

## **Meeting Minutes**

### **Whatcom County Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials**

**Date:** March 26, 2025

**Time:** 4:00 PM PT

**Location:** Virtual Meeting

#### **1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 4:04 PM by Vice-Chair Foldenauer

#### **2. Roll Call - Attendance**

Quorum confirmed. Members present:

- Rebecca Sadwick Shaddix
- Guy Occhiogrosso
- Gary Wrightson
- Sonya Luhm
- Ralph Foldenauer
- Vanessa Bronsema
- Tracie Gult
- Daniel Darwin

Absent:

- Karen Funston
- Brennen Brown

#### **3. Meeting Minutes**

- The meeting minutes from the March 12th meeting were approved unanimously.

#### **4. Public Comment**

Dewey Dessler wrote a statement to the Commission (which is included as an attachment in the agenda).

Prosecutor Richey made public comment responding to the written statement and clarifying his point of view regarding how the Prosecutor salary has not exactly matched that of Superior Court Judge.

Facilitator Carroll clarified that the Commission could set the salaries many ways including a number, a formula, matching another position, etc. She encouraged the Commissioners to just think about how to make it very clear and free from misinterpretation.

#### **6. Old Business**

None.

#### **5. Presentation by Elected Officials**

The elected official gave a brief statement, and Commissioners asked additional or clarifying questions of the elected official. The questions were based on understanding the position and changes of the positions over time. The statements were made in the following order:

#### 5.1 Sherrif Donnell “Tank” Tanksley

### 7. New Business

None.

### 8. Information Review

#### 8.1 Review data needs by position

Commissioners discussed briefly how they feel they should proceed with discussion and recommendations. Facilitator Carroll suggested an approach to talk about each position and what additional data was needed. Commissioner Gulit suggested revisiting the conversations that were started last time and see if there is alignment around the philosophy of how to compare position. There was discussion about if other county data was relevant. Commissioners discussed the internal alignment with Second-in-Command but also discussed needing data on other department heads in the County. Facilitator Carroll stated she would get a list from the County of all department heads and their current salary.

#### 8.2 Discussion

Commissioners continued their discussions about how to set these salaries. Commissioner Gulit requested that information be consolidated to identify which positions the elected official considers their peer. She also discussed the issue of understanding what the private sector equivalent job would be. Commissioner Occhiogrosso brought forward the point that the elected official must live in Whatcom County, so comparing to another County may have challenges. Commissioner Wrightson brought up the issue that \$221,000 is a lot of money and a lot of people may want that position for that money. Commissioner Luhm brought forward the point that the uniqueness of this position being elected is that on a very rigid schedule the position is available. Chair Shaddix brought up the idea of an “acceptable mistake” and discussed how it could relate to setting salaries and trying to avoid issues that may come if the salaries are tied to a specific position and then something about that position changes or goes away. She mentioned that setting a number that may fall a little short may be less of a risk. Commissioner Bronsema confirmed that the idea of looking at data and doing a “temperature check” is a way to use the data but not rely on it alone. She suggested looking at a wider array of data but not as deep.

The Commissioners revisited the Summary Data document to re-visit what data they would like to look at. The issue of the definition of “comparable county” was raised and Facilitator Carroll walked the Commission through the different definitions of what has been used in the past. This was discussed in more detail. Facilitator Carroll mentioned that she would begin

to collect data for Counties prioritizing the Counties that appear in each definition of “comparable”. Commissioners agreed this would be the right approach.

Facilitator Carroll also agreed to put out an email after looking through the statements from the elected officials to identify what other positions data should be gathered. She requested that the Commissioners “reply all” with anything else that is needed.

Facilitator Carroll reviewed the timeline in light of the May 1<sup>st</sup> due date.

The Commissioner discussed the meeting scheduled and approved a change in meeting date from April 9<sup>th</sup> to April 16<sup>th</sup>. This was approved unanimously by those in attendance.

## **9. Next Steps**

9.1 The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 16<sup>th</sup> 2025 from 4-6 p.m.

## **7. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 6:05 PM by Chair Shaddix

**Prepared by:** Stacey Carroll, Facilitator

**Approval:** Approve by Salary Commission at the April 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting