



To: Whatcom County Council  
From: Whatcom County Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials  
Subject: Elected Official Salary Schedule for 2022 and 2023  
Date: April 26, 2021

The Whatcom County Salary Commission began meeting in January 2021. The Commission met six times from January through April to establish the most appropriate salaries for County Elected Officials for the next two calendar years of 2022 and 2023.

The Commission reviewed the work of previous Salary Commissions, the current salaries of other county and state-level Elected Officials around the state and other substantial information provided by the Whatcom County Human Resources Department. During their meetings, the Commission received and considered written and oral presentations from Elected Officials and the general public. Members of the Commission actively participated in the process and shared their unique perspectives that led to the Commission's final salary placement decision.

The Commission wants to thank the County Executive's Office for providing to the Commission the competent and very able assistance of Kara Turner and Pat Elwell. Their work with the Commission and substantial contributions allowed us to properly and timely complete our mission.

It has been an honor and privilege to be selected and serve on the Whatcom County Salary Commission.

DocuSigned by:  
*Dewey Dester*  
Dewey Dester, Citizen at Large  
Commission Chair

DocuSigned by:  
*Jill Bernstein*  
Jill Bernstein, Legal Profession

DocuSigned by:  
*Lance Calloway*  
Lance Calloway, Business

DocuSigned by:  
*James Farmer*  
James Farmer, Citizen at Large

DocuSigned by:  
*Tracey Gulliford*  
Tracey Gulliford, Citizen at Large

DocuSigned by:  
*Karen Peila*  
Karen Peila, Citizen at Large

DocuSigned by:  
*Lori Province*  
Lori Province, Organized Labor

DocuSigned by:  
*Beth Vonnegut*  
Beth Vonnegut, Personnel Management

DocuSigned by:  
*Matthew Williams*  
Matthew Williams, Citizen at Large

## Whatcom County Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials

### Future Salary Placements April 2021

Position	2021 (Current)	2022	2023
Assessor	\$126,264	\$133,332	\$136,532
Auditor	\$126,264	\$133,332	\$136,532
Treasurer	\$126,264	\$133,332	\$136,532
Sheriff	\$172,428	\$176,756	\$181,193
Prosecuting Attorney	\$194,664	\$199,675	\$203,169
County Executive	\$194,664	\$205,665	\$209,264
County Council	\$40,176	\$56,881	\$58,246

*Note: The description below summarizes the general data reviewed in the Commission's deliberations and captures the overall intent. Should any discrepancies arise from these summaries, the Commission refers to the above numbers as the final approved compensation.*

#### **DATA REVIEWED BY COMMISSION**

In determining the appropriate compensation for the Elected Officials, the Salary Commission reviewed and considered the following primary data:

- County Charter – Article 3 with Elected Official's responsibilities and duties
- Department responsibilities and FTE count within County budget document
- Whatcom County insurance benefits coverage and cost
- Historical Whatcom County Elected Official Compensation
- Previous Salary Commission's decisions and data considerations
- 2020 salary data from the six county comparables: Cowlitz, Benton, Skagit, Thurston, Kitsap and Yakima
- 2021 Top step compensation of deputy director (second-in command) positions
- Washington State Superior Court Judge Salaries
- Washington State Legislatures Salaries
- Whatcom County collective bargaining agreement historical COLAs by group

- 2021 Salary Matrix for unrepresented employees and historical COLA's
- Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPI for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) over last 10 years
- Elected Official written submissions (EOS1-EOS7)
- Elected Official public comments (see minutes)

## **SALARY PLACEMENTS**

The Commission minutes over the various meetings reflect the review and discussions of the information requested and presented, including the written statements and documents submitted by the Elected Officials. The final salary placements focused on the following information:

**Assessor/Auditor/Treasurer:** There was significant discussion regarding the responsibilities of these positions, comparing them to the six county comparable salary data, the salary of their respective second-in-command positions and to other County management positions. The Commission reviewed and listened to significant data presented by the Elected Officials holding these roles. After deliberation, the Commission set 2022 compensation to align with the top step of Range 440 of the 2021 Unrepresented Employees, Group B-Management Salary Matrix and applied a 2.4% COLA increase for 2023.

**Sheriff:** The Commission reviewed and discussed a variety of salary data points for the Sherriff position, including the six-county comparables, second-in-command pay and historical adjustments to the position. Based on this data, and the written statement provided by the Sheriff, the Commission adjusted the compensation based upon the Cost-of Living Adjustment (CPI-U) of the five-year average of 2.5% for 2022 and for 2023.

**Prosecuting Attorney:** The Commission reviewed and discussed various compensation data for the Prosecuting Attorney, including the six-county comparables, second-in-command pay, historical adjustments and Washington State Superior Court Judge historical salary data. Additionally, the Commission received multiple documents with compensation data and commentary from the current Prosecuting Attorney at several Commission meetings. After thoughtful consideration and discussion, the Commission set the final compensation for 2022 and 2023 to more closely match the Washington Superior Court Judge pay.

**County Executive:** It was noted that there was little comparable County data for Whatcom County's Executive position due to the difference in governance structures and responsibilities along with the size of comparable Charter Counties in Washington. The Commission reviewed and discussed the County Executive's responsibilities and historical compensation. The Commission expressed a desire to recognize that the County Executive has the highest level of responsibility and accountability for overall County government operations and, therefore, set the final compensation to be 3% above the Prosecuting Attorney for 2022 and 3% above the Prosecuting Attorney for 2023.

**County Council:** The Commission reviewed a variety of compensation data points and conducted independent research talking to various Council members, elected officials from other jurisdictions, as well as hearing public comment from a current County Council member.

The Commission considered a variety of factors including historical compensation data, County Council compensation from other Counties, State Legislators' compensation, benefits coverage, and estimated hours expected and/or required each week to appropriately perform the functions of the Council business throughout the year. The Commission set the final compensation at the same rate of Washington State Legislators for 2022 and a 2.4% COLA for 2023.