

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

**MINUTES**

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2021 4:00PM**

**Virtual Zoom Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81236994438?pwd=N3J4RVRtQXRzYXVveCtiRDdyU1NrUT09>

**ATTENDANCE**

Members Present: Jill Bernstein, Lance Calloway, Dewey Desler, Tracie Gult, Philip Howell, Karen Peila, Lori Province, Beth Vonnegut, Matthew Williams

Members Absent: Jim Farmer

Staff Present: Kara Turner, Turner HR Consulting and Commission Facilitator, Pat Elwell  
Commission Administrative Assistant

Guests: Whatcom County Prosecuting Attorney Eric Richey, Whatcom County Auditor  
Diana Bradrick, Whatcom County Treasurer Steve Oliver, Whatcom County  
Assessor Rebecca Xczar, Whatcom County Councilmember Rud Browne,

**A. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Dewey Desler at 4:03PM.

**B. APPROVAL OF JANUARY 18, 2021 MINUTES**

On page 3 of the minutes, it was requested to correct Commissioner Province's first name from Leora to Lori.

**Motion was made by Commissioner Lance Calloway and seconded by Commissioner Lori Province to approve the minutes as corrected. The Motion passed unanimously.**

**C. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**D. GENERAL COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR**

Chair Desler acknowledged the volume of information the commission will be reviewing. Those elected and local officials present were welcomed and were requested to speak on the key points of their submitted presentations and noted there would be the opportunity for Q&A at the end of each presentation.

**E. ELECTED OFFICIAL COMMENTS**

ERIC J. RICHEY, WHATCOM COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

C.1. Verbal Comment.

- Consider matching the Whatcom County Prosecutor's salary to the Washington Superior Court Judicial Salary; consider setting a salary schedule effective mid-year to follow that of Superior Court Judge's salary schedule
- Consider removing Cowlitz County in comparable analysis
- Consider including Cost of Living Adjustments
- Consider assuring elected officials' salaries are equal to or greater than Whatcom County department heads

Mr. Richey noted a math error on page 8 of his memo (EOS-1) and will provide a corrected paragraph. Question and Answer followed.

C.2. Written Comment.

Reference meeting materials EOS-1 and EOS-1a.

BILL ELFO, WHATCOM COUNTY SHERIFF

C.1. Verbal Comment. Sheriff Elfo was not present to provide verbal comment

C.2. Written Comment.

Reference meeting materials EOS-2

DIANA BRADRICK, WHATCOM COUNTY AUDITOR

C.1. Verbal Comment.

- The Auditor is making less than other department heads within the county; consider adjusting the Auditor's salary to align with the HR, IT and Finance Directors
- Salary compression exists between elected officials and their second in command; consider addressing
- Consider Skagit and Cowlitz counties as not comparable to Whatcom County
- Consider including Cost of Living Adjustments

Question and Answer Followed.

C.2. Written Comment.

Reference meeting materials EOS-3 and EOS-3a

STEVE OLIVER, WHATCOM COUNTY TREASURER

C.1. Verbal Comment.

- Consider addressing salary compression between elected and second-in-command as well as internal equity between elected officials and department heads by:
  - aligning the County Treasure salary with that of the County Finance Director
  - including COLAs for elected officials
- Recognize Whatcom County's Home Rule Charter and its implications when comparing to other six counties for comparables
- Consider replacing six-county comparables model with local, similar in-scope positions, such as City, Port of Bellingham, etc.

Question and Answer Followed.

C.2. Written Comment.

Reference meeting materials EOS-4

REBECCA XCZAR, WHATCOM COUNTY ASSESSOR

C.1. Verbal Comment.

- Consider addressing salary compression between elected officials and second-in-command
- Consider unbalanced internal equity between elected officials and Whatcom County Department Heads; elected officials are department heads
- Recognize that though elected officials participate in Public Employees Retirement Plan (PERS), there is a 5 year vesting requirement and elected officials serve for four years

Question and Answer Followed.

C.2. Written Comment.

Reference meeting materials EOS-5

RUD BROWNE, WHATCOM COUNTY COUNILMEMBER

C.1. Verbal Comment.

- Not running for re-election
- Current compensation is less than one day/week; time spent on council business is more than this. Estimates time is equal to a half-time position
- Council issues are becoming more complex; homelessness, housing, border issues, jail, etc. One needs to spend more time learning and addressing these issues

Question and Answer Followed.

C.2. Written Comment.

Reference meeting materials were not submitted

**F. INFORMATION REQUEST REVIEW**

Commission Facilitator Kara Turner summarized the meeting materials and data supplied for evaluation.

**G. DISCUSSION**

Due to limited time, a brief discussion was held around comments received and next steps.

**H. NEXT STEPS**

The commission will review materials and based on comments received, discuss at next meeting whether any additional ~~materials information~~ will be ~~requested~~needed. Commissioners were directed to submit additional questions to Facilitator, who will collate and present at next meeting.

Topics to be discussed at next meeting include:

- COLAs
- Wage compression and if/how to establish permanent buffer
- Review of County Charter (duties/responsibilities of council and definition of full-time vs part-time)
- Review Charter of Salary Commission

**I. ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 6:25PM.

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Dewey Desler**  
**Chair**

**Attest:**

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**Patricia F. Elwell**  
**Commission Administrative Assistant**