

Personnel Department 2020 Annual Report

Narrative:

As was true for most departments, life as usual in Personnel upended in March 2020 when the Governor's Order to reduce staffing to 50% was issued. Three staff members worked daily from home and occasionally onsite. Other staff members worked onsite sporadically until mid-May when all staff returned to the office.

The Personnel Officer was busy deciphering the COVID related State and Federal paid leave laws that were implemented and revised on a regular basis, and made determinations on each individual's eligibility based on their specific circumstances. All total, the County issued pay for 1782 hours of missed work due to the COVID related paid leave programs.

As luck would have it, implementation of the Online Application portal in Fall 2019 allowed Personnel to continue accepting Applications electronically, despite the office being closed for two months. However, as of March 2020, New York State employees began working from home and continue to do so. The State consequently was not able to fulfill its mandate to provide local civil service agencies with exam materials; exams scheduled for March 2020 – September 2020 were postponed. Although many of those exams have now been rescheduled, the State has yet to reschedule several. Consequently, employees are being hired without having had an opportunity to take their civil service exam and gain status; they serve in a provisional capacity awaiting their exams. Appointing Authorities are forced to hire and train individuals who have yet to satisfy the merit and fitness examination process.

The Institute for Advancement training program had a rigorous schedule planned for 2020 but had to scale back on the trainings offered. Despite the Executive Order restriction on group gatherings, we were able to offer a new class of participants a complete set of trainings; 16 participants completed the training program. The training topics covered were: Real Colors and Real Solutions; County Government 101; Communication and Conflict Resolution; and Ethics for the Public Servant.

Contract negotiations with TCCA/NCEU were concluded for a successor agreement covering 2020 – 2022. The collective bargaining agreements with CSEA and TCLEA expired December 31, 2020. In recognition of the financial impact of COVID on the County and the corresponding withholding of reimbursements by the State and reduced sales tax revenue, in the spirit of cooperation CSEA agreed to rollover the terms of their contract for 2021 to allow time for the County to better assess the full financial impact of COVID before negotiating a successor agreement.

The Personnel Department established a Facebook presence in late 2020, in hopes of enhancing our recruiting efforts.

We continue to see a steady stream of retirements, especially in the area of law enforcement. Retirements in all areas, in addition to typical turnover, makes for a constant workload for all in Personnel.

The scaled down Employee Recognition Program was modified further in light of COVID restrictions. Service pins were issued without ceremony, and those reaching 25, 30, 35, etc years of service were recognized and issued plaques at a Legislative meeting, however the traditional luncheon was not held.

To end on a positive note, although the prudent decision was made to cancel the annual "Christmas Graze" at 56 Main Street, a door decorating contest was held instead. The Personnel Department was awarded first prize!