said.

Robert is trying. I don't think he has the respect of the employees. Promises have been made during the campaign that have not been fulfilled. This is very disheartening to the staff. He is at work on a regular basis, which does show commitment.

Reacts to things before knowing all the facts.

This Commissioner is on the fence and a lot of the times staff can't be certain of the direction because it may change by persuasion from someone else. From time to time he will micro manage and jump in before staff has time to respond to issues. He is somewhat effective



because he cares about the staff.

Robert is trying

Tries to understand what is happening in the county and why it is being done the way it is.

You can discuss issues with him.

Allows meeting or discussion to get off on tangents

Commissioner Rowland began his term listening to the vocal minority and had many of the same traits as Commissioner Ross. I have seen a positive change in that he now appears to have a broader view of real issues and appears to be concerned with the overall wellbeing of the county. Commissioner Rowland can be a good leader and has demonstrated good leadership when he sets out on his own to understand the issues, consults with department heads or elected officials impacted by the problem and makes an informed unbiased decision. The jury is still out.

Commissioner Rowland has grown significantly since he started in January. He also initially leaned toward constituents, but appears to be balancing his roles. I have found him to be supportive and willing to give of his time.

What changes in Commissioner Rowland's' leadership would have the most positive impact?

I think continued growth in working as a team is important for all. Additionally, since Commissioner Rowland is a very verbal and gregarious person he may want to temper his natural tendencies sometimes and watch those boundaries of saying too much

Listen to what people are telling and not just hear part of what is being said

Has gotten better in not micro managing as much

Needs to stick to the issues in discussions and meetings

Trying to fulfill his promises.

Allow department heads and elected officials to do their jobs without unnecessary meetings and tasks that have no definable outcome.



Meetings for the sake of meetings waste manpower and convolute the true issue or issues facing the county.

Work on bringing money into the county and supporting staff.

Attempt to work with Commissioner Ross, if there is no immediate resolution, then he needs to move on and not get drug into a never ending debate.

Don't allow Commissioner Ross to bully staff.

Comr. Rowland remaining detached from operational level decision making would be positive. He should make decisions based on items that are brought to the whole board. No single commissioner should be making any decisions outside of the boardroom, or any decisions of a daily operational nature.

Follow instincts, let staff do their jobs. Stand up to Ross in a professional manner, do not let him keep projects or task from moving forward.

Commissioner Larry Ross

Please describe how you view the leadership ability, style, and effectiveness of Commissioner Ross.

Has poor people skills. Does not listen to what people are trying to explain to him.

Comr. Ross' leadership abilities rely solely on threats & intimidation based on how important he believes himself to be. He is a detriment to progress, growth, & development of services & functions county governments regularly provide. Comr. Ross asks questions but does not listen to the answers. He is not interested in fact; he is only interested in his perception of fact & on whom he may place the blame. He lacks leadership ability & chooses to belittle or intimidate those who disagree with him.

Interrupts when people are talking to him.

Commissioner Ross could use some training in how to be a boss and the responsibility of his position. He is diligent about his commitment to his constituents, but needs to know that in his current role he also has a



commitment to the County staff. He shows little respect for the role of Department Heads and wants us to respond to the ongoing complaints of constituents who seem to have his “number” and realize that he will try to make all of them happy. He overstepped boundaries with me initially by going directly to my staff without my knowledge and asking for reports to appease one or two people. This was very disruptive to our operation since my staff was stressed out and dropped the work they should have been doing to please Commissioner Ross. I did bring up my concerns and no similar incidents have occurred in my agency.

This Commissioner is not a leader, his style is to Bully the employees through the abuse of his title to get what he wants. He is not effective, he believes everyone and everything is a conspiracy, many times projects or functions are delayed because of his need to study them. He does not follow the chain of command often times he directs employees as he sees fit, with no respect of the chain of command. He feels because he is a commissioner he can interact with venders, customers, or staff as he wishes, this style undermines the Department Heads and many times is more destructive then effective.

Dictates to people.

