



COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR BARRY COUNTY, MICHIGAN

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Barry County, MI (pop. (63,554). Barry County is searching for a seasoned administrator with excellent communication and project implementation experience, as well as conservative financial skills. Barry County is a growing county in a thriving rural area located at a strategic crossroads for West Michigan. Barry County is becoming a popular bedroom community location, where rural character and natural beauty blend with convenient access to major job centers. Barry County is fifteen miles from Grand Rapids, twenty-five miles from Lansing, and ten miles from Kalamazoo and Battle Creek which have a total combined population of 1.3 million. The Lake Michigan shoreline is roughly 30 miles to the west.

Barry County is known for being family-oriented and has excellent schools, along with continuing education at Kellogg Community College. Bountiful natural resources include 260 lakes, the unique Thornapple Birding Trail, the 42-mile non-motorized Paul Henry-Thornapple Trail, and related parks, preserves, and additional recreational amenities. The Gilmore Car Museum, Gun Lake, Yankee Springs Recreation Area, Pierce Cedar Creek Institute, and the Barry Expo Center round out the areas major attractions.

The County provides a full range of public services with a combined budget of \$67 million. These services include legislative, judicial, public works, public safety, health, welfare, cultural, recreation, transportation, public improvements, and general administration. Barry County has earned an AA+ bond rating and ranks as one of the best managed counties in the State.

Barry County is composed of people committed to its heritage, where local values such as farming, natural resource preservation, rural landscapes, supportive philanthropy, and civic traditions predominate. The culture is proactive, positive, and practical. The cost of living and housing is reasonable. New professionals and their families truly love living in Barry County. "Wonderful" is the word most often used to describe living in Barry County.

This is an excellent opportunity for an experienced professional looking to make a difference who is interested in public service first and furthering special political interests last. The County Commission stands ready to support the County's new administrator in achieving a long and successful tenure.





SCHOOLS, RECREATION & QUALITY OF LIFE

Barry County is composed of affordable and welcoming communities with a high quality of life, including outstanding natural features and multiple recreation opportunities such as inland lakes, game areas, extensive non-motorized trails, and golfing. Downtowns provide opportunities to engage in community activities and host a variety of live music weekly. Barry County is dotted with small towns filled with hard working, family oriented citizens which offer a variety of lifestyle choices at a slower pace, with low crime rates. You will know your neighbors and find out first-hand that no one is just a number in Barry County.

Multiple school choices exist – many of which have facilities that are recognized as top of their class. Both public and parochial school systems provide quality instruction and low pupil-to-teacher ratios. Teachers get to know and actively engage with their students. You can count on their support and mentoring -- whether for college preparation or overall life preparation. Opportunities to meaningfully participate in the schools are prevalent. School millages are generally approved and investments in performing arts and athletics alike are made.

Non-profit and governmental leaders have boundless energy to make Barry County the best it can be as a place to thrive. The community hospital is affiliated with those in the large nearby urban centers and provides first-rate general health care along with specialized services, including cardiology and oncology care.

If interested in learning venues, the nearby Gilmore Car Museum is a must-see venue. The Gilmore Car Museum is North America's largest auto museum and is known as the ultimate automotive experience. The museum houses 400 vintage and collector vehicles and motorcycles on a historic, 90-acre campus. The museum is part of the Motor Cities National Heritage

Area. The Kalamazoo Air Zoo is less than an hour away and features significant World War II stories through 1940s aircraft displays ranging from the Guadalcanal campaign, WASPs, black fighter pilots, to the Doolittle Raid, as well as the cold war/jet age, and space. Amusement park-style rides send children's imaginations soaring in the Flight Innovation Center.

Due to its abundance of inland lakes and waterways, Barry County features a high number of lakefront residential opportunities. Barry County is a growing magnet for residential growth from nearby urban centers.

Residents are pleased that no interstates crisscross the County, which is viewed as a major quality of life feature. Work/life balance is important across the board. The existing County Administrator was able to perform well in his position, be active in the community, and participate fully in family life for three decades.

