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# ARTICLE I

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## ORGANIZATION OF PERSONNEL SYSTEM

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NORTHAMPTON COUNTY  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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# ARTICLE I: ORGANIZATION OF PERSONNEL SYSTEM

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## Section 1. Purpose

The purpose of this personnel policy is to establish a human resources system that will promote a fair and effective means of employee recruitment and selection, develop and maintain an efficient and responsible workforce, and provide the means for removal of unsatisfactory employees.

This personnel policy is established under the authority of Chapter 153A, Article 5 and, for those employees subject to the STATE HUMAN RESOURCES ACT, Chapter 126 of the General Statutes of North Carolina.

The Northampton County Personnel Policies Manual contains standards relevant to employment within Northampton County Local Government. Employees are required to read and become familiar with and adhere to the contents of the Personnel Policies Manual.

All employees are expected to remain informed and compliant with current County policies and procedures. An employee's failure to remain knowledgeable of and compliant with County policies and procedures may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of his/her employment. Accordingly, employees should refer to the Manual as frequently as needed to remain compliant with the content as stated.

An employee's need for further clarification or information about the standards should be addressed by consulting with their Department Head and/or the County's Human Resources Director.

The policies and procedures in this Manual are designed to serve as guidelines for management action. They are **not** intended to create any contract or binding agreement between the County and any employee. All policies and procedures outlined in this Manual are subject to change or modification at the County's discretion at any time that particular circumstances warrant. No provision or portion of the Manual constitutes an implied or expressed contract, guarantee or assurance of employment or any right to an employment-related benefit or procedure.

The County Board of Commissioners reserve the right to change, modify, eliminate or deviate from any policy or procedure in this Manual at any time by appropriately implementing necessary revisions, directives or amendments. The policies herein shall be reviewed on an annual basis (*see Article XI*).

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## Section 2. Introduction

The governing body for Northampton County Local Government is the Board of County Commissioners, which is comprised of five (5) members within the County. The Board of Commissioners holds regularly scheduled meetings, as well as special meetings, all of which are open to the public, unless otherwise specified.

## Section 3. Coverage

All employees in the County's service, including employees of the Office of the Sheriff and the Register of Deeds, are subject to this personnel policy, *except* as provided in this section.

Elected officials, County Attorney, members of advisory boards and special boards and commissions, consultants, volunteers, and contract employees are *exempt* from all provisions of this personnel policy, *except* as specifically designated.

The following employees are covered only by the listed policies and sections:

1. Employees governed by the STATE HUMAN RESOURCES ACT shall be subject to all policies *except* Article II: The Position Classification Plan.
2. Employees of the Office of the Sheriff and the Register of Deeds shall be subject to all policies *except* Article VIII: Separation, Disciplinary Action & Reinstatement and Article IX: Grievance Procedures and Appeal Policies.

## Section 4. Definitions

**Adverse Action.** An involuntary demotion, an involuntary reduction in pay, a suspension without pay, a layoff or a dismissal.

**Aggregate Service.** Aggregate service for *leave accrual* purposes refers to total period of countable service as an employee of Northampton County, inclusive of any time allowed as transfer credit from another jurisdiction for the purpose of determining entitlement to the particular benefit in question. Aggregate service for *retirement* purposes refers to total length of service under which the employee pays retirement contributions into the North Carolina State/Local Government Employees Retirement System.

**Allocation.** The assignment of a position to an appropriate salary range depends upon the assigned duties and responsibilities of the position.

**Anniversary Date.** The employee's date of employment with Northampton County service in a permanent position.

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**Applicant.** One who places himself or herself in competition for a vacant position by virtue of completing and submitting an application for employment, regardless of employment status.

**Appointing Authority.** Any board or position with legal or delegated authority for making hiring decisions.

**Catastrophic Illness.** Any illness that requires lengthy hospitalization, extremely expensive therapies, or other care that would deplete a family's financial resources.

**Class.** Positions or groups of positions having similar duties and responsibilities requiring similar qualifications, which can be properly designated by one (1) title indicative of the nature of work performed, and which are assigned the same salary grade.

**Classification Plan.** A formal plan of structuring and ranking groups of classifications.

**Complaint.** A claim or complaint alleging an event or condition which affects the circumstances under which an employee works, allegedly caused by misinterpretation, unfair application or lack of established policy pertaining to employment conditions. A complaint may involve allegations of safety or health hazards, unsatisfactory physical facilities, surroundings, materials or equipment, unfair supervisory or disciplinary practices, unreasonable work quotas or any other inequity relating to conditions of employment subject to the control of the County.

**Cost-of-living Increase.** An annual adjustment that may be made by the Board of County Commissioners to all pay ranges, typically effective on July 1, the beginning of a new fiscal year. Cost of living increases are also applied to employees paid on an hourly rate.

