

**2WHATCOM COUNTY COMMISSION ON SALARIES  
FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS**

**MINUTES**

**MONDAY, JANUARY 18, 2021 4:00PM**

**Virtual Zoom Meeting**

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87919646964?pwd=ZTZlWSt3cGpwM0lEN3ZzNFBOYmVGZz09>**

**ATTENDANCE**

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

Members Absent: None

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

**A. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Facilitator Kara Turner at 4:06PM.

**B. INTRODUCTIONS**

Each commissioner introduced themselves, providing employment background and how they came to be appointed to the commission.

**C. OVERVIEW OF COMMISSION'S DUTIES**

**C.1 Ordinance**

Ordinance 2012-08 creating the Whatcom County Commission on salaries for elected officials can be found on the Whatcom County website at <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/576/Salary-Commission>.

**C.2 Timeline**

The commission's work must be completed by 5/1/2021 and will take effect for the time period 1/1/2022 through 1/1/2023.

**D. OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT TRAINING**

**D.1 Expectations for Boards and Commissions**

Attachment A (Item D.1), "Expectations for Boards and Commissions" was reviewed and discussed.

**D.2 Training Presentation**

Due to technical difficulties, viewing of the video training on the Open Public Meetings Act was postponed until after the break.

## E. INFORMATION REVIEW

### E.1 **Review Last Commission's Conclusions and Work Product**

Attachment B (Item E.1) "2019 Commission Conclusions & Work Product" were reviewed and discussed. The salary commission is tasked with determining a) whether the elected positions are where they should be in comparison to market and, b) what, if any, Cost of Living (COLA) should be granted. Discussion followed around the historical work process, as well as the logistics and impact of needing to work remotely. Commissioners requested website links of the previous salary commission's agendas, minutes and work product be provided for their individual review.

The commission took a five-minute break.

The commissioners viewed The Washington State Attorney General Public Meetings Act Training video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9yTtVGToW1A>). Adjustments to the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) in order to accommodate public safety during the pandemic were reviewed. Discussion followed. Commissioners with additional questions or comments that occur between meetings may direct them to the Facilitator, Kara Turner. She will then disseminate the information to the entire commission. In addition, Kara will be the liaison between the commission and Whatcom County Human Resources Department.

### E.2 **Identify Information Needs**

Attachment C (Item E.2) "Primary Information Requested by 2019 Commission" was reviewed. Discussion followed. Facilitator, Kara Turner, summarized the request for additional information as:

- Whatcom County organizational chart with FTE count
- Summary of duties for each county department, from county's budget document
- Current job descriptions of elected officials
- Salaries of 6 comparable counties (used for County bargaining units and unrepresented staff): three above and three below when sorted by assessed value, population, number of employee and budget. Counties: Benton, Cowlitz, Kitsap, Skagit, Thurston and Yakima. **Note: The Commission does want to verify that when sorted, these still remain the current three above and below - if not then add the new County to the existing 6.**
- Salaries of Whatcom County department deputies (2nd in command positions). It was also requested that the top Public Defender positions salary be provided, along with any explanation regarding how second in command salaries are set.
- COLA's for each labor contract (last three years and future if known)
- Consumer Price Index (All Urban Consumers – West Urban) for the last ten years
- Washington Citizen's Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials (2019 & 2020) for Judges and Legislative Branch
- Value of Whatcom County benefits package, along with verification that elected official positions continue get the 2% deferred comp match
- Any actions/response to COVID that has impacted wages or benefits (layoffs, furloughs, etc.)
- Employment Security latest wage report for Bellingham.

### **E.3 Consider Scheduling Elected Officials' Comments**

The commissioners would like to hear from the elected officials and their next meeting in February. Facilitator Kara Turner will communicate this request to the county.

### **E.4 Consider Scheduling Public Comments**

The Commissioners discussed the logistics of public comment. Notice of the meeting as well as the zoom link are publicized on the Whatcom County website. The public may observe the commissioners' meetings and it was suggested that time be set aside at the beginning of each meeting for public comment. In addition, there will be a public hearing when the commissioners work product is ready for review.

## **F. SELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON AND VICE-CHAIRPERSON**

### **F.1 Nomination and Voting**

Motion was made by Commissioner Calloway and seconded by Commissioner Province that Commissioner Dewey Desler assume the position of Chair. The Motion passed unanimously.

Motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein and seconded by Commissioner Calloway that Commissioner Leora Province assume the position of Vice-Chair. The Motion passed unanimously.

### **F.2 Meeting Quorum**

The commissioners discussed what should comprise a quorum and what would require passage of a motion and the final work product. Motion was made by Chair Dewey Desler and seconded by Commissioner Gulit that 6 (six) members present would make a quorum; that 4 (four) of the quorum or if more than a quorum was present a majority would pass Motions and that 6 (six) of the 10 (ten) members would be required to pass the final work product. The Motion passed unanimously.

## **G. CONFIRM FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE**

### **G.1 Meeting Dates**

Initially, the Facilitator proposed the third Monday of each month, February 15, March 15, and April 19. Discussion followed and concern was expressed that conducting business remotely might take longer. Commissioner Guilt moved and Commissioner Province seconded that the commission meet February 15, March 1, March 15, April 5 and April 19, noting that if not needed, these additional meetings could be cancelled. The Motion passed.

It was confirmed that the Zoom link for future meetings will always be documented at the top of the next meeting's agenda. Commissioner Farmer expressed concern that this may not be easily accessible to the public. Facilitator Turner will check with Whatcom County staff to see if they can call out the meeting information in a different manner.

The logistics of managing public comment at each of the meetings was discussed.

The logistics of acquiring signatures will be addressed by the facilitator and administrative assistant.

**H. ADJOURN**

Motion was made by Commissioner Vonnegut and seconded by Commissioner Williams to adjourn. The Motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:30PM.

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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**

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**Dewey Desler  
Chair**

**Attest:**

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**Patricia F. Elwell  
Commission Administrative Assistant**