

# **WHATCOM COUNTY COMMISSION ON SALARIES FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS**

## **AGENDA**

**Wednesday, April 1, 2015, 4:00 p.m.**

**Whatcom Transportation Authority Board Room  
4111 Bakerview Spur, Bellingham**

	<u><b>Pages</b></u>
<b>A. CALL TO ORDER</b>	
<b>B. PUBLIC COMMENT</b>	
<b>C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – March 19, 2015 Meeting</b>	<b>1 - 5</b>
<b>D. REVIEW INFORMATION REQUESTS</b>	
<b>D.1 COLA's for County non-represented employees         for 2014 and 2015</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>D.2 Salary amounts for the elected positions in 2005         and 2010</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>D.3 Average wages for Whatcom County citizens</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>D.4 Council member responses</b>	<b>8 - 9</b>
<b>E. DISCUSSION</b>	
<b>E.1 Preliminary Salary Placements</b>	
<b>F. NEXT STEPS</b>	
<b>G. ADJOURN</b>	

**AGENDA ITEM C.**

**WHATCOM COUNTY COMMISSION ON SALARIES  
FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS**

**MINUTES**

**Thursday, March 19, 2015, 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.**

**Whatcom Transportation Authority Board Room  
4111 Bakerview Spur Road, Bellingham, WA**

**A. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Al Jensen, Commission Chairman at 4:06 p.m.

**ATTENDANCE**

Members Present: Mike Arbiter-District #2, Kristi Birkeland-District #1, Bob Carmichael-Legal Profession, Allan Jensen-Organized Labor, Brian Lydiard-Business, George Plucinski-District #2

Members Absent: Jesse Berg-District #3, Thom Fischer-District #1, Peter Schroeder-District #3, Kara Turner-Personnel Management

Staff Present: Andy Rowison-WTA Director of Human Resources and Commission Facilitator, Vicki Esser-WTA Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board and Commission Administrative Assistant

Others Present: Robin Dexter

**B. PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Robin Dexter:** Mr. Dexter said he came to speak about the salary for County Council members. He said he has spent 20 years working on water issues and various other issues. He said the County is engaged in updating the County Comprehensive Plan and he is giving them suggestions on four various plans being updated. He said all of these will be brought before the County Council. Mr. Dexter said his opinion is that the County Council has an unbelievable work load and a high number of pages in their meeting packets. He said they don't have the ability to give their duties the attention they deserve as long as they are compensated as part-time. Mr. Dexter said if it's within the commission's ability to increase the salaries of council members in line with what happens in other Home Rule counties (50-60% of the County Executive's salary) it would go a long way toward attracting the kind of people we need and would allow them to give the job the attention it deserves.

Commissioner Carmichael asked if Mr. Dexter feels he has enough experience with the council to give an estimate of the number of hours needed to do the job. Mr. Dexter said easily 40 hours, to 50 or 60 per week. He said it is difficult to live on the salary they get, so most of them have other jobs, and it is hard for them to give the council job the time it needs.

**C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Feb. 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

Chairman Jensen asked if there were any corrections or additions to the minutes from the previous meeting. Mr. Rowson asked if anyone had clarification on the dollar amount that Mr. Oliver said the County Treasurer's office typically has on deposit to manage for about 70 public entities (on page two of the minutes). Chairman Jensen said his notes show \$300 million to \$400 million. It was agreed that number is correct and should be corrected in the minutes.

MOTION BY LYDIARD, SECONDED BY ARBITER TO CORRECT THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 19, 2015 MEETING AS DESCRIBED ABOVE.

*The motion passed 6 – 0.*

MOTION BY LYDIARD, SECONDED BY PLUCINSKI TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 19, 2015 MEETING AS AMENDED.

*The motion passed 6 – 0.*

**D. INFORMATION REQUESTS**

Mr. Rowson reviewed the requested information in the meeting packet with the Commission.

Commissioner Carmichael provided a memo detailing the background for the reference to the County Council members being part-time. He reported that the part-time language came from a letter that was written by the Chair of the Board of Freeholders and inserted at the beginning of the original (1979) County Charter. He said subsequent versions of the Charter did not include the letter. He said there is now no part-time or full-time restriction for council members. He said the number of hours council members work are left up to them.

Mr. Carmichael also explained that, for a period of time, the Charter set the council's salary at 15% of the County Executive's salary. However, when the voters created the Salary Commission, that restriction was removed.

## **E. DISCUSSION**

### **E.1 Preliminary Salary Placements**

#### **Auditor, Assessor, Treasurer**

The commission discussed whether they want to continue making the Auditor, Assessor, and Treasurer salaries equal or look at each individually.

Consensus: Based on the fact that most other counties do link these positions, and a compelling reason to do otherwise was not raised, there was consensus to keep the Auditor, Assessor, and Treasurer salaries equal.