Opportunities to get outside and hike, road and mountain bike, golf, fish, hunt, shoot recreationally, and boat are nearly endless. You can explore hiking in Yankee Springs Nature Park (5,200 acres of protected open space with cabins for rent). The 4,800 mile North County Trail crosses Barry County, the Chief Noonday Trail Recreational Heritage Route extends the length of Barry County, and the Paul Henry-Thornapple Trail will soon cross the county. [See Interactive Trail Map \(barrycounty.org\)](http://barrycounty.org).

Given the multitude of other outdoor activities, along with convenient transportation, quality schools, safe communities, and friendly people, Barry County creates the backdrop for a great life. In Barry County you can succeed and personally experience their motto to "live better." See video: [Why Barry County](#)

BARRY COUNTY ECONOMY

Barry County has a strong and diverse economic and manufacturing base. There are multiple employment opportunities across many different sectors. Barry County features a prominent farming industry, with 42% of its land currently used for agriculture. Barry County is actively recruiting green businesses.

The county is easily accessible to the Grand Rapids Gerald R. Ford International Airport and the runways of the Kalamazoo/Battle Creek International Airport. Four major population and business centers with a total combined 1.3 million people are just a half hour away.

Barry County's Master Plan is forward thinking. The main concentration of the plan is on civility and cooperation. Because of its location, the County faces two competing pressures. On one hand, the County is home to lakes, woodlands, and high quality farmland. These irreplaceable natural assets give Barry County a strong tradition of preservation in its planning and zoning policies. On the other hand, the County is part of the fast-growing West Michigan region, with metropolitan areas in four different directions creating intense growth pressure and rising housing costs. [Barry County Master Plan](#)

Hundreds of small and long-term businesses, clean industry, and multiple farms and agricultural entities predominate and provide Barry County's economic foundation. The region's pro-business environment, motivated labor pool, and affordable wage rates are key attractors for employers. The workforce is known for their work ethic and dedication to solid, innovative, and excellent outcomes. For example, Bradford White produces hot water heaters and supports 1500 plus living wage jobs. Other key industries include Flex Fab that markets to the automotive and aerospace industry and the nationally-known Hastings Mutual Insurance Company-- a pillar of Hastings since 1890. Barry County's downtowns are strong and vibrant and filled with unique retailers like "The General Store" and "Alfresco" in Hastings and dozens of excellent restaurants and brew pubs. With a current unemployment rate of 3.7%, there is an employment opportunity for each person in Barry County.

Other Barry County economic development activities include:

- Corridor studies
- Housing Studies
- Targeted industry and business analyses
- Broadband connections
- Creating a "Food Hall" for \$1.5 million, inclusive of 144 apartments including a Montessori School
- Supporting an intergovernmental leaders' task force to retain and train students for workforce skills
- A revolving loan program for new affordable homes spearheaded by the community foundation



COUNTY RECOGNITIONS & DISTINCTIONS

Barry County is one of only seven counties in the state with an AA+ rating from Standard & Poor's. Annual audits for the County continue to win recognition. The County's bond rating and pension system is the envy of others.

Barry County's judicial system is known to be highly functioning and has no backlog of cases. Barry County was the first to figure out how to have a safe jury trial during COVID. The Barry County Court Administrator won best Administrator of the Year. The longest serving judge in Barry County served as state president for the 104 probate judge association. Barry County's roads are routinely found to have the best Paser ratings in the State. Planning and Zoning wins national awards for their planning. Hastings is the County Seat and was ranked one of the best one hundred small towns in America. The County is rich with philanthropy. The Airport Commission received generous donations and lengthened the runways twice and new parks and programs are routinely created with philanthropic support, including endowments for operating expenses.



ORGANIZATION, BUDGET & MASTER PLAN

Barry County is fiscally strong and resource rich. The unrestricted unallocated reserve is 15%. The County itself provides a full range of public services with a combined budget of \$67 million. These services include legislative, judicial, public works, public safety, health, welfare, cultural, recreation, transportation, public improvements, and general administration.

