



**November 21, 2018**

Classification Study/Position  
Review – Suzanne Lippre –  
Senior Office Assistant

Final Report

**County of Humboldt**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background

In July, 2018, the County of Humboldt (“County”) contracted with Koff & Associates (“K&A”) to conduct a classification study for the Senior Office Assistant position allocated to the Planning Department encumbered by Suzanne Lippre. All findings and recommendations are included in this report.

This position review process was precipitated by the incumbent’s assertion that the preponderance of her duties and responsibilities are not aligned with the current classification allocation, and therefore the County requested that the position be studied.

The goal of the study was to:

- Obtain detailed information about the position encumbered by Ms. Lippre through a variety of techniques, including a written Job Analysis Questionnaire (JAQ) as well as interviews with the incumbent and her supervisor (Paula Mushrush);
- Analyze the work assigned to the position to identify the major duties and responsibilities;
- Analyze the County’s current description for Senior Office Assistant; and
- Make a recommendation regarding the appropriateness of the current classification allocation of the position relative to the duties performed by the incumbent.

## CLASSIFICATION FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

### Findings

When positions are classified, the focus is on assigned job duties and the job-related requirements for successful performance, not on individual employee capabilities or volume of work performed. Positions are thus evaluated and classified on the basis of such factors as the nature and level of work performed, the complexity of the work, the authority delegated to make decisions and take action, the responsibility for the work of others and/or for budget expenditures, contacts with others (both inside and outside of the organization), the impact of the position on the organization, and the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform the work. Narrative on some of these factors is presented below.

- Major duties and responsibilities of the position as detailed in the Job Analysis Questionnaire completed by the incumbent:
  - Response to requests related to the California Public Records Act (20% of work time) – Ms. Lippre receives requests made for information under the California Public Records Act (CPRA) relative to the Planning Department, reviews the



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requests to determine appropriate courses of action and obtains necessary documentation both internally and from other departments to respond to requests or forwards requests to the appropriate staff members for response. To this end, Ms. Lippre must have knowledge of guidelines related to the CPRA such as the kind of information and documents that are disclosable and timelines associated with CPRA requests. The incumbent must also exercise judgment and be resourceful in researching and locating information to be provided.

- Clerk duties relative to the Planning Commission and Zoning Administrator (30% of work time) – The incumbent performs clerk duties for the Planning Commission and Zoning Administrator which include development, posting, and distribution of agendas pursuant to regulatory requirements; production of quarterly calendars for submission deadlines of agenda items and distribution of calendars to department and County staff; and staff support subsequent to Commission and Administrator meetings to follow up on the directives of each. The duties and responsibilities related hereto require that Ms. Lippre be knowledgeable of the regulatory requirements related to posting and distribution of agendas of local agency governing bodies and commissions, activities and decisions that are within the decision-making authority of the Commission and Administrator, backup documentation necessary for agenda items, and actions necessary for implementing Commission and Administrator directives including required documentation as well as identification of, and communication with, the stakeholders for each directive.
  - Lead direction of support staff (20% of time) – Ms. Lippre serves as the lead worker of administrative support staff consisting of approximately five (5) staff members who provide reception and front-desk administrative support for the Planning Department. The incumbent directs work flow, makes work assignments, and provides input for performance evaluations of assigned staff. Disciplinary and other personnel actions are elevated to Ms. Lippre’s supervisor, and Ms. Lippre may be called upon by her supervisor to provide input on such decisions.
  - General administrative support duties (30% of time) – Ms. Lippre performs administrative support duties such as scheduling appointments for the Director; handling difficult phone calls and complaints from the public; monitoring and ordering office supplies; records storage, retrieval, and maintenance; receiving and addressing electronic correspondence directed to the Planning Commission; and reception duties.
- Decision making – Ms. Lippre is responsible for the workflow oversight of the reception function for the Planning Department including directing the work of, and making work assignments to, lower level staff. She independently develops, posts, and distributes



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Planning Commission and Zoning Administrator agendas and performs appropriate follow up on Commission and Administrator directives with minimal supervision.

- Contacts – The position has contacts internally with coworkers, staff, and department management as well as management and staff from other County departments. Externally, the incumbent has contact with the Planning Commission and Zoning Administrator, vendors, and the general public.

### Classification Recommendation

It is our assessment that the duties and responsibilities of this position are outside of the scope of Senior Office Assistant, and it is our recommendation that the position be reclassified to Executive Secretary. Ms. Lippre’s responsibilities related to clerk functions for the Planning Commission and Zoning Administrator as well as those related to California Public Records Act (CPRA) requests are more complex and have a higher consequence of error than do the typical duties and responsibilities as described in her current classification description. Since a substantial amount of her work time (approximately 50%) is spent on these duties, it is appropriate to reclassify the position to a classification that more adequately captures the work complexity and scope of responsibility.

It should be noted that the current classification description for Executive Secretary is dated August 1990. Consequently, there are aspects of the classification description that should be amended to reflect changes in work processes, systems, equipment, and methods that have occurred over time. However, the broad duty statements and overarching description of work complexity for the classification are applicable to the position encumbered by Ms. Lippre. It is advisable to update the classification description to capture aforementioned workplace changes; however, since there are multiple positions allocated to this classification, there are internal County processes that must be followed prior to amendment to the specifications which are outside of the scope of this single-position study.

When evaluating the allocation of a position, it is necessary to: (i) identify the duties that the incumbent is currently being required to perform; (ii) determine if those duties are captured in the current job description; and (iii) identify the percentage of duties being performed, if any, which are outside of the current classification. The test is not whether or not the current incumbent possesses the knowledge, skills, and qualifications for a given classification. Rather, the test is determining the duties performed and the level and scope of responsibility of the position itself regardless of who encumbers it.

**Recommendation:** Reallocate the Senior Office Assistant position encumbered by Suzanne Lippre to Executive Secretary.

### CONCLUSION

This Final Report presents the process, methodologies, and findings with respect to the Senior Office Assistant position encumbered by Suzanne Lippre. We want to thank the County and its



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staff for their cooperation and participation in study activities to ensure the study is a success.

Respectfully submitted by,  
**Koff & Associates**

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