

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

Date: 5/6/2025

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Amos Morris, Executive Zoo Director *Amos D Morris, Jr.*

Subject: From the Executive Director requesting the creation of 1.0 FTE Senior Executive Assistant and abolishment of 1.0 FTE Executive Assistant

File Type: Action Report

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**REQUEST**

The Executive Zoo Director is requesting the creation of one position of Senior Executive Assistant and the abolishment of one vacant Executive Assistant position.

**POLICY**

Wisconsin State Statutes:	Chapter 59.17
Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	Chapter 17.05 (1)
Specific Adopted Budget:	2025 Budget
Specific Adopted Budget Amendment:	
Specific Adopted Capital Project:	

**BACKGROUND**

With the upcoming retirement of the Executive Zoo Director's Executive Assistant in May, the Zoo is presented with a timely and strategic opportunity to elevate this essential role to better meet the growing needs of executive leadership and the organization as a whole. In support of the recently completed Strategic Plan and Master Plan Refresh, the Zoo is requesting to abolish the current vacant Executive Assistant position and create a Senior Executive Assistant role. This enhanced position is designed to bring a higher level of administrative expertise, strategic insight, leadership, and discretion, ensuring the executive team is supported with the business acumen and operational excellence needed for high-level decision-making and organizational impact.

The Zoo is starting a new beginning, guided by the Zoo Coalition's new vision and strategic commitments to Care, Connect, and Conserve, principles that underpin the mission to inspire people to conserve wildlife and wild places. The work of the new strategic plan requires a higher-level support role that goes beyond traditional administrative functions. The Senior Executive Assistant will serve as a strategic partner to the Executive Zoo Director, enabling streamlined communication, improved cross-departmental coordination, and more efficient implementation of strategic initiatives.

This role will support the Zoo's ongoing efforts to maintain Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accreditation standards. With AZA requirements becoming increasingly complex and rigorous, the new Senior Executive Assistant will assist in monitoring compliance, managing key documentation, and ensuring that leadership remains well-informed and proactive in meeting evolving criteria.

This proposed change aligns with precedent across the County. Senior Executive Assistant positions currently exist within several key departments, including:

- Department of Administrative Services
- Combined Courts Related Operations
- Office of the Comptroller
- Office of the Sheriff
- Milwaukee County Department of Transportation
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Parks

As one of Wisconsin's top 10 attractions, welcoming over 1.2 million annual guests and partnering with the Zoological Society of Milwaukee on one of the state's largest membership programs, the Milwaukee County Zoo is both a premier cultural institution and a major driver of regional engagement and education. Looking ahead, it is important to have the right leadership support in place to successfully realize the goals of the Zoo Coalition's new vision, mission, and strategic plan and master plan refresh. The creation of a Senior Executive Assistant position is essential to ensuring continued excellence and progress.

### **ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN**

Describe how the item aligns to the objectives in the [strategic plan](#):

- 1B: Create and nurture an inclusive culture across County government: Elevating the role signals that support staff are strategic partners, not just administrative. This position can help champion inclusive practices at leadership levels, ensuring communication and scheduling are mindful of cultural and community needs.
- 2B: Break down silos across County government to maximize access to and quality of services offered: This role is critical to work across departments to streamline executive communication and manage collaborative initiatives.
- 3B: Enhance the County's fiscal health and sustainability: Restructuring with the new role creates a more efficient staffing model by providing more strategic value.
- 3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities: The new role supports leadership's community-facing work, ensuring meetings with community stakeholders are inclusive.

**FISCAL EFFECT**

The maximum salary impact on the Zoo's budget from creating a Senior Executive Assistant position and eliminating the Executive Assistant role is \$9,672. However, due to the overlap between the two pay ranges (outlined below), the actual fiscal impact could result in a net-zero tax levy change, depending on the starting salary of the new position.

<b>Position Description</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Pay Grade</b>	<b>FTE</b>	<b>Annual Salary Range (based on 2088 hours)</b>
Senior Executive Assistant	Create	NR23	1.0	\$58,677 - \$87,984
Executive Assistant	Abolish	NR21	(1.0)	\$52,229 - \$78,312

**VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

Amos Morris, Executive Zoo Director [Amos.Morris@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:Amos.Morris@milwaukeecountywi.gov)

Vera Westphal, Deputy Zoo Director [Vera.Westphal@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:Vera.Westphal@milwaukeecountywi.gov)

**PREPARED BY:**

Vera Westphal, Deputy Zoo Director

**APPROVED BY:**

Amos Morris, Executive Zoo Director

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Resolution, Fiscal Note, DHR Report, JEQ, OSBP Report

cc: Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
 Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County Clerk  
 Clarence H. Kinnard, Personnel Committee Coordinator  
 Allyson R. Smith, Finance Committee Coordinator  
 David Crowley, County Executive  
 Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive  
 Margo Franklin, Chief Human Resources Officer  
 Tony Maze, Director of Total Rewards  
 Christine Carlson, HR Compensation Manager  
 Vera Westphal, Deputy Zoo Director  
 Steve Cady, Research and Policy Director  
 Joe Lamers, Director, Office of Strategy, Budget and Performance  
 Anthony Rux, Sr Analyst Budget and Management  
 Mary Polaris, HR Business Partner