The County Board is elected on a partisan basis every two years, yet is moving to four year terms in the current election cycle based on new Michigan statute. The County seat is in the City of Hastings. The County is governed by the Board of Commissioners, consisting of 8 members, all of whom ran on the Republican ticket. The other six elected officers of the County are elected on a partisan basis serving four-year terms. These other elected officials include the Sheriff, County Clerk, Treasurer, Drain Commissioner, Prosecuting Attorney, and Register of Deeds.

The County Board is responsible for establishing policies, adopting the annual budget, appointing board and commission members, and hiring the County Administrator and Corporation Counsel. The Chair is selected by the Board. The County is comprised of sixteen (16) townships, four (4) villages, and 1 city. The County provides planning & zoning for 11 townships and 2 villages. The county government provides a broad range of programs and services including: the jail and county law enforcement, the major local courts, public transportation, services to the aging, Central Dispatch/E-911, water management resources, recording of property records, and vital records, administering public health regulations, mental health services and participates with the state in the provision of social services. The county board of commissioners approves the annual budget.

The County Administrator reports directly to the Board of Commissioners, serves as the Chief Administrative Officer of the County, and carries out directives and implements policies of the Board related to the administration of the County. The County Administrator also provides administrative support to the Board and departments, manages appointed department managers, and serves as liaison between department managers and the Board of Commissioners. The County Administrator provides oversight over the appointed leadership team responsible specifically for Planning & Zoning, Information Technology/Geographic Information Services, Equalization, Building & Grounds, Animal Shelter, CDBG Housing, Emergency Management, Medical Examiner and Veterans' Affairs. The position is at-will.

The County Administrator supervises the actions of all appointed department heads to provide the best possible service to the residents of Barry County. The Deputy County Administrator reports directly to the County Administrator. There are currently no intergovernmental issues or barriers. [View Job Description](#)

BY THE NUMBERS

Number of Barry County Employees: 285

Population: 63,554 (2024)

Employer Establishments: 1,307

Recreational Facilities

Parks, Preserves, Public Land & Campground Areas: 40

Lakes: 260

Trail Systems: 3

Canoe Liveries: 3

Golf Courses: 6

Single Family Home ownership rate: 84%

Income, Median Household: \$74,059

Median Home Value: \$265,000

Backgrounds:

95% White

1% Black or African American,

4% Hispanic or Latino

Bachelor's Degree: 24%

Poverty: 8.5%

The County's mission statement captures the aspirations of the community:

Barry County protects its citizens' right to a safe, healthy and prosperous community through responsible county leadership.

The recently adopted, award-winning Master Plan for Barry County was created by McKenna and Associates and lays out a vision through 2040 for Barry County. The results are best summarized in three words: Preserve, Enhance, and Grow.

[Barry County Master Plan](#)

UPCOMING MAJOR DUTIES, MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

In summary, Barry County has high expectations and innovation is commonplace in Barry County. The next County Administrator will need to be an enthusiastic and hardworking public official who is both a strong leader and a motivator who is willing to make the hard and controversial decisions on several fronts to move the County forward (financial planning, technology enhancements, and succession planning are key examples). The County Administrator also serves as head of human resources and Chief Financial Officer.

The next Administrator needs to be a patient and effective coordinator to maximize the best outcomes and to enable viable policy ideas to be explored. Although the budget is typically one of the largest responsibilities, the new County Administrator will need to provide overall program recommendations to the Board. Another significant challenge is to orient, mentor, and support new personnel with retirements happening soon and given the new expected elected leadership. The next County Administrator will need to assist the Board and Administration with coordinating and completing the following priorities and opportunities:

Facilities and Real Estate:

- The jail renovation is a \$40 million project. Create a vision and funding that is not overbearing
- Complete the vision for the new Commission on Aging building
- Coordinate and resolve land ownership questions with location of the jail, the Friend of the Court, and the Commission on Aging
- Manage new trail investment associated with the Paul Henry-Thornapple Trail and the parks program

Finances

- Keep the County finances in the black; the annual budgets are traditionally tight, and the County Commission and elected officials are financially conservative. Consider a zero-based budgeting process
- Address long-term budget planning for Barry County government, especially related to wage rates.
- Implement new financial software for the county
- Experimenting with TIF's and brownfields for assisting growth
- Consider structural improvements associated with Finance and Human Resource functions