**Creditable Service.** Means years of service while actively participating in the North Carolina Retirement System.

**Demotion.** The movement of an employee to a position or classification having a lower salary range and lesser responsibility than the position or the classification from which the reassignment is made due to disciplinary action. (See Article VIII – Section 5)

**Department Head.** The highest level of supervision or top administrative official of a department of County government.

**Employees Subject to the STATE HUMAN RESOURCES ACT.** An employee of the Department of Social Services, the Department of Health or the Office of Emergency Management, receiving federal grant-in-aid funds and subject to the provisions of the STATE HUMAN RESOURCES ACT, North Carolina General Statute 126.

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**Exempt Employee.** Full and part-time employees who have been classified as “Exempt” from the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act are paid for the accomplishment of assigned accountabilities, rather than being paid for the number of hours worked in a work period. These include executive, administrative and professional staff of the County.

**Full-Time Employee.**

1. Permanent: An employee appointed to a permanently established position, who is regularly scheduled to work the standard work period established by the County and is designated by the Board of County Commissioners as regular full-time.
2. Temporary: An employee who is regularly scheduled to work the standard work period established by the County and is designated by the Board of County Commissioners as a temporary full-time appointment to a temporarily established position or to function in a full-time, permanent position for a temporary period **not** to exceed twelve (12) months.

**General County Employee.** A County employee assigned to a County department **not** subject to the STATE HUMAN RESOURCES ACT.

**Grant Funded Positions.** Positions which are supported wholly or in part by financial grants or other non-county monies. Individuals occupying such positions are appointed for a specified period of time to perform particular services on behalf of the County. Employees may or may **not** be entitled to County benefits, depending on the provisions of the grant.

**Grievance.** A document that may be submitted by an employee as a rebuttal to an adverse action which results in a demotion, suspension without pay, dismissal, reduction in pay, reduction in force or layoff, unlawful workplace harassment, retaliation, alleged discrimination, and/or denial of equal employment opportunity.

**Hiring Rate.** The salary paid to an employee when hired into County service, normally the first step of the salary range.

**Maximum Salary Rate.** The maximum salary authorized by the pay plan for an employee within an assigned salary grade.

**Merit Increase.** An increase in salary above the standard job rate based upon the employee consistently performing the assigned duties in an above average to outstanding fashion.

**Non-Exempt Employee.** Full and part-time employees who have been classified as “Non-Exempt” from the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act and who must be paid for overtime hours worked or given compensatory time off in accordance with the guidelines of this policy. Overtime is paid or compensatory time off is given to non-exempt employees for hours worked in excess of the standard work periods established by the County.

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### **Part-Time Employee.**

1. *Permanent Part-time Employee:* An employee appointed to a permanently established position who is regularly scheduled to work less than the standard work period established by the County, and is designated by the Board of County Commissioners as regular (or permanent) part-time.
2. *Temporary Part-time Employee:* An employee appointed to a temporarily established position, who is regularly scheduled to work less than the standard work period established by the County, and is designated by the Board of County Commissioners as temporary part-time. Employee may also work in a permanently established position for a specified temporary period **not** to exceed twelve (12) months.

**Pay Plan.** A schedule of pay ranges systematized into sequential grades, which consists of multiple steps assigned to any given range.

**Permanent Appointment.** An employee in a permanently established position is expected to be retained on a permanent basis. Permanent appointments follow the satisfactory completion of a probationary and/or trainee appointment.

**Permanent Employee.** An employee who has satisfactorily completed the applicable probationary period of County service and has been approved for permanent status by his/her Department Head and/or County Manager.

**Permanent Position.** A position which has been approved by the Board of Commissioners, in which the duties and responsibilities are required to be fulfilled on a continuous and recurring basis, normally requiring full-time employment of an individual.

**Position.** A group of current duties and responsibilities assigned by competent authority, requiring the full or part-time employment of one (1) person. A position, even though unoccupied by an employee, may still exist.

**Position Classification Plan.** A plan approved by the Board of County Commissioners that assigns classes, positions, to the appropriate pay grade.

**Probationary Employee.** An individual appointed to a permanent position who has served less than the probationary period in the position.

**Probationary Period.** The required period of time an employee serves before obtaining permanent status when entering County service.

**Promotion.** The advancement of an employee to a vacant position or classification having a higher salary range than the position or classification from which the advancement is made.

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**Public Safety Employees.** Northampton County employees working in the Office of Sheriff, Detention Center, Emergency Communications, Emergency Medical Services, Emergency Management, Code Enforcement, and Animal Control officers.

**Range Revision.** One (1) or more salary grades are assigned different minimum and/or maximum salary ranges; or when a classification is assigned a new pay grade based upon labor market issues.

