5.00 EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION AND ADVANCEMENT

5.01 PAY. Pay for county employees is set each year by the commissioners court in the adopted county operating budget. Rules governing pay increases also are established by the commissioners court.

5.02 PAYDAYS. The pay period for the county is every two weeks. Checks are issued on alternate Fridays. If the payday falls on a holiday, checks will be issued on the last working day preceding the holiday.

5.03 CHECK DELIVERY. Paychecks will not be issued other than on the days set out above. All newly hired employees are required to have their paycheck electronically deposited to a designated account at a financial institution with which the County Treasurer has made the appropriate arrangements for such a transfer.

The county treasurer is responsible for the proper distribution of paychecks. Checks may be released only to the individual responsible for their proper distribution within a department.

No salary advances or loans against future salary will be made to any employee for any reason. *(Legal reference: Texas Constitution, Article III, Sections 51, 52, and 53.)*

An employee must bring any discrepancy in a paycheck (such as overpayment, underpayment, or incorrect payroll deductions) to the attention of the county treasurer.

5.04 PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS. Any deductions must be approved and authorized by the commissioners court. Deductions will be made from each employee's pay for the following:

Federal social security;

Federal income taxes;

Court ordered child support;

Texas County and District Retirement System contributions (for eligible employees and elected and appointed department heads as specified by TCDRS); and

Any other deductions required by law.

In accordance with policies and general procedures approved by the commissioners court, deductions from an employee's pay may be authorized by the employee for:

The portion not paid by the county of group health/medical or dental premiums for the employee or dependents;

Supplemental deferred compensation; and

Such other deductions as may be authorized by the commissioners court.

If there is a change in the employee's family status, address, or other factor affecting his or her payroll withholding or benefits status, the employee is responsible for obtaining, completing, and returning to the Human Resources office the appropriate forms for communicating these changes.

5.05 MERIT INCREASES. Merit increases recognize outstanding performance and thus are granted only in conjunction with the supervisors written recommendation and a performance evaluation of the employee. No merit increase will be granted unless and until the Human Resources office has certified that a current performance evaluation, which reflects performance <u>above</u> the Meets Expectations level, is on file for that employee. Merit increases are not used to recognize increased duties and responsibilities (a promotion) and are granted without regard to cost-of-living factors or longevity.

Normally, merit increases are given in one-step increments. Depending upon departmental funds available for merit purposes (see the following paragraphs in this section), department heads or elected officials may propose to give an employee no more than two merit increases per fiscal year, not to exceed a total of two steps on the pay schedule during the fiscal year. Any requests for merit increase exceeding two steps requires special Commissioner's Court approval and will be considered on a case by case basis.

In any year that merit increase funding is specifically budgeted by the Court for all County Departments, the merit funding shall be calculated on the basis of an approved percentage of the total salaries (excluding Elected Officials and individuals paid by state or other agency funds) and shall be included in the departmental salary account.

Each department retains those funds which have been saved by the department when an employee being paid above step one has left county employment in that department, and the department has hired a replacement at step one or some other step which is below the step occupied by the departing employee. The difference between the previous employees salary and the new employees salary is retained in the departmental salary line item account, for the remainder of that budget year. Unless the commissioners court specifically votes otherwise, any remaining difference (savings) at the end of each budget year will be re-budgeted into the subsequent fiscal year and available for that departments use for merit increases.

The possibility of such savings described above results from employee turnover and is more likely to occur in departments with the largest numbers of employees. Therefore, ***in***

any year in which merit increases have not been specifically budgeted for all departments, the commissioners court may designate a separate line item in the budget for merit increases to be granted in departments with five or fewer employees, where turnover is less likely to produce a departmental merit increase balance. The amount set aside in this small departments cooperative merit increase account will normally be less than the amount needed to give all eligible small department employees a one-step increase. Elected officials or department heads over small departments may recommend merit pay increases to employees in their departments whose performance exceeded Meets Expectations, provided that no department head or elected official may recommend merit pay increases to more than 75 percent of his or her department's work force in any given year. The only exception to this is for departments with three or fewer employees. If a department has three or fewer employees, the department head or elected official may not recommend merit increases to more than 50 percent of the department's workforce in a given year. These limitations do not apply in years when merit funding is specifically budgeted for all county departments. Any recommendation for this type of merit increase is subject to Commissioners Court.

5.06 ACROSS-THE-BOARD PAY INCREASES. During budget deliberations for the forthcoming year, the commissioners court may authorize an across-the-board pay increase. If an across-the-board or blanket cost-of-living pay increase is approved, the increase will be in the form of a percentage rather than a flat dollar amount. When this is done, each salary amount on the pay schedule and each individual employee's salary are adjusted by the authorized percentage increase, unless a specific employee's salary has been frozen as a result of a determination that the employee is being paid beyond the maximum salary established for the position.

