ORANGE COUNTY

County Attorney

RAFTELIS

The Position

Orange County, Virginia, is searching for a skilled and trusted legal advisor to serve as its next County Attorney. This is a rare opportunity to serve as the chief legal officer of a growing, historically rich county at a pivotal moment: the County is navigating a major zoning ordinance overhaul, a regional transmission line proposal, active state legislative advocacy, and the buildout of a new legal team. The next County Attorney will have the chance to shape how the County approaches these opportunities and provide steady counsel to a Board of Supervisors and County Administrator who value transparency, responsiveness, and practical legal guidance.

The County Attorney provides timely legal services and guidance to the Board of Supervisors, Constitutional Officers, the County Administrator, and department heads. This position also advises the County's various boards, authorities, and commissions, including the Planning Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, the Economic Development Authority, and the Orange County Broadband Authority (dba FiberLync). Responsibilities include managing complex civil litigation, coordinating with insurance and outside counsel, preparing and reviewing legal documents, and analyzing laws, ordinances, legal opinions, and contracts. The role also serves as the County's primary risk management officer.

As the chief legal officer, the County Attorney reports directly to and is accountable to the five-member Board of Supervisors. The County Attorney's Office is authorized for a County Attorney, a Senior Assistant County Attorney, and a paralegal. A key early responsibility will be building out the County Attorney's Office by hiring and developing a cohesive legal team that can meet the growing demands of a county evolving while preserving its rural character. The County Attorney is expected to hit the ground running, quickly establishing credibility, building collaborative relationships, and providing sound counsel on pressing matters.

Priorities

The next County Attorney should be prepared to focus on the following priorities in the first year and beyond:

- Build trust and credibility with the Board of Supervisors, the County Administrator, and department heads by being visible, accessible, and responsive. The Board is looking for a legal advisor who communicates clearly, provides candid and timely counsel, and earns the confidence of elected officials and staff alike.
- Establish and lead the County Attorney's Office by hiring a paralegal and also hire a Senior Assistant County Attorney. This is an opportunity to shape the office's culture, workflow, and capacity from the ground up, ensuring the County has the in-house legal resources to handle its growing portfolio of legal needs.
- Provide proactive legal guidance on land use, zoning, and development matters. Orange County is in the midst of a zoning ordinance review, including proposals to restructure its agricultural zoning district and introduce new zoning classifications. The County Attorney will work closely with the Department of Development Services, the Planning Commission, and the Board of Zoning Appeals to ensure ordinance amendments are legally sound and effectively implemented.
- Serve as the County's subject-matter resource on Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) compliance, human resources law, and procurement, providing practical guidance that helps staff navigate these areas confidently and consistently.

The Successful Candidate

The ideal candidate is a seasoned attorney with meaningful local government experience who understands the pace, politics, and legal complexities of serving a county government. This person brings strong expertise in land use, zoning, and civil litigation, and can apply that knowledge across a broad range of municipal legal issues, including contracts, real estate, employment law, and risk management.

Above all, the next County Attorney is someone who builds trust quickly. The Board of Supervisors and the County Administrator need a legal advisor who listens carefully, communicates in plain language, and provides advice that is both legally rigorous and practically useful. This person is comfortable advising elected officials in public meetings and in closed sessions and understands the importance of maintaining confidentiality while fostering transparency in government operations.

The successful candidate is also a team builder. With the responsibility of onboarding a Senior Assistant County Attorney and a paralegal, the next County Attorney must have the leadership and management skills to develop and retain talented legal professionals. This person sets high standards, delegates effectively, and creates an environment where team members are empowered to contribute meaningfully.

The ideal candidate has experience navigating FOIA requests, human resource matters, and procurement processes in a government setting, and can advise on these topics without being asked. This person is proactive, identifying legal risks before they become problems and keeping leadership informed of changes in state and federal law that may affect County operations.

Experience as a chief legal officer or senior attorney in a local government setting is strongly preferred. Candidates with backgrounds in private practice are welcome, provided they can demonstrate a solid understanding of the local government legal environment and a genuine interest in public service.

Qualifications

A Juris Doctor degree from an accredited school of law is required, along with a current license to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia, or the County will work with the successful candidate to facilitate Virginia bar admission. Candidates must have at least five years of relevant legal experience, with a strong preference for candidates whose experience includes local government law, land use and zoning, and civil litigation.

Experience as a chief legal officer or senior attorney in a county, city, or town government is strongly preferred. Candidates should be able to demonstrate experience advising governing bodies, managing litigation, drafting ordinances and contracts, and providing counsel on FOIA and procurement matters.

