Employment Opportunity

County Administrator

Ogemaw County
Ogemaw County is located in the mid-section of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan, with abundant small lakes and outdoor recreation opportunities. The county is seeking an experienced leader/facilitator to move the organization forward and build trust between all levels of government as its first chief administrative officer.

In the 1930s, anthropologists working in the area uncovered three Native American mound formations. These and other mounds discovered in Ogemaw County confirm that ancient mound dwellers were inhabitants of the area long before Christopher Columbus arrived in the Americas. The county was originally created by the Michigan Legislature in 1840 but was absorbed into a neighboring county before being finally organized in 1875. The county’s name is an Anglicization of the word ogimaa, meaning chief.

Ogemaw County has a history of being a melting pot of people who have called the area home for generations; those who have retired and moved to the area to enjoy the natural beauty and all the area offers; and a large number who come to the area for shorter periods of time to enjoy the many recreational opportunities.

With a population which swells in the summer months, the area has managed to keep its small town feel and agricultural roots. The county has many cottages and second homes primarily owned by residents of the more populated southern tier of Michigan. Interstate 75 passes through the county and provides easy access to the area from Metro Detroit communities and the Tri-Cities of Saginaw, Midland, and Bay City.

Year-round recreational and sporting activities (e.g. camping, fishing, hunting, and golf) are readily accessible and support a thriving tourist industry in the county. Off-road vehicle and non-motorized trail systems traverse the area and offer additional outdoor activity options. State parks and campgrounds located in the county are very popular destinations for visitors. The Great Lake shoreline of Lake Huron is less than an hour drive to the east.

Ogemaw County is blessed with many assets. It has always drawn people to the area with its natural beauty and abundant natural resources. After lumbering played out, farming, oil, and then manufacturing became economic drivers. These industries remain in the county, but tourism, retail, and medical services are now dominant in the private economy.

The new county administrator will function as the chief financial officer within the organization. The successful candidate will possess excellent skills in all aspects of governmental budgeting, procurement, and resource allocation. Historically, the elected county clerk has fulfilled some of the administrator’s duties in addition to those of the clerk’s office. The current county clerk is not expected to run for re-election in November 2020.

The county offers a competitive package of benefits and has set the starting salary range for the new administrator at $65,000 to $80,000.
Ogemaw County is located on the southeastern edge of what is locally called “Northern Michigan.” The county covers 575 square miles including 11 square miles of water surface. Using the 2010 U.S. Census population figures, the population density of the county is roughly 38.5 people per square mile. The county consists of 14 townships, one village, and two cities. The county seat and offices are in the City of West Branch.

Residents and visitors to the county feel very safe and enjoy low crime rates. The area offers excellent public and private schools for its student population. All areas of the county provide a small town feel in rural settings. Many residents were once vacationers and second home owners who ended up retiring in the area to enjoy the low cost of living and high quality of life in Ogemaw County.

The landscape of the county offers areas of rolling hills, forest land, rivers and streams, and small lakes to enjoy in all four seasons. The variation in climate and four distinct seasons makes the region desirable for water activities, biking, and other summer sports as well as snowmobiling, cross country skiing, and snowshoeing in the winter. Hunting and fishing opportunities are plentiful. These activities draw tourists and visitors to the area, accounting for much of the seasonal fluctuations in population in the county. Total annual snowfall is almost 50 inches.

A community airport near West Branch serves private airplanes. The airport has a lighted, 5,000-foot asphalt runway and offers fuel, hangars, and a new terminal building. Bus service provided by Ogemaw Public Transit Organization serves the area with a demand/response for the county. Recently opened MidMichigan Medical Center - West Branch, is a modern 88 licensed-bed acute care facility. It is a major employer in the area with 350 employees. Other major commercial activities in the county include agriculture, oil and gas production, retail shops, and tourist-related businesses.

Area residents enjoy parades, an art fair, farm markets, historical museum, a nature park, and a variety of annual events which happen throughout the county. The Fair Grounds provides the venue for a week long County Fair and West Branch offers a summer-long Music in the Park Series.
Ogemaw County government serves 21,699 (2010 Census) residents and provides a wide range of services. Departments include: clerk, treasurer, building, sheriff, corrections, probation and parole, equalization, prosecutor's office, courts, information technology, housing commission, parks and recreation, buildings and grounds, veterans, transit, dispatch/911, and zoning. Current workforce includes 94 full-time and 35 part-time employees. Its taxable value is approximately $880 million in 2019.

The general operating fund of the county for 2019 was approximately $9 million and the total of all funds was approximately $12 million. October 1 is the start of the county’s fiscal year.

Policy and direction are set by an elected Board of Commissioners. The five-member board is comprised of district representatives and exercises budgetary approval and legislative authority. Members serve two-year terms; partisan elections are held in even years. Three of the five commissioners were newly elected in November 2018.