Preliminary salary numbers were discussed. The commission agreed that they would like the following information before a preliminary decision is made.

#### **Information Requests:**

- COLA's for County non-represented employees for 2014 and 2015
- Salary amounts for the elected positions in 2005 and 2010
- Average wages for Whatcom County citizens

#### **Prosecuting Attorney**

The Commission discussed the salary for the Prosecuting Attorney.

Consensus: A tentative decision was made to link the Prosecuting Attorney's salary to the salary established for Superior Court Judges as set by the State of Washington. This would be the same linkage as was set by the prior Whatcom County Salary Commission.

#### **Sheriff**

The Commission discussed that the Whatcom County Sheriff is in charge of a jail and many County Sheriffs are not. They estimated that the population the Sheriff serves is roughly the same as the City of Bellingham. The point was raised that the Sheriff also runs the Department of Emergency Services.

Consensus: A tentative decision was made that the Sheriff's salary would be increased only as much as the other positions unless another member brings forward a compelling reason to increase it more.

#### **County Council**

The Clark County Council salaries were discussed.

A commission member stated that the Charter Review Commission is putting forward a proposal that could go on the ballot to link council salaries to 60% of the County Executive's salary. He said they have not voted on it yet, but that could negate the Salary Commission's decision on council member salaries.

There was discussion about the difficulty in estimating how many hours council members work, and therefore, difficulty in deciding on appropriate pay. A commission member estimated that the current salary pays \$16 per hour if the council member worked 30 hours per week. There was agreement that this seems like a low hourly wage for the position.

Commission members agreed that the council members have a lot of information to sift through and tough decisions to make with a lot of money involved and future ramifications for the entire county.

The point was made that the cost of election may keep many from running for a part-time job.

Commission members agreed that they would like to hear from more council members or former council members regarding how many hours per week they spend on council business.

It was decided that an email request should be sent, through a council staff person, to the council members who did not respond to the original information request.

## **F. NEXT STEPS**

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, April 1<sup>st</sup> at 4:00 p.m. at the Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA).

Subsequent meetings were tentatively set for Wednesday, April 8<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> also at 4:00 p.m. at WTA and will be held depending on the amount of time needed to finish the work that is due May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Chairman Jensen stated that the 2013 Salary Commission put out the tentative salary schedule for public viewing and then held a Public Hearing before the final vote. The commission members in attendance expressed their approval of that approach.

Chairman Jensen said he would like to have the final document signed by all commission members.

## **I. ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Jensen at 5:57 p.m.

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Minutes approved by the Commission in open public meeting on \_\_\_\_\_.  
Date

**Whatcom County Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials  
Whatcom County, Washington**

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**Allan Jensen**  
**Chairman**

**Attest:**

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**Vicki G. Esser**  
**Commission Administrative Assistant**

## AGENDA ITEM D.1 & D.2

### Andy Rowison

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**From:** Nanette Kallunki <NKallunk@co.whatcom.wa.us>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 23, 2015 1:23 PM  
**To:** Andy Rowison  
**Subject:** RE: salary commission

Hi Andy,

There were no salary increases in 2014 for unrepresented employees. There was a 1.7% increase in 2015 and will be another 1.7% increase in 2016. Here is the elected official salary information for 2005 and 2010:

Whatcom County Elected Official Salary					
	2005	2010	% Increase		<u>2015</u>
Executive	\$ 8,975	\$ 12,252	36.51%		\$12,822
Prosecuting Attorney	\$ 8,887	\$ 12,129	36.48%		\$13,030
Sheriff	\$ 7,287	\$ 9,946	36.49%		\$10,755
Auditor	\$ 5,901	\$ 8,054	36.49%		\$8,429
Treasurer	\$ 5,901	\$ 8,054	36.49%		\$8,429
Assessor	\$ 5,901	\$ 8,054	36.49%		\$8,429

Thanks for your role in keeping this process moving. Be sure to let me know if you need further information.

### Nan Kallunki

HR Associate Manager  
Whatcom County Administrative Services  
311 Grand Ave., Suite 107  
Bellingham, WA 98225-4038  
360-676-6802 ext. 50549  
[nkallunk@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:nkallunk@co.whatcom.wa.us)

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**From:** Andy Rowison [mailto:[andyr@ridewta.com](mailto:andyr@ridewta.com)]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 23, 2015 9:23 AM  
**To:** Nanette Kallunki  
**Subject:** salary commission

Hi Nan,

In follow up to our conversation, the Salary Commission has requested the following"

- Non-represented salary increases for 2014 and 2015, and 2016 if known. (I know you gave me this information verbally, but I would appreciate you sending it back in writing.)
- The actual salaries for the 6 elected positions for 2005 and 2010.

