



Snohomish County
Citizens' Commission on Salaries of Elected Officials
June 1, 2016

Commissioners present: Suzan Sturholm, Ed Triezenberg, Erica Temple, Steven Knox

Commissioners absent: Emily Guildner, Brandon Hall, David Fairchild, Christopher Stecher, Dakota Smith, Alzada Nye

Staff present:

Marcia Isenberg, Deputy Executive
Shawna Ousse, Human Resources

Location: Executive's Office Conference Room, 6th Floor, Admin. West building, County Campus

Minutes

Meeting was called to order at 6:05pm by Chair, Erica Temple.

Erica asked for approval of the minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously as written.

Introductions.

Erica invited Councilmember Terry Ryan to offer comments. Councilmember Ryan thanked commission for volunteering their time. He mentioned that we trust your judgment and that he is happy to serve community and gave examples of how he has helped his constituents.

Erica asked Councilmember Ryan if he feels as if the salaries are high enough to attract quality candidates. Councilmember Ryan mentioned that he took a pay cut to take this job, but did it because his dad was a public servant and this was important to him. He mentioned that it is hard to get professional people with a great business background to run for office. To some degree it does, but that is true anywhere.

Suzan was given the Open Public Meetings Act and Public Records Act materials. Marcia mentioned that emails should go through her and recommended that Commission Members set up a separate email account for Commission business.

The following documents were handed out:

- Updated Elected Official salary comparable data for the Assessor, Auditor, Clerk, Prosecuting Attorney, Sheriff and Treasurer with corrected Skagit County information. The original information Human Resources received was not accurate.
- The requested COLA information for the last five years. Marcia mentioned that the Deputy Sheriff's Association and County Clerks Association have not yet settled for 2015 and 2016.

- The requested salaries for the top three employees for Elected Officials.

In regards to the top three employees, Suzan asked if these salaries are based on time in the position. Marcia mentioned that they are considered professional employees. They are eligible for step increases and COLAs.

Erica mentioned that the electeds don't have paid vacation and sick leave, but do get a vehicle allowance.

Suzan asked about a review process for elected officials.

Marcia mentioned that elected officials are accountable to the public and do not receive performance evaluations. Attendance is only taken for meeting minutes.

In regards to the top three employees, Ed asked if these are at the top step. Marcia mentioned that it varies.

Erica asked members how they want to proceed and suggested going around the room.

Steven mentioned that he doesn't have a priority list. Comparable information is helpful, but we need to be looking at King County and Pierce County and cost of housing. I think we should go position by position. The last salary commission did a good job at recognizing the long term issues and coming out of the recession. They had to make up for lost time.

Erica mentioned that King County seems a little different because of the population and cost of living and would look more at Pierce County and that it is relevant that the largest union just settled their contract for 2.5% for 2017 and 2.5% for 2018. Erica mentioned that she doesn't want to give our electeds much more than that.

Suzan mentioned that the Deputy Sheriffs have not settled, and asked if they have tenure positions. Marcia responded that classified positions receive annual step increases until they reach top step. For management exempt employees the steps are more optional and based on their performance.

Erica mentioned that Deputy Prosecutor 1 positions for example, once they are at top step they only get COLAs unless they move up to Deputy Prosecutor 2

Suzan mentioned that a 3.1% increase is average for private employers.

Ed mentioned that he negotiates contracts. Last time, the Salary Commission did a great job bringing them up to the average. I would be happy if we tied it to AFSCME and set it at 2.5% and 2.5%. When you tie it CPI you tend to lose ground.

Erica suggested starting with 2.5% and then look at every position individually.

Shawna mentioned that three Elected Officials had reached out to her about being available for comments. Assessor Hjelle was unable to attend this meeting, but asked if the Commissioners had specific questions about the Assessor's position. Clerk Kraski was unable to attend, but asked if the

Commissioners need any information about the Clerk's Office and offered a tour. Auditor Weikel was unable to attend, but asked about Elected Official comments at a future meeting.

Suzan asked if the Assessor is required to have a degree. Marcia responded that residency and age were minimum requirements for elected officials.

Erica mentioned that the Assessor's salary is lower than Pierce County and the average and that is the same as Auditor and close to the Clerk.

Steven mentioned that King County is way up there and that they have had a lot of growth. Coming from the private sector a position at \$115,000 is low.

Erica mentioned she would reconsider kicking up to the average.

Erica mentioned that the Auditor is lower than Pierce County and lower than the chief deputy auditor. Skagit County is skewing the averages. We want somebody that is highly qualified

Marcia mentioned that all but two Auditors are elected and Seattle and King County are appointed. Ed mentioned that Clark and Kitsap Counties have uniform pay for certain positions.

Steven mentioned that the Assessor and Auditor are often identical in other jurisdictions. Should we stay consistent for both positions?

Erica mentioned that the top three salaries for the people that work for the Assessor are lower than those that work for the Auditor.

Steven asked if the chief deputy runs the Assessor's office. Marcia responded that in some cases it is possible and that the current Assessor was the deputy for many years. Also that the Assessor, Auditor and Clerk all worked for the office before being elected. Erica mentioned that these position rarely open up and that generally the most qualified person is elected. Marcia mentioned that these offices usually open up because of term limits.