**Reassignment.** The movement of an employee from one position to another existing (vacant and posted) position within the County as a consideration for continual employment.

- **Lateral Reassignment.** A voluntary change in status resulting from assignment of a position to an equal classification level.
- **Lower Classification Reassignment.** A voluntary change in status resulting from assignment of a position to a lower classification level.

**Reclassification.**

The reassignment of an existing position from one (1) class to another based on changes in job duties, difficulty, required skill and responsibility of the work performed.

**Reduction-in-Force.** The abolishment of or reduction of a position or group of positions based upon organizational needs, workloads and funding.

**Salary Grade.** All positions which are sufficiently comparable to warrant one (1) range of pay rates.

**Salary Plan.** A schedule of pay ranges for each class assigned to any given salary range.

**Salary Plan Revision.** The uniform raising and lowering of the salary ranges of every grade within the pay plan.

**Salary Range.** The minimum and maximum salary for a given classification.

**Salary Schedule.** A listing by grade and steps of the entire approved minimum to maximum salary ranges authorized by the Board of County Commissioners for various position classifications within County government.

**Temporary Employee.** An individual appointed to serve in a position for a period of time, typically **not** to exceed twelve (12) months, usually for a specific project or assignment. A temporary employee is **not** subject to participation in benefits programs; however, must meet the qualifications for the position.

**Temporary Position.** A position in which the duties and responsibilities are required to be attended for a specific, short period of time, normally **not** to exceed twelve (12) months, or for a specific project or assignment. A temporary position may be full-time or part-time.

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**Trainee.** An employee appointed to a position in any class for which the County Manager or the Office of State Personnel has authorized “trainee” appointment and who does **not** meet the minimum education and experience requirements for the classification. An individual may **not** be appointed as a trainee if he/she possesses the acceptable training and experience for the regular class and must be appointed to the regular class when he/she gains the acceptable training and experience. A trainee shall be paid at a rate below the minimum of the regular class.

**Work Against Appointment.** When qualified applicants who meet education and experience requirements are unavailable, and there is no trainee provision for the classification of the vacancy, the appointing authority may appoint an employee to a position below the level of the position for which the applicant applied in a work-against appointment situation. A work-against appointment is for the purpose of allowing the employee to gain the qualifications needed for the desired position through on-the-job experience. The appointee must meet the minimum education and experience standard of the class to which initially appointed.

**Work Week.** The workweek shall be from 12:01 am on Sunday to 12:00 pm on Saturday.

### **Section 5. Merit Principle**

All appointments and promotions shall be made solely on the basis of merit and qualifications. All positions requiring performance of the same duties and fulfillment of the same responsibilities shall be assigned to the same class and the same salary range.

No applicant for County employment or employee shall be deprived of employment opportunities or otherwise adversely affected as an employee because of such individual’s race, color, religion, sex, national origin, political affiliation, marital status, citizenship status, disability, or veteran status, age, non-disqualifying handicap or other legally protected status.

### **Section 6. Responsibility of Board of Commissioners**

The Board of Commissioners shall adopt or provide for rules and regulations or administrative policies relating to personnel policies and other measures which promote the hiring and retention of capable, diligent, and honest employees under the authority of Chapter 153A-94 of the North Carolina General Statutes, and shall confirm appointments when so specified by law.

The Board of Commissioners shall also establish the Classification and Pay Plans. The Board of Commissioners shall prescribe the office hours, workdays and holidays to be observed by the various offices, departments, boards, commissions and agencies of the County.

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Personnel policies become effective when adopted by the Board of County Commissioners, and may be amended, revised or repealed through the same procedure. Revisions in personnel policy are also effective upon approval by the Board, unless otherwise designated.

### **Section 7. Responsibility of County Manager**

The County Manager shall be responsible to the Board of Commissioners for the administration of the County Personnel Program, including the Northampton County Personnel Policies.

The County Manager shall appoint, suspend and dismiss County officers and employees, except those who are elected by the citizens of Northampton County or whose appointment is otherwise provided for by law or those specifically exempt.

The County Manager shall be responsible for the above duties and other functions in accordance with Section 153A-82 of the General Statutes of the State of North Carolina and all other applicable state and federal laws, as well as other relevant portions of the Personnel Policy.

The County Manager shall monitor all personnel administration practices of the County, initiate and recommend revisions of rules governing personnel administration to the Board of Commissioners and present and supervise the classification plan, pay plan, and all other personnel records for County employees.

### **Section 8. Responsibility of the Human Resources Director**

The Human Resources Director shall assist in the preparation and maintenance of the position classification plan and perform such other duties in connection with the County Personnel Program as the County Manager may require.