Thank you,

## AGENDA ITEM D.3

### Average hourly wage, unadjusted, all industries except federal government and NAICS 814 (household employers)

1990 through 2013

Source: Employment Security Department/LMPA

Unadjusted for inflation	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Whatcom	\$12.02	\$12.57	\$12.91	\$13.45	\$13.94	\$14.43	\$14.69	\$15.10	\$15.65	\$16.13	\$16.68	\$17.44
Percent Change		4.58%	2.70%	4.18%	3.64%	3.52%	1.80%	2.79%	3.64%	3.07%	3.41%	4.56%

Unadjusted for inflation	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Whatcom	\$17.62	\$18.12	\$18.23	\$19.14	\$19.91	\$20.83	\$21.77	\$22.39	\$22.58	\$23.76	\$24.24	\$25.06
Percent Change	1.03%	2.84%	0.61%	4.99%	4.02%	4.62%	4.51%	2.85%	0.85%	5.23%	2.02%	3.38%

## AGENDA ITEM D.4a

March 24, 2015

Hi Andy –

Thanks for asking for our input. I intentionally did not respond to the first email because I am sure any answer I give will be used by certain political operatives to portray me as a self-serving meddler seeking to enrich myself. But, if it will really help you, here are some thoughts.

- 1) My scope of work is the legislative branch of government. We are the budgetary authority for all Whatcom County government. The County has over 800 employees and a budget approaching \$200,000,000. We determine land use and zoning throughout the County. We set policy for the Health Department, Planning Department, and Public Works. We authorize budgets for those departments as well as the Sheriff, the Jail, Auditor, Assessor, Prosecuting Attorney, Treasurer, Judges, and Public Defender. We deal with everything from Lake Whatcom's drinking water quality, roads and flooding in East County, to garbage collection in Point Roberts, to ferry operations for Lummi Island. We serve on multiple boards and commissions for various agencies. I currently serve on the board of Opportunity Council, North Sound Mental Health Administration, and Northwest Regional Council. In the past 5 years I have been on the Marine Resources Board, Economic Development Council, Bellingham International Airport Advisory Committee, and the East Whatcom Community Coalition – and probably some others that I am forgetting.
- 2) I was attracted to the job because I love my community. I was experiencing a high degree of frustration with the national government and I wanted to help my community solve problems. I felt that I was qualified and had job flexibility to really study the issues and make good decisions.
- 3) I stay in the job because I have met so many good, smart, dedicated, hard-working, thoughtful, and honest people throughout government and the private sector all throughout the County that are an inspiration to learn from and to work with. I am continually motivated to work hard because I am in a position help chart a better course for the County.
- 4) The job can be emotionally exhausting. The toxic language, abuse, and unfounded accusations that shower down upon elected officials is disturbing. The time commitment is also incredible. Aside from the many hours of meetings, we have lots of correspondence with constituents, we have to study and learn about new issues all the time, and we are constantly asked to appear at events to make speeches or communicate about issues. I actually enjoy most of those responsibilities, but it has come at the expense of time spent with my family and it has radically impacted my business.
- 5) It really depends on the week. On average it is over 20 hours per week, but it can be anywhere from 10 hours (i.e. Christmas week) to 30 hours (i.e. Comp plan updates, jail planning, Lummi Tribe negotiations, etc.).

Ken Mann

## AGENDA ITEM D.4b

Hi Andy,

Sorry for the delay answering these questions. Here are my short answers.

### **1) What is your scope of work?**

Council member's job mainly involves setting county policy and reviewing and setting the budget to implement those policies. We also serve as one avenue of liaison for citizens to County government and serve on multiple policy and advisory committees. As Council chair I have additional duties setting agendas, signing documents, and serving on additional internal committees.

### **2) What attracted you to this job?**

Before joining the Council in 2006 I had spent 15 years interacting with the County on a variety of issues and was interested in providing some of my expertise to move many of these policy issues forward.

### **3) What keeps you in your job?**

Once elected I realized the vast breadth of issues that face the Council. I still find learning about these issues and then working with citizens to solve issues to be fascinating and rewarding.

### **5) *For council members only*, how many hours a week do you spend on council business?**

Hours per week varies a good deal depending on current issues, meeting schedules, etc. On average I would say I spend the following hours per month/week:

- 12 hours every other Tuesday (Council meeting days) = 24 hour/month
  - 3 hours every other Tuesday (off Council meeting days = 6 hours
  - 3 hours per month per advisory committee X 8 committees = 24 hours
  - Chair duties = 5 hours per week = 20 hours
  - Citizen correspondence and meetings = 8 hours
  - Packet review, reading, policy development, other meetings = 20 hours
- Total = 102 hours/month or 25.5/week

Hope that helps.

Carl

Carl Weimer, Member  
Whatcom County Council