



November 14, 2018

Memo to: Board of Commissioners

From: George Wood, Interim County Manager *GW*

Re: Recommendation on a Proposed Personnel Position Classification and Pay Plan

As you know, the County entered into a contract with Evergreen Solutions, LLC in January, 2018 to conduct a personnel classification and pay study for all Buncombe County employees. We had the consultant make a presentation to you in August on the methodology used to perform the study.

Enclosed is a copy of the full study, which details the counties and cities in North Carolina that were used as benchmarks to compare salary and wage levels. Please note that Mission Health, MAHEC, and UNC-A were also included. The complete list is on Page 4-2.

The study of comparable governments and the other three showed that at the minimum (beginning step) of the grades, Buncombe County salaries and wages averaged 9% higher. Please note that this comparison was made after adjusting for the relative cost of living in each jurisdiction. *So, the higher cost of living in Buncombe County already has been factored in.*

The mid-point for salaries and wages averaged 5.1% higher; and the maximum point for them averaged 2.7% higher than the comparable entities.

While that is on average, there are some specific positions that were determined to be lower than the market, and the Plan calls for them to be taken to a higher grade. There are 92 employees in this category, and the resulting cost to the County will be \$117,450.

The study recommends to keep the Plan current with changing market conditions, the Human Resources Department conduct small-scale salary surveys as needed for hard to fill positions, or those experiencing above average turnover. This is standard practice.

They then recommend that you conduct a new pay study every 3-5 years. In my experience, every five years is sufficient, if you conduct the small-scale surveys recommended above. This is important, as these pay studies cost nearly \$75,000.

The recommendation is to place every employee within the appropriate grade, at least 4.5% higher than the minimum (beginning) point. The reason is that newly hired employees and those that are promoted to new positions are eligible for up to a 4.5% increase when they successfully complete a six-month probationary period. You do not want them making more money than current employees.

As part of the classification and pay study, Evergreen has developed new job (position) descriptions. Customary practice is to adopt those administratively, so the Board of Commissioners does not have to approve minor changes to them. However, to assure that the Plan remains intact, the adopting resolution calls for any job description changes sought by a department head to be approved by both the Human Resources Director and the County Manager.

In order to maintain the Plan's integrity, no one can change a position title, or the assigned grade, or add a new position to the Plan, without a written resolution approved by the Board of Commissioners. That assures that you as the governing body know any changes beforehand, and have approved them. For example, if staff requested a change in assigned grade for a position from Grade 75 to Grade 77, you should be given a cover memo explaining the reason, and a resolution for adoption by you that specifically authorizes the grade change. This is an internal control mechanism that needs to be followed. The adopting resolution contains this provision.

The resolution also calls for the HR Director to maintain a current copy of the Plan, and copies of all resolutions where changes have been authorized. This is standard practice as well.

Finally, the study and our review of it by the Interim HR Director and team, has taken longer than expected as we sent it back to our department heads for one additional review with the Interim HR Director. Given that, I am recommending, and the adopting resolution calls for any pay adjustments to be made retroactive to July 1, 2018, the beginning of the fiscal year. That way, no employee will have been adversely affected by the delay in adoption.

This Plan allows the flexibility by using minimum and maximum points on a pay grade to allow either annual Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) and/or merit increases based on job performance evaluations. The County currently does not use performance evaluations in all our departments. I highly recommend that your new HR Director develop a performance evaluation system as soon as possible. In the meantime, you would need to continue to use COLAs. The COLAs can either adjust the minimum, mid-point, and maximums on each pay grade, or alternatively they can be used to move people further along within the grade. This flexibility would allow you to give different COLA percentages to different classifications, such as your lower paid personnel. This is something some of you have mentioned.

Please call me if you have any questions or comments on this matter.



Classification and Compensation Study - Impacted Employees by Classification

Position Classification	Total Positions in Classification	# Impacted Employee per Classification
Accountant	3	1
Administrative Support Specialist I	9	2
Administrative Support Specialist II	13	4
Civil Process Supervisor	2	1
Deputy Fire Marshal	1	1
Desktop Support Specialist I	2	2
Detective	28	1
EMT - Advanced	17	1
EMS Telecommunications Supervisor	2	1
EMT - Paramedic	54	8
Executive Assistant	3	1
Fleet Manager	1	1
GIS Technician I	2	2
Human Services Program Consultant	1	1
Library Associate	7	1
Library Specialist	12	11
Library Substitute	26	26
Maintenance Tech I	12	3
Maintenance Tech II	11	1
Patrol Deputy	92	1
Payroll Supervisor	1	1
Personal Property Manager - Sup	1	1
Physician III-A	1	1
Pre-Trial Release Coordinator	8	4
Procurement Manager	1	1
Senior Accounting Technician	14	2
Senior Citizens Affairs	1	1
Sergeant Jail Shift Supervisor	6	3
Soil Conservationist	3	2
Tax Clerk	8	2
Telecommunicator	14	2
Video Technician	1	1
Website Administrator I	1	1

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