Retention, Recruitment, Succession Planning, and Chief Administrative Leadership

- Create a plan for succession and personnel policy updates, a new financial management system, and strengthen the human resource systems overall
- Orient, train, and mentor the new Treasurer, new County Clerk, and new Register of Deeds, as well as the new Director of Planning and Zoning when retirement occurs

- Anticipate Planning and Zoning staff retention or recruitment; 11 of 16 townships are under the County's jurisdiction
- Continue efforts to inform, empower, and enable the Courts to adapt to changing state requirements and service needs without detriment to remainder of organization

Economic Development

- Enable and continue coordination and cooperation with economic development tools and non-profit and intergovernmental partners to retain current business and to grow Barry County sustainably.
- Enable and continue planning and support for County staff, non-profits and intergovernmental agencies to meet the housing challenges and needs
- Support efforts to retain and attract young people

Other

- Facilitate and direct long-term, strategic planning to maintain and continuously improve economic development and services provided to the community.
- Enable long term thinking about technology adoption.
- Make large changes slowly and avoid political whiplash
- Enable and enhance departmental autonomy

IDEAL CANDIDATE ATTRIBUTES

The ideal candidate will understand the complexity of county finance and intergovernmental relationships and be able to effectively coordinate and leverage financial and innovative outcomes. Although the Commission functions very collegially, multiple pressures need to be astutely managed and communicated from a variety of political, ad hoc, or special interest groups on a regular basis. Impartiality is essential and will be enthusiastically supported by the County Commission to protect the Administrator's ability to serve the greater good and to ensure freedom of the elected commission and officials to make independent policy judgments. It is critical that the County Administrator set their own personal political beliefs aside. A thoughtful and comprehensive governance system that is appropriately responsive to multiple points of view and practical realities is needed to channel these working relationships proactively and positively.

Barry County is specifically looking for an Administrator who will be:

- A professional, strong, and conservative leader that communicates directly and honestly with integrity and who is realistic in assessing needs and handling expectations
- Unflappable, flexible, patient, well spoken, diplomatic, level-headed, calm, non-authoritative, good listener, trustworthy and can work constructively behind the scenes
- Able to recommend and administer a conservative budget with creativity, innovative, proactive and intergovernmental financial skills
- A servant leader who deeply understands and embodies that the Administrator's office exists to serve the other departments and to enhance other department's productivity
- A defender of constructive board relations to coordinate outcomes and enhance roles for what is best for Barry County
- Knowledgeable about Michigan county government, knows the County's finances and state elected boards, and officials and can demonstrate a quick learning aptitude as changes arise
- Transparent and share information equally, uniformly, and in a complete and timely manner
- Collaborative with the multiple elected officials, townships, villages, cities, and other institutional entities within the County
- A leader who can mentor staff and other officials and orient new elected officials
- Able to negotiate and resolve sensitive and controversial issues relevant to the job requirements with facts
- Consistent, responsive, and accurate, while setting appropriate boundaries for themselves and staff
- Engaged at both the state and local level on relevant subjects and committees and boards that enhance county service outcomes
- Capable of a degree of charm
- Able to retain, recruit, and support talented employees while employing a full range of recognition and incentive tools
- Able to keep personal feelings to themselves and be neither a "yes" or "no" person
- A Parliamentarian who can be relied upon to explain the Michigan Open Meetings Act and Roberts Rules of Order



SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE REQUIREMENTS

Education:

