

WHATCOM COUNTY COMMISSION ON SALARIES FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

MINUTES

Thursday, January 19, 2017, 4:00 p.m.

Whatcom Transportation Authority Board Room
4111 Bakerview Spur
Bellingham, WA

A. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Andy Rowilson, Commission Facilitator at 4:00 p.m.

B. INTRODUCTIONS / ATTENDANCE

Members Present: Mike Arbiter, Kristi Birkeland, Justin Iverson, George (Steve) King, Brian Lydiard, Randy (Todd) Morris, Jason Russell, Diana Schmidt, Jon Sitkin, Wendy Wefer-Clinton

Members Absent: None

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

Others Present: None

Each Commission member introduced themselves. Three members are returning from the 2015 commission including Mike Arbiter, Kristi Birkeland, and Brian Lydiard.

C. REVIEW OF SALARY COMMISSION HANDBOOK

Mr. Rowilson reviewed the sections in the binder provided.

D. OVERVIEW OF COMMISSION'S DUTIES

D.1 Ordinance

Mr. Rowilson reviewed the Commission's purpose and duties based on County Ordinance No. 2012-008 which established the Commission. He stated that the commission does not merely give a recommendation on salaries, but they will set the salaries for the County elected officials for 2018 and 2019.

D.2 Timeline

Mr. Rowlson stated that the final work product of the commission is due to the County Council by May 1, 2017. He stated that this deadline is necessary for County budgeting and for setting filing fees for elected positions.

E. SALARY DISCUSSION

E.1 Identify Information Needs

Mr. Rowlson stated that one item the last commission used was a table of data available through the Association of Washington Counties. He said the Commission looked at elected official salaries for the closest few counties above and below Whatcom County based on different categories in the table such as population, assessed value, number of employees, and annual budget.

A question was raised about benefits. Mr. Rowlson stated that the commission does not have the authority to change benefits, but can use them as a factor when considering salary decisions. He said previous commissions found that most elected officials have good insurance benefits and trying to compare details of benefits was time-consuming and not very useful.

The group discussed and agreed that looking at non-insurance benefits such as a cell phone or car allowance, or deferred compensation might be useful.

Mr. Rowlson handed out and reviewed a list of information requested from the previous commission at their first meeting, as well as some recommended changes.

A commission member asked if there are private sector occupations that are comparable. Mr. Rowlson stated that is a good point, but it is hard to get data from private companies who are under no obligation to provide it, and if we do collect that data and it gets in our records, it becomes a public record. It was suggested that the commission could request comments on compensation from private sector organizations like the Whatcom Business Alliance.

There was further discussion about the information desired.

It was decided that the following information would be requested:

1. Current non-insurance benefit information for Whatcom County elected officials. (*Current salaries are already known*)
2. Current job descriptions for all Whatcom County elected officials
3. AWC's table of information on counties in Washington State

4. Elected official current salary and non-insurance benefit information for AWC comparable counties (four above and four below based on population, assessed valuation, number of employees, and budget)
5. Basis used for Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA's) for comparable counties
6. Current salaries and non-insurance benefits of elected officials and other appropriate positions from the City of Bellingham, City of Ferndale, City of Lynden, and the Port of Bellingham
7. State of WA Attorney General and Governor's salary and non-insurance benefit information
8. Consumer Price Index for the last ten years (bring CPI information used in 2015 current, adding the last two years)
9. Names of the counties used as comparables by the 2015 Commission.
10. Compression salaries (salaries of closest direct reports to elected officials in Whatcom County)
11. COLA's received by Whatcom County employees for the last five years
12. Cost of living by County provided by the Office of Financial Management (OFM)

E.2 Consider Scheduling Elected Officials' Comments

There was discussion followed by agreement to invite Whatcom County elected officials to attend the February 16th meeting to speak to the Commission or to provide comments in writing.

The Commission discussed whether they are setting salaries for the specific individuals based on their performance, or for the position only. It was agreed that the role of the commission is to set the salaries for the positions and let the voters decide on the performance of individuals in those positions with their vote.

It was decided that the following questions would be asked of the elected officials when requesting their comments:

- 1) Please describe the job duties of your office.
- 2) Do you feel the compensation matches the requirements of the job? If not, why?
- 3) Is there something else you think we should be aware of?
- 4) For County Council Members: How many hours a week do you spend on council business?

E.3 Consider Scheduling Public Comments

It was agreed to set a public comment period at the beginning of each meeting. Discussion will take place at the next meeting about setting a Public Hearing to receive comment on the Commission's draft salary schedule once it is available.

F. SELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON

F.1 Nominations and Voting

Kristi Birkeland nominated Brian Lydiard for Commission Chairman. Mike Arbiter seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations.

Brian Lydiard was elected Committee Chairman by unanimous vote.

F.2 Meeting Quorum

Mr. Rowson provided information on the definition chosen by the previous Salary Commission for a quorum and opened discussion on this topic.

MOTION BY MIKE ARBITER, SECONDED BY WENDY WEFER-CLINTON THAT THE COMMISSION ADOPT THE FOLLOWING DEFINITION OF A QUORUM AND VOTING REQUIREMENTS:

- Five commission members out of ten are required for a quorum.
- An affirmative vote of the majority of the members present is required to take action, except for approval of the final work product.
- The final work product requires six affirmative votes for approval.

The motion passed unanimously.

G. CONFIRM FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE

It was agreed that the Commission will meet monthly on the third Thursday of each month through April 2017 and additional meetings will be added, if needed. The meetings will take place from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Whatcom Transportation Authority, 4111 Bakerview Spur, Bellingham, WA.

The meeting dates based on the above schedule are:

Thursday, February 16th

Thursday, March 16th

Thursday, April 20th

H. OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT TRAINING

The Commission watched the Attorney General's training video on the Open Public Meetings Act.

I. ADJOURN

MOTION BY ARBITER, SECONDED BY IVERSON TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

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

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

**Brian Lydiard
Chairman**

Attest:

**Vicki G. Esser
Commission Administrative Assistant**