The board will appoint the new county administrator who will serve as the chief administrative officer. All appointed department directors will report to the administrator. The county government also houses a judicial branch (circuit, district, and probate courts). The judges, prosecuting attorney, sheriff, clerk, treasurer, register of deeds, and drain commissioner as well as county road commissioners are all elected at-large.

Ogemaw County has three joint ventures which provide services to its residents. The health department and mental health services agency provide services to a multi-county area. In addition, the West Branch Community Airport is jointly operated by several local governmental units including the county. A County Housing Commission has provided public housing options since it was established in 1983.
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR POSITION

Under the direction and oversight of the Ogemaw County Board of Commissioners as a body, the county administrator will serve as the chief administrative and budget officer of the county and perform a wide range of administrative activities that serve to support effective and efficient county government operations; advise and assist the board in planning, policy, and operational matters; and direct and coordinate the administration of county government in accordance with policies and directives issued by the board as a whole, pursuant to all applicable state and federal laws and regulations. The position will supervise all appointed department heads and will be involved in most personnel and labor relations matters.

Employees will look to the administrator to assume the role of assisting and educating elected board members in the use of data, benchmarking, and well-constructed recommendations upon which to base decisions and set direction. To support employees as well as appointed and elected department heads, the new administrator will be fair, reasonable, and able to deal with the diverse needs, wants, and politics that are part and parcel of county government. He or she must be a consensus builder who takes input from all corners, builds bridges between all the players, and can achieve agreement around a common direction and the coordinated roles and responsibilities of all the partners.

The incoming county administrator will find the following challenges and opportunities awaiting their attention in Ogemaw County, in no particular order:

OPPORTUNITIES

- Pursue grant opportunities
- Economic development and support for four Downtown Development Districts
- Create a vision and long range plan
- Multi-year budget development and finalizing current year budget
- Bring county policies and procedures up to date
- Several elected department heads are likely to not seek re-election in November along with the possibility of new commissioners
- Educate Board of Commissioners on each department’s role and responsibilities
- Ability to chart the course as the first person to hold the position

CHALLENGES

- County finances
- Time to research and write grants
- Public perception of county government and lack of trust throughout the organization and county
- Three first-term board members
- Promotion of possible new millage proposals
- Retention of local talent and youth
- Outdated policies and procedures
- Community college relocating local branch
- Finalizing current year budget and balancing future budgets
- Upkeep of buildings/facilities/equipment
- Hiring and retaining employees
- Working with different and diverse township governments
- Working with the various county departments
THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The county is seeking motivated and experienced local government administrators and will only consider applicants qualified who possess the following knowledge and experience:

- **Required:** Bachelor’s degree in public administration or related field
- **And:** Minimum three years local government management experience
- **With:** Solid familiarity with public accounting, budgeting, and financial controls

Any applicant who moves to the level of candidate will have highly developed collaborative and facilitation skills with a natural affinity for creating and maintaining successful relationships and the ability to build bridges between other entities and individuals. Among the desired skills to be illustrated in a resume and letter of introduction are these:

- Strong accounting, finance, and budget skills and experience in the public sector
- Human resources management, labor relations, and personnel functions including collective bargaining
- Highly developed communication talent; can serve as the face of the county in writing, interpersonally, and as a presenter; can create and deliver the county’s message to the media and public
- Grant writing and administration
- General knowledge of information technology
- Asset management
- Demonstrated leadership ability
- Good business skills
- Experience and comfort in a rural setting

The new county administrator will be a leader and a partner using his or her drive and dedication to move the county and its partners forward. He or she should be:

- Friendly and cooperative
- Honest and positive
- Pro-active and demonstrate integrity in interactions
- Diplomatic and apolitical in decision making
- Sense of humor
- Honest, even if it’s not what others want to hear
- Confident and have the backbone to support recommendations
- Good communicator, able to explain budget/finance information
- Not afraid to deliver “bad” news to board or to disagree
- Fair
- Visionary, sees the big picture
- A leader who can also manage well
- Bridge-builder between staff and board
- Willing to invest in the community long-term
- Thick-skinned with strong backbone
- Personable, people person
- Consensus builder
- Accountable
- Transparent
APPLICATION PROCESS

APPLY BY CLOSE OF BUSINESS February 28, 2020

Please submit resume, cover letter, consent form, and five professional references to:

Email:
execsearch@mml.org, Subject Line: Ogemaw County Search

-OR-

Mail:
Michigan Municipal League,
ATTN: Ogemaw County Search
1675 Green Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48105

Questions can be directed to MML Executive Recruiter Jerry Richards at jrichards@mml.org or (517) 719-7807.

Candidates desiring confidentiality of their interest, as allowed for and provided by Michigan law, must indicate such in a separate subject line above the body of the cover letter.

This search is conducted by an Equal Opportunity Employer.