Inside The County

Orange County operates under the traditional Virginia form of government, with a five-member Board of Supervisors serving as the governing body; each member represents one of the County's five magisterial districts. The Board appoints a County Administrator to manage the day-to-day operations of County government and a County Attorney to serve as the County's chief legal officer. The County Attorney reports directly to the Board of Supervisors and works closely with the County Administrator and department heads across all County functions.

Orange County's adopted FY2025-2026 budget is a $158.1 million spending plan. The County employs staff across a range of departments, including Development Services, Finance, Fire and EMS, Parks and Recreation, Public Works, and others. The Board of Supervisors recently adopted a new mission and vision centered on four focus areas: A Vibrant Economy, Effective and Reflective Government, Sustainable Land Use, and Enhanced Quality of Life.

The County is actively engaged in several strategic initiatives, including a comprehensive zoning ordinance review, economic development through its industrial park, and continued investment in broadband infrastructure through the FiberLync Broadband Authority.

Orange County has earned consistent recognition at the state and national levels for its commitment to innovation, fiscal discipline, and community-focused service delivery. The County has received the Government Finance Officers Association's (GFOA) Distinguished Budget Presentation Award every year since fiscal year 2018 and holds the GFOA Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting, reflecting a finance operation built on transparency and best practices. GFOA has also profiled the County's transition to program budgeting as a model for how local governments can better communicate the value of public services.

The Center for Digital Government and the National Association of Counties have ranked Orange County in the top 10 nationwide among counties with populations up to 150,000 in the Digital Counties Survey for four consecutive years, recognizing the County's investments in technology, cybersecurity, and digital service delivery. The Virginia Association of Counties has honored Orange County with multiple Achievement Awards in recent years for programs spanning public safety, parks and recreation, tourism, and youth engagement, including a "Best Small County Achievement" designation for the Central Ohio Fire & Emergency Medical Services Organization (COFEMS) Whole Blood Program. These recognitions reflect a county government that sets high standards, invests in creative solutions, and consistently delivers results for its residents.

The Community

Orange County is located in the heart of Virginia's Piedmont region, approximately 60 miles northwest of Richmond, 70 miles southwest of Washington, D.C., and just 20 miles northeast of Charlottesville and the University of Virginia. The County spans 341 square miles of rolling countryside, historic estates, and small-town character, offering residents the rare combination of rural tranquility and easy access to major metropolitan areas.

With a population of approximately 39,000, Orange County is a close-knit community with deep historical roots. The County is home to the birthplaces of two U.S. Presidents, James Madison (Montpelier) and Zachary Taylor, and the Town of Orange and Town of Gordonsville each offer walkable, charming downtowns with local shops, restaurants, and community gathering places. Lake of the Woods, a planned residential community in the northwest portion of the County, is home to roughly 7,200 residents and offers a range of commercial and recreational amenities.

Orange County's economy is among the most diverse in the region, anchored by agribusiness, manufacturing, and commercial and retail services. The County is home to 419 active farms and 10 manufacturing companies employing more than 2,000 workers. A civilian labor force of over 17,000 supports the local economy, and the County's strategic location along key transportation corridors provides employers with access to a regional labor shed of more than 250,000 workers.

The County offers a high quality of life, with access to excellent outdoor recreation, a growing arts and cultural scene, and the natural beauty of the Virginia Piedmont. Residents enjoy a lower cost of living compared to Northern Virginia and the greater D.C. metro area, while remaining within a reasonable commute to those regions. Orange County Public Schools serves approximately 5,000 students and is complemented by private school options in the surrounding area. Germanna Community College maintains a campus in the County, and the University of Virginia and several other colleges and universities are within easy reach.

Compensation

The hiring salary range for the County Attorney is $175,000 to $225,000, depending on qualifications and experience. Relocation assistance is provided.
Orange County offers an excellent benefits package, including the following:

- Participation in the Virginia Retirement System (VRS)
- Medical, dental, and vision insurance
- Life insurance
- Short-term and long-term disability insurance
- Generous paid leave, including vacation, sick, and holiday leave
- Flexible spending accounts
- Employee Assistance Program
- Professional development and continuing legal education support

How to Apply

Applications will be accepted electronically by Raftelis at raftelis.com. Applicants complete a brief online form and are prompted to provide a cover letter and resume. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis, so candidates are encouraged to apply early to ensure their materials are presented to the Board of Supervisors at the earliest opportunity. This will be a confidential recruitment process.

Questions

Please direct questions to Anne Lewis at alewis@raftelis.com or Kelsey Batt at kbatt@raftelis.com.