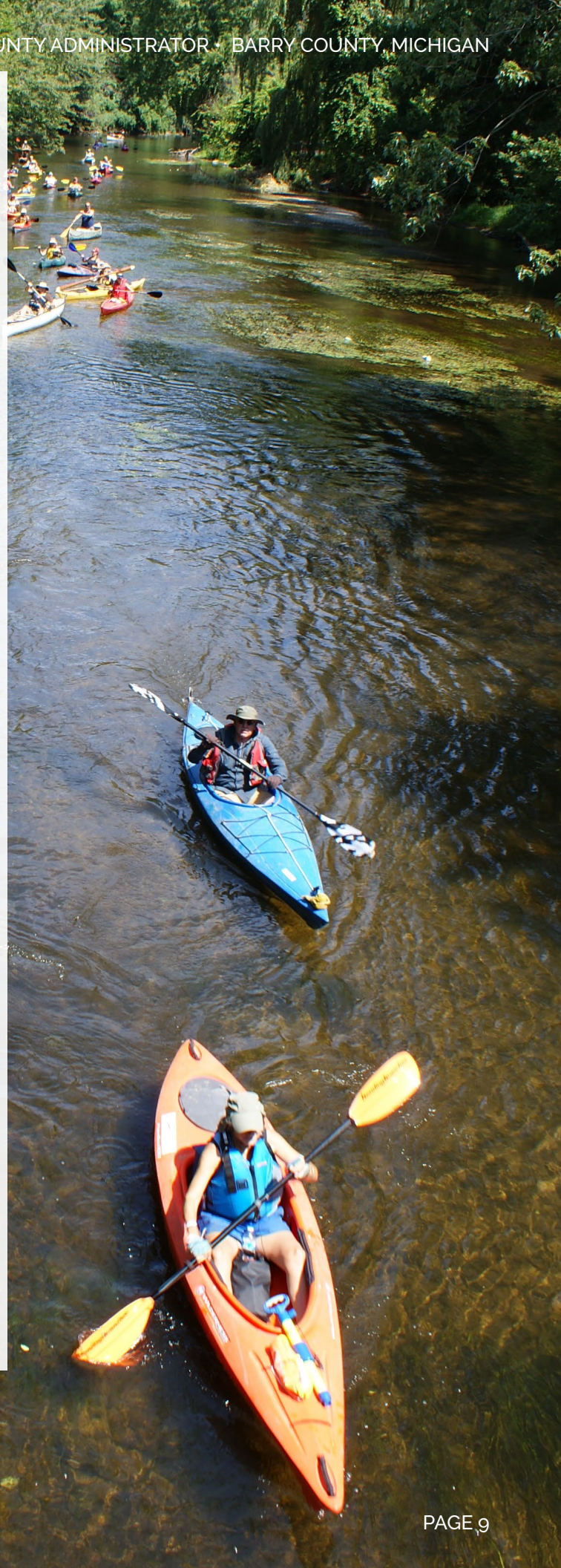
- Bachelor's degree
- Graduate degree in Business, Public Administration, Finance, Law, or a related field

Experience:

- Five (5) years of administrative/supervisory experience in local government with responsibility for budgeting, personnel, purchasing, and human resources
- Knowledge of
 - Principles and practices of public finance, including principles of fund accounting
 - Principles and practices of budget development and control
 - Principles and practices of public administration
 - Management and supervisory principles and practices
 - Principles and practices of media relations and presentation skills
 - Legal terminology and court procedures
 - Professional experience working with a policymaking board
 - Demonstrated commitment to quality improvement and consensus building
 - Ability to strategically plan and implement complex and creative operational programs
 - Demonstrated integrity of, and accountability for, services provided by the County
 - Supervisory experience using collaborative management principles

Preferences:

- Preference to candidates with experience as a County Administrator, Deputy County Administrator, City Manager, or an Assistant City Manager in a comparably sized or larger organization
- Residency is not required yet strongly preferred



COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

The compensation range for the position is \$125,000 - \$160,000, negotiable DOQ/E. Barry County also offers a [generous benefit package](#).

APPLY TODAY!

[Click here](#) and load résumé, cover letter, and contact information for five professional references (references will not be contacted until interview stage). For questions, contact Ryan Cotton at 847-380-3240, Ext. 114. Apply now since applicants will be screened continuously and applications will be accepted until the position is filled. Recruiter virtual meetings will begin on July 1st.

SAVE THESE DATES

Interviews with the County Commission will be conducted on Friday, July 19th (first interviews) and Tuesday, July 23rd (second interviews). Please save these dates. The expected start date is the end of August. Equal Opportunity/ADA Employer. [Welcome to Barry County, Michigan](#)