There is no respect for Larry. Larry has some good ideas, but he does not know how to get his point across in a short amount of words. People tend to tune him out when the starts to talk. He has a bad temper and acts like a child (with temper tantrums), when things don't go his way. ~~His wife is his downfall for the County also. She is very vocal and looses her temper very easily. Both come across as unprofessional.~~

Commissioner Ross also seems to be absent frequently, wants to ponder over decisions and hinders progress and action. Basically he needs to learn to trust Department Heads and not sit on decisions.

I question Commissioner Ross' effectiveness at this point because I don't think that he has been able to adjust his role from candidate to elected official. I just don't witness much respect for him.

Commissioner Ross is self-absorbed and believes that the county did not function before he arrived. He has alienated staff and manages with a “because I said so” mentality. His lack of understanding when it comes to social services, road construction, law enforcement, elections and a myriad of other professions does not stop him from forcing his uneducated will on Elbert County employees and elected officials leaving these individuals bound by unnecessary and wasteful meetings that have predetermined outcomes.



I believe Commissioner Ross is not a bad person and has good intentions however the road to hell is paved with good intentions and this simply is not working.

Micro manages

What changes in Commissioner Ross' leadership would have the most positive impact?

You tell me.

Needs to stop micromanaging especially in areas where he does not have any expertise and rely on staff.

Comr. Ross must listen to & trust department leadership, who are experienced professionals in their chosen careers. He must also remain detached from operational decision making as he is not the most qualified person to make operational decisions in the various professions. Comr. Ross should change his goal from blame to more constructive issue resolution.

He needs to learn how to be a part of a team decision process and how to support his Department Heads and staff.

Respect the employee's!! Understand the big picture and stop meddling in day to day operations. Understand that there is a certain % of the tax payers that the County cannot please. Focus on the people who want to make a difference in the County, not necessarily the ones that are the loudest!! (Resign)

Allow staff to do their jobs

Control fits of rage that reflect poorly on Elbert County government as a whole

Stop micromanaging pet projects and overall operations

Treat people with dignity and respect

Provide support and allow problem solving solutions to be implemented

Have a clear understanding that he is "part" of a board that makes



decisions as a board

Stop making unilateral decisions that leaves staff with misdirection

~~Tell his wife to not get involved in his work and~~ have a more of a professional attitude.

Work inside the constraints of county government

Stop badmouthing individuals that don't see things his way, we can disagree in private but are unified in public

Make decisions on his own without the input from outside special interest groups, spouses, friends, etc.

Communicate clear goals and objectives

Make his actions and decisions based on what is best for all 23,000 citizens of this county and not the 1/70th of a percent that is the squeaky wheel.

Commissioner Kurt Schlegel

Please describe how you view the leadership ability, style, and effectiveness of Commissioner Schlegel.

Commissioner Schlegel has learned through trial and error the proper role of county government. He has the best interest of the staff and citizens in mind when making decisions. Although we sometimes disagree, and these disagreements are heated, there is a common respect and he will actually listen and understand other viewpoints on an issue.

Commissioner Schlegel is direct and gets to the point. I think that he comes across as cold and uncaring at times, however, I have found him to be supportive and approachable. He is a little stubborn on a few issues, but he acknowledges those areas😊

Informed on the issues brought before him or asks questions concerning areas he doesn't understand

Comr. Schlegel sets an organizational direction & expects county department heads & leaders to reach that goal. He trusts each leader to be a professional in their field & to accomplish the goal that has been set. He remains detached from daily operational decisions. Comr.



Schlegel is a positive & effective leader.

Kurt does not have the respect of the employees. He is very arrogant. It is either his way or no way.

Can be over bearing at times

I respect Commissioner Schlegel's diligence and strong work ethic. He sets high expectations for himself and those who work for him.

Can discuss issues with him

Shows frustration with people at times if they do not agree with him

This Commissioner is a strong leader, you understand his position from the get-go!! He supports staff as needed and directs criticism when required. His style can be overpowering at times but he is always clear. Very effective because you know his position and what is needed if you think something should be different, you can present your side, if he agrees he will support you. Win, lose, or draw once something is decided he moves on, no hard feelings. He is also effective because he allows staff to do their job....

What changes in Commissioner Schlegel's leadership would have the most positive impact?