The duties and responsibilities shall include the interpretation and implementation of personnel policies, establishment and maintenance of records relating to County employees, development and administration of recruitment programs, development of effective personnel administrations within County departments, recommendations in regard to the establishment and/or modification of County personnel functions and the issuance and distribution of administrative directives, interpretations, policies and other personnel materials necessary for the proper functioning and maintenance of procedures in accordance with the Northampton County Personnel Policies.

The Human Resources Director is responsible for the establishment and maintenance of personnel records for County employees in all departments, with the exception of the Department of Social Services and the Health Department. The individual directors are responsible for the original personnel records of employees in their departments, and file copies are maintained in the Human Resources Department.

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### **Section 9. Responsibility of Department Heads**

Department Heads shall be responsible to the County Manager for recommendations and/or decisions for the appointment, suspension and removal of County employees assigned to their departments.

The Department Heads shall be responsible to the County Manager for ensuring that all employees are thoroughly familiar with the provisions of the Northampton County Personnel Policy.

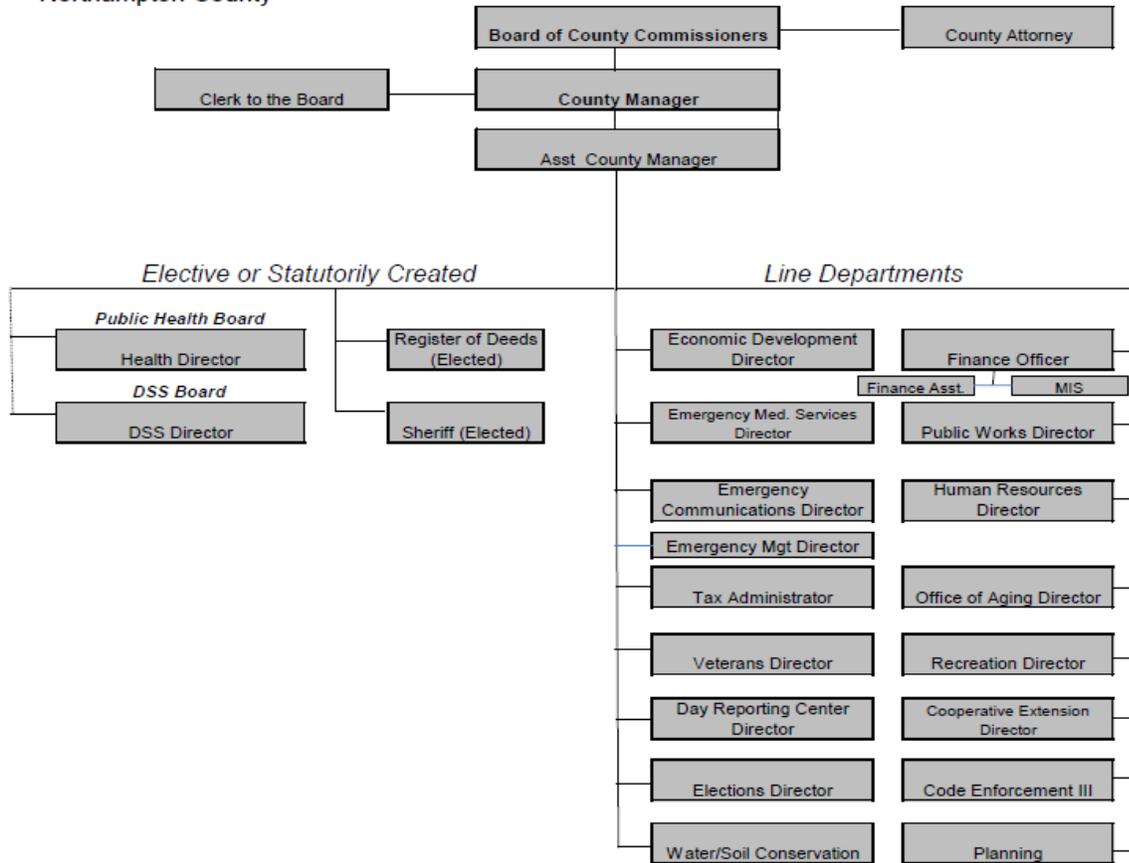
The Health Director, Social Services Director, County Sheriff and the Register of Deeds are accountable for the appointment, suspension and termination of employees in their respective departments.

The Social Services Director and the Health Director are accountable for the maintenance of the official personnel records of employees in their departments.

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## Section 10. Northampton County Organizational Chart and Chain of Command

Organization Chart  
Northampton County



Northampton County's Chain-of-Command represents the delegation of authority to various levels within the County. Different levels of hierarchy have the authority to address specific issues and independently make specific decisions. All employees are expected to follow the proper Chain-of-Command when handling all business matters, whether requests or grievances, as it increases efficiency and insures practical time management for the County.