



Agenda Action Form Overview

The Board is requested to approve the creation of the position of Fire Marshal utilizing the existing position of Division Chief of Fire Prevention and Education (position number 40009050) to provide leadership, direction, supervision, and budgetary authority and oversee the daily operations of the Office of Emergency Services Fire and Life Safety function consistent with statutory authority and to advance the County's public safety priorities.

Background/Justification

Board of County Commissioners' approval is required to establish the Fire Marshal and move forward with the position recruitment process. The authorized strength of the office will remain unchanged as an existing full-time equivalent position will be used.

The Office of Emergency Services (OES) was established in March 2020 with the merger of Durham County EMS and the County Fire Marshal/Emergency Management teams. This merger created four functional areas within OES: Business Operations, Emergency Management, Emergency Medical Services, and Fire Prevention & Life Safety. The former Fire Marshal role was reclassified into the OES Director position at the time of the merger.

Since then, Durham County has experienced continued growth and increased demand for coordinated fire prevention, inspection, and community safety services. The absence of a designated Fire Marshal limits the County's ability to provide the dedicated oversight, coordination, and compliance functions envisioned by statute. Pursuant to North Carolina General Statute §153A-234, counties are authorized to appoint a Fire Marshal, set duties, and employ assistants. The Board of County Commissioners holds the sole authority to establish this position.

The Fire Marshal will:

- Provide leadership and oversight of fire prevention and life safety programs across Durham County.
- Conduct required fire inspections, including schools, childcare facilities, and other structures as required by law.
- Advise the BOCC on improvements in firefighting and fire prevention activities.
- Support volunteer and municipal fire departments in developing capacity and improving services.
- Enhance community safety through proactive fire code enforcement and prevention initiatives.

Establishing this position strengthens Durham County's ability to safeguard residents, supports emergency response partners, and ensures compliance with state requirements.

If approved, OES Director Mark Lockhart will work with Durham County Human Resources to finalize the job classification and compensation for the Fire Marshal role.

References:

North Carolina General Statute §153A-234 – Fire Marshal
Draft Job Description



Policy Impact

No impact to policy.

Procurement Background

N/A

Fiscal Impact

The estimated fiscal impact is \$172,268 in salary and benefits. This cost may fluctuate depending on the starting pay and is calculated based on grade mid-point. Additional costs for uniforms and equipment is included in the OES budget.

Recommendation

The County Manager recommends that the Board approve the creation of the position of Fire Marshal utilizing an existing position to provide leadership, direction, supervision, and budgetary authority and oversee the daily operations of the Office of Emergency Services Fire and Life Safety function, consistent with statutory authority and to advance the County's public safety priorities.