Although his direct style works well for me, he probably needs to be aware that he may come across as intimidating to others.

Confront Ross in a professional manner.
Needs to have more patience with people

Attempt to work with Commissioner Ross, if there is no immediate resolution, then he needs to move on and not get drug into a never ending debate.

Allow department heads and elected officials to do their jobs without unnecessary meetings and tasks that have no definable outcome. Meetings for the sake of meetings waste manpower and convolute the true issue or issues facing the county.

Work on bringing money into the county and supporting staff.

To be more understanding and listen to the different department needs.



Become more approachable.

Don't allow Commissioner Ross to bully staff.

Comr. Schlegel is frequently impatient with monetary restrictions, the slow government process, & with perceived inefficiency. An increase in patience & diplomacy when dealing with staff would increase his effectiveness as a leader

Conclusions and Recommendations

When the consultant began this project, he was optimistic that the conflicts in the BOCC could be resolved and the cynicism in the county could be mitigated through open communication. The realization is that the problems on both fronts are greater than originally thought. While the consultant's optimism for progress is still high, the amount of intervention and change needed have increased.

The politics of Elbert County have a decidedly scorched earth modus operandi. The desire for collaboration is not seen in the more visible political groups. There are no minor differences. All disagreements of direction for the county are life or death struggles. The worst casualty is usually the one who seeks to have a dialogue of middle ground. Whether it is the Democrats, Republicans, or Tea Party, their agenda is all or nothing. The BOCC must be able to rise above this environment.

In the recent trouble facing the county and the BOCC, the Republican Party as a whole has shown little or no interest in helping. Their interests seem to lie more in protecting their power base in the county than protecting the citizen. Their activities center around the welfare and promotion of the party rather than the county or the governing positions they hold. While their party holds the majority of commissioner's seats, they have shown no leadership or interest in healing the factions of the BOCC or its individual members. The party appears to seem content to rest in the fact that they have an overwhelming majority in Elbert County.

At the same time, the Democratic Party has only served to attack and malign in a time they feel it is safe. Rather than choose to come to the forefront and show real leadership, cooperation, and initiate dialogues



focused on solutions, they have chosen to continue trying to tear away at anyone who is not a Democrat. They have plenty of criticism, but don't initiate a solution based dialogue. They, too, seem more concerned with party politics and getting in their licks to the Republicans than actually trying to fix the things that are wrong.

The Tea Party has matured exponentially in Elbert County. It has proven itself to be a real political party by matching the Democrats and Republicans in their posturing. Like any mature and confident political party, if you don't agree with them 100%, then you are 100% wrong. They have come a long way in a short time, albeit the wrong way.

The BOCC has districts, but the commissioners serve at large. They are to represent the people of Elbert County. It seems that they are doing it all too well. The BOCC has been able to replicate and represent the same level of cynicism and dysfunction that the three political parties do. They have allowed their leadership to fall prey to the same divisiveness within the leadership as that of the parties. They must overcome this trend.

For the BOCC to find its way and begin to effectively tackle the problems of Elbert County, they will need to do several things. First and foremost they have to get out of the daily operations of Elbert County. Leaders are to be strategic and prepare organizations for tomorrow. This can't be done by leaders who are seeking justification from department heads and elected officials for budgeted expenditures that are a microscopic fraction of the overall county budget or by driving county roads and checking out minor Road and Bridge complaints.

The commissioners have to start leading and put together a strategic plan for tomorrow. Effective leadership will allow the department heads



and other elected officials to run the daily operations of their departments. It is recommended that the BOCC seriously consider creating an office of County Administrator to oversee all departments and daily operations. Much of the time spent by the BOCC in meetings could be eliminated by the creation of this position.

The intimidation and bullying of employees will place the county at risk for a human resource lawsuit. The employees are growing very tired of these tactics and of being placed in a position where they must choose between what a commissioner has told them to do and what their boss has told them. Failure to respect and continued abuse of the chain of command will lead to further loss of employees and perhaps the loss of department heads.