5.07 CLASSIFICATION PLAN. The county maintains a classification plan which assigns each class of positions to a pay group based on the principle of equity among positions requiring similar knowledge, skills, and abilities and having similar levels of responsibility.

5.08 PAY PLAN. Pay ranges for each group are established by a pay plan which is approved by the commissioners court.

5.09 PAY GROUP AND STEPS. Within the general guidelines of the pay plan and the budget, the commissioners court is authorized to determine the appropriate pay group to which each position is allocated and the pay to which the particular employee is assigned. An employee who is designated exempt from the pay plan is paid within maximums set in a budget approved by the commissioners court.

5.10 CLASSIFICATION AND PAY ADMINISTRATION. A new employee normally is hired on Step 1 of the pay group to which the position is assigned. A new employee may not be hired above Step 1 without specific written approval from the commissioners court accompanied by documentation supporting the extraordinary qualifications of the applicant.

5.11 PROMOTIONS. A promotion is a change in the duty assignment of an employee which results in advancement to a higher position requiring higher qualifications and involving greater responsibility. A promoted employee will always receive a pay increase of at least the amount of difference from one pay group to the next.

Promotions are approved by the elected or appointed department head within the staffing pattern and budget limits authorized and approved for that department by the commissioners court.

Upon promotion, an employee serves an introductory period of 90 days in the new position and may be returned to a lower position at any time during the introductory period if performance is inadequate.

5.12 LATERAL TRANSFERS. A lateral transfer is the movement of an employee between positions in the same pay group within the county. Lateral transfers may be made within the same department or between departments and are subject to a 90-day introductory period. An employee will not receive a pay reduction when making a lateral transfer provided that the employee's current salary is within the range approved by the commissioners court for the transfer position.

5.13 DEMOTIONS. A demotion is a change in duty assignment of an employee to a lower paid position. Demotions may be made for the purpose of voluntary assumption of a less responsible position; as a result of a reclassification of the employee's position; or as a disciplinary measure, because of unsatisfactory performance in a higher position. Disciplinary demotions always involve a decrease in pay.

5.14 PAY REDUCTION FOR DISCIPLINARY REASONS. An employee's pay for continued performance in the same position may be reduced, as a disciplinary measure, to a lower rate. The period covered by this type of disciplinary action may not exceed 60 days. See the chapter of these policies on **Discipline** for information about suspension with or without pay for disciplinary reasons.

5.15 APPROVING AUTHORITY. The commissioners court is the approving authority for all payrolls and payroll transfers granted under the terms of (1) these policies, (2) the classification and pay plans, and (3) the annual budget. The appropriate elected or appointed department head may recommend merit pay increases provided that (1) sufficient funds are available; (2) the merit increase(s) is/are consistent with these policies, the classification and pay plans, and the annual budget. The department head must receive commissioners court approval of the change(s). Except in the case of an emergency hire as defined, a payroll change may not take effect until the first payroll following commissioners court approval.

5.16 LONGEVITY PAY. If funds are available Regular Full Time and Regular Part Time County Employees and all salaried Elected County Officials with one or more full years of continuous employment receive longevity pay annually in a lump-sum payment which is disbursed in December of the calendar year in which it was earned. The amount of longevity pay is calculated as $60.00 per year for each full year of continuous employment, up to a maximum of $1,200.00 per employee. Longevity pay is earned and awarded annually and is not otherwise prorated or compensable upon termination.

5.17 CERTIFICATE PAY. The County has established levels of Educational Certification Pay (Certificate Pay) for certain regular full-time peace officer positions and corrections positions (qualified by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officers Standards and Education (TCOLE), as follows;

Intermediate Certificate	$50 per month	($600/yr)
Advanced Certificate	$100 per month	($1,200/yr)
Masters Certificate	$150 per month	($1,800/yr)

To qualify for Certificate Pay, an eligible employee must spend at least ninety percent (90%) of his/her work hours on patrol, investigation, inmate supervision or in the supervision of employees assigned to the stated work and must have satisfied all TCOLE requirements for their assigned position and be current on all required training. Regular full-time Telecommunications Operators/Supervisors and Bailiffs may qualify in the same manner for amount listed. Certificate Pay is awarded annually during the budget adoption process and issued proportionately with each regular payroll. Upon separation, any Certificate Pay beyond that portion issued with final pay will not be compensated. Employees qualifying for Certificate Pay or a change in level of Certificate Pay after a fiscal year budget is adopted and/or qualified individuals hired after the adoption of the budget may be considered for Certificate Pay to be adopted in the next occurring budget process.