Erica mentioned that the Clerk's salary is lower than Pierce County, but they are appointed there. All salaries are a bit lower than Pierce County and lower than Kitsap County.

Steven asked Erica or Marcia to comment on the comparison between the Elected Official and the top three employee's salary in the Council office.

Marcia mentioned that it is not unusual for the highest paid staff employees to earn more than the elected official. Council staff positions do often earn more than Councilmembers.

Erica mentioned that the Prosecuting Attorney's salary is tied to the salary of the Superior Court Judges. King County is not significantly higher. Possibly not touch the salary too much. Marcia asked Erica, not touch at all, but continue to tie to superior Court judges? Steven asked why it is tied. Marcia responded that they are both advocates for the system and represent the people in different roles. They are creatures of the state. Steven clarified with Erica that the Prosecuting Attorney's salary doesn't stand out as much for needing a change.

Erica mentioned that Sheriff's Office deputies make more with overtime than possibly the Sheriff. Steven asked if the top three positions in Sheriff's Office are eligible for overtime. Staff will follow up to confirm.

Erica mentioned that some of the salaries need well over 2.5% to come up to average.

Suzan mentioned it is important to start off with what is competitive and that she struggles with somebody in charge of a department getting paid less.

Erica mentioned that somebody in charge of Auditor's office might have more experience.

Marcia mentioned that the Sheriff doesn't have to have experience as a sheriff deputy, but voters may prefer that.

Steven mentioned that the Sheriff's Office stands out as the big exception.

Suzan mentioned that it is a problem that you get a pay cut for a promotion.

Steven mentioned that as a citizen the morale is low in Sheriff's Offices and Police Departments.

Suzan mentioned that the Prosecuting Attorney's salary is not one we should look at for much change; that the Treasurer's salary definitely needs to change; that for the Sheriff, Prosecuting Attorney and Executive she would like to see more competitive salaries including Council. Clerk is fine. Auditor is low. Assessor is probably ok.

Suzan mentioned that as a citizen, the Sheriff's salary is one that really strikes her as low. She would interact more with this office as a citizen. They are the real representative of the county. The Treasurer's salary bothers me. Prosecuting Attorney's salary seems fine.

Steven asked Ed, are you fighting for a small percentage? Ed mentioned that with the private sector you can get 6% and 7% raises. With the public sector that is unheard of. Coming from labor I know the battles AFSCME has with the county. You want to pay people what they should really be paid. I don't think they are paying enough. Too much of an increase will stir up stuff within the office and union members. Tried to negotiate 3% raise and settled for 2.5%. At the same time, I think they should be making \$125,000 minimum.

Suzan asked about the health of the county. Marcia responded that with the general fund which is discretionary, we are struggling very significantly. We have a gap of about \$6 million between resources and anticipated expenditure. Lower than estimated revenues and higher cost. Property taxes only go up 1% per year. There is a request for a criminal justice sales tax. To save money we are now suggesting a remodel instead of a new courthouse because we need to put resources towards services and programs instead of debt

Suzan asked about non-union employee's salary and benefits. Marcia responded that the non-represented employees get the same COLA and benefits as AFSCME members.

Erica mentioned that it is not plush to work at the county. Marcia mentioned that the County is very mindful of the money spent and that 75% of our general fund goes towards criminal justice.

Steven asked about the number of represented employees, and their average salary. He asked if there was any chance of a reverse cause and effect. Does it give labor leverage?

Erica mentioned that the county offers good healthcare and a pension.

Ed mentioned that I assume every jurisdiction has PERS. Marcia responded that there are a couple of exceptions in the state, but most offer PERS.

Suzan asked if employees have to pay for parking. Marcia responded yes, and we pay market rates for parking in the garage.

Erica mentioned that although we were starting at 2.5% some of them seem like they need a bigger bump.

Steven asked Erica, what should we be thinking about and be ready to comment on next week?

Suzan asked about the difference percentage wise between the current Elected Official salaries versus the top staff person.

Ed mentioned that when you look at comparable information, there is often one rate for Auditor, Assessor and Clerk. How come Snohomish County doesn't do that? Marcia responded that the reason is unknown and it has been set by the Salary Commission for the last ten years.

Erica mentioned that to summarize we are looking at what do the unions get, the highest paid employees in the offices and the comparable counties. Then we need to decide the most important factor to consider.

Marcia confirmed that the Public Hearing is scheduled for June 8th beginning at 6:00pm. It does not have a certain end time.

Steven asked Marcia, if you were on this commission as a citizen with the same knowledge, what else would you consider? Marcia responded that they are doing a good job looking at parity internally and externally.

Ed asked Shawna to contact the Salary Commissioners not present.

Erica adjourned the meeting at 7:21pm.

Motions passed:

- The commission approved the minutes of the May 25th meeting

Action items for Staff:

- The number of employees in each of the county's bargaining units (e.g. AFSCME, DSA)
- The average pay and benefits for members of each of the bargaining units
- Are the top three positions in the Sheriff's Office eligible for overtime?