There are some fantastic ideas coming from some department heads and elected officials to save money and in some cases raise revenue. There is perceived to be a practice of financial socialism in the county, where departments or elected officials who have no plan share equally in the spoils of successful plans. Meanwhile, the departments that devise those plans feel penalized because they receive little or no benefit from all the work they did and others who did no work benefited. If you don't respect the work some do and quit rewarding those who do no planning, then the ideas will evaporate. You can require plans and ideas from Department heads, but the elected officials must answer to the voters if they fail to have a good plan.

You are running the danger of not only being short on funds, but of losing the best talent you have in the county departments. It is logical that the longer the fund deficiency drags on, the more you are going to need the most talented people to make the county work. If you lose the



money and the talent, it will take the county a decade or more to recover. You must quit relying on employee cuts and start protecting the heart of county services – this experienced employees. Remember, many positions can get from half to double their salary at a neighboring county.

While service cuts are inevitable in all departments in the coming year, this does not mean in the elected official's service. On Fridays, you have one department that is open, the Sheriff's Office, and they field all the calls for the county. If you hope to reach the people in the middle who want to have a productive conversation, then the elected officials can still work five days a week even if it is just to answer phones and questions. Just because you have to furlough employees one day a week does not mean the elected officials have to take the day off. That would be a great day for the BOCC to get some strategic planning done on how to get out of this mess.

Along with this, and in the spirit of good faith, the BOCC should see if the employees could or would stagger their days off. Some could work Monday through Thursday and others Tuesday through Friday, keeping the offices open five days. The consultant recommends a survey of the employees to see if some would prefer having a Monday off instead of Friday.

The commissioners have to get out of the office and connect with the people of the county. More time should be spent on relationship building and dialogues rather than on site in endless meetings about day-to-day operations. If you want to begin a new dialogue, then you have to get out and find the people to have it with. If it causes you to fall behind, you can catch up on your work on Friday.



The drama and conflict in the BOCC has to stop, you have lost credibility with the employees and the community. The credibility of the BOCC is essential for the leadership of the county. The consultant told you from day one of his service that you had to resolve the internal BOCC issues if you expected people to listen to you. It makes you weak and vulnerable to attack, which many have seized upon. Two commissioners ran on a platform of making the BOCC better and it is as bad as it has ever been. The level of dysfunction is still escalating. There is justified suspicion that there is now a conscious effort to discredit the BOCC in the community coming from within the BOCC itself.

The conflict began with Commissioners Ross and Schlegel. That has now spread to Commissioner Rowland because he has voted with Commissioner Schlegel on several issues, most notable the recent Oil and Gas Policy. The BOCC is a majority rule body and the commissioners must accept that democratic process. The employees, elected officials, and department heads have run out of patience. There needs to be a new paradigm and leadership style in the BOCC. The drama, anger, and divisions need to be ignored, if they cannot be repaired, and the BOCC move ahead for the county. Those who do not want to be engaged in a dialogue, but rather have their own way, cannot be allowed to hold back the county.

The BOCC needs to have continued assistance and direction to overcome its present challenges. While the suggestion of a retreat by one of the department heads was made, it would seem that the sunshine laws would prevent it. However, onsite workshops and executive coaching would go a long way to create an effective and more trusting atmosphere. All three commissioners must respond in a positive way to the 360 surveys if you are to have any hope of success.



To each of you individually:

Commissioner Schlegel, you have to quit letting Commissioner Ross get under your skin. Your anger and agitation is obvious to all. It does nothing but give him reason to make you the bad guy. You two will never agree on how to lead this county forward, but you have to accept that he is opposed to you and move on. Patience will serve you well.

Commissioner Ross, you have to get it together. The consultant assisted you in your campaign and believed in what you wanted to do. You have lost the support of the county employees and many of the other elected officials. Your anger and suspicions are beginning to consume you. Even if you never win a single vote while on the BOCC, you still cannot justify bringing dissention and discord to the county government and have to respect the process and position even if you serve with those you disagree with.

Commissioner Rowland, you have to lead. Your attempts to be a peacemaker are not going to work in this situation. You have spent enough time on this and now you must lead the county forward. You have to know who and where to engage the dialogues that will produce solutions we can use. You have given yourself one term – how will you use it?

This concludes my report and I appreciate the opportunity to serve the BOCC and the citizens of Elbert County.