(Reference:Commissioner's Court 08/12/14 for FY 15)

5.18 CELL PHONE ALLOWANCE. Employees whose job or work-related needs demand immediate access, or is required to be on call 24/7 for emergency situations, as determined by the Elected Official or Department head, may be allotted a cell phone allowance. Departments should review employees' job functions in order to justify establishment of cellular telephone allowances. An employee that is eligible for cellular telephone allowance must be a regular employee in a position for which a clearly defined business need has been determined by the Elected Official or Department Head. The amount of the allowance is to be determined by the Elected Official or Department Head. This allowance will be within the limits of departmental budget, must be reasonable in relation to the percentage of usage for county purposes, and may not exceed the employee's contractual cost for service. Implementation will be pending Commissioners Court approval. The employee must provide a copy of the current cell phone statement at the time of the allowance and any updated or subsequent changes to the County Auditor's Office for their records. The County Auditor may ask for verification periodically. The employee must not use their cell phone in an illegal manner, whether during work hours or off time, and will be responsible for their own cell phone bill. At any time the employee is unable to maintain their personal cell phone, the employee must report this to their Elected Official or Department Head. The Elected Official/Department Head must complete a Personnel Action Form (with the date of the cell phone termination) to discontinue the cell phone allowance on the next applicable payroll, at which time any adjustment will be made as necessary in relation to the date of termination of the cell phone. This adjustment will ascertain that no payment is to be made to an employee after the date the cell phone was no longer in use for county purposes. No payment will be made by the County to add, replace or maintain any cellular phone, including stolen, lost or damaged, software and/or equipment, nor to pay any monthly cell phone plan fees. The County will not be responsible for any cellular contract termination fees (assessed by service provider) to include employees who are terminated, quit, transfer to another office or department, or are moved into another position not requiring use of a cellular phone. Cell phone allowances do not constitute an increase in base pay, or overtime pay and will be not included in any percentage calculations for increase in base pay. Payment will be equally divided among the designated pay periods. All cell phone allowances will be processed through the payroll and is subject to standard payroll deductions in accordance with Internal Revenue Service. Abuse of the cell phone policy is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

5.19 SPANISH BI-LINGUAL INCENTIVE PROGRAM

Purpose: The goal of the Spanish Bi-Lingual Incentive Program is to encourage each Polk County employee to reach a level of proficiency that enables them to successfully communicate in Spanish with the Spanish-speaking public. An employee, by learning to effectively communicate in Spanish and eventually being able to pass an oral proficiency exam, could earn a one-step raise in pay.

Polk County encourages employees who desire to learn Spanish as a second language or to improve Spanish speaking skills, to do so by whatever means they may choose at their own expense; such as enrolling in a college or university of their choice, taking a correspondence course, using a private teacher, participating in courses offered via the internet, computer CD's or videos for the television. Employees may contact the Human Resources Office to learn about available resources.

Exam: For the purpose of this program, the exam will be called the Spanish Oral Proficiency Exam. The exam will be administered by a qualified, independent person of the County's choosing. The exam will be administered orally and will consist of the employee's ability to ask and/or say in Spanish, questions or phrases related to communicating with the Spanish-speaking public regarding job related and general subject matters. The Spanish Oral Proficiency Exam will be administered by appointment only to any employee who feels he/she is sufficiently ready to take it. To register for the exam, an employee must call the Polk County Human Resources office to schedule the test with the Examiner. The employee will be required to pay a $50.00 examination fee directly to the Examiner. The Examiner will notify the Human Resources Office in writing, within two business days, of the results of the exam.

Salary Incentive: When an employee successfully passes the Spanish Oral Proficiency Exam, a Personnel Action Form will be submitted by the Human Resources office to the next regularly scheduled Commissioner Court meeting for an approval of the employee’s one-step increase within the Employee’s current Pay Group, and will normally be effective the payroll period following the Court's approval.

Employee Reimbursement: Upon passing the Spanish Oral Proficiency Exam, the employee will be reimbursed by the County for the full amount of the $50.00 fee paid to the Examiner. The fifty dollars ($50.00) examination fee will not be reimbursed should the employee not successfully pass the exam.

Reassessment Requirement: Once an employee passes the Spanish Oral Proficiency Exam and their one-step incentive raise has become effective, the employee must be reassessed by the County’s Examiner for Spanish proficiency on or before the two (2) year anniversary of the one-step incentive raise and every two (2) years thereafter, at the employee’s expense. This requirement must be met in order for an employee to maintain the one-step increase. Should the employee fail to complete or to pass any reassessment testing, as required, the one-step incentive increase will be eliminated effective the next payroll occurring after the reassessment anniversary date.