

LEWIS COUNTY SALARY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

THURSDAY, MARCH 23, 2023
5:30 P.M.

County Courthouse Commissioner Meeting Room I Chehalis, WA 98532

I. Call to Order

Robert Berg called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m., Thursday, March 23, 2023.
Those in attendance were:

Salary Commission Members:

Robert Berg (in person)	Matt Brock (in person)
Rick Kuykendall (in person)	Kelly Bell (via Zoom)
Eric Carlson (in person)	Ted McC Carson (in person)
Martha Hunt (in person)	
Brandon Campbell (in person)	
Donna Moody (via Zoom)	

Other attendees:

Becky Butler (in person)	
Rieva Lester (in person)	
Kevin McDowell (in person)	

II. Verification of a Quorum

There is a quorum of seven (7) salary commission members at the beginning of the meeting.

III. Introductions

There were no introductions.

IV. Approval of Meeting Agenda

Bob Berg called for a motion to approve the meeting agenda. **Kelly Bell made a motion to approve the agenda for March 23, 2023. Rick Kuykendall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 7 to 0.**

V. Approval of Minutes for June 7, 2022

Bob Berg called for a motion to approve the minutes, as submitted, for the meeting on June 7, 2022. **Matt Brock made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted for June 7, 2022. Rick Kuykendall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 7 to 0.**

VI. Public Comment - Limit of 3 minutes

Bob Berg called for any public comments; there were no public comments.

VII. Review of Agenda Packet Materials

Bob Berg reviewed the agenda packet for the meeting. *See Meeting Agenda for March 23, 2023, which is incorporated herein by reference.*

VIII. Discussion / Decisions

A. Review of Salary Commission work and decisions since October, 2019 – present.

Mr. Berg gave a historical summary of the Lewis County Salary Commission's work beginning with the appointment of its members on October 19, 2019 by the Lewis County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC). Summary as follows:

1. The Lewis County Salary Commission has held thirteen meetings since October, 2019.
2. At the beginning in October, 2019, the BOCC tasked the Salary Commission with the plenary authority to set the BOCC salaries and recommend salaries of all other elected positions (except for, a portion of the prosecutor's salary; and wholly excluding the superior and district court judges, which are set by state).
3. The salary commission spent a great deal of time and effort in its first year of to arrive at a formula to set salaries for all elected officials. Instead of using the consumer price index (CPI) as a guide, the salary commission chose instead to use the *per capita* income of employed (working) people in Lewis County. In other words, any increase an elected official would receive would be **directly** linked to how much the average Lewis County worker saw any increase in their paycheck. This *per capita* (employed/payroll) income is measured and published by the Employment Security Department for Washington State. So, if the *per capita* working / payroll income went up by 2% annually for the average Lewis County worker, then that is how much an elected position's salary at Lewis County should be increased. *Note: The salary commission purposefully excluded income from pensions, social security, or other retired income streams. The reason is retired people are*

not working. The salary commission felt it was important to compare working citizens with working public elected officials.

4. In August 2020 the BOCC rescinded the salary commission's authority to recommend salaries for the other elected positions – instead choosing to set those salaries at 45% of the state salary schedule for elected superior court judges.
5. The Salary Commission was not happy with the BOCC's move to take away what it had originally tasked the volunteer Salary Commission to do. That resulted in the Salary Commission voting 4-3 in June, 2022 to deny the BOCC any raises of any amount. The Salary Commission tabled any consideration of any future salary increased to the BOCC until its next meeting in March, 2023. *See generally*, previous Lewis County Citizens Salary Commission Meeting Minutes.
6. Employment Security Department's payroll data for Washington State counties lags approximately two years. The most current data available is for the period 2018 – 2020.
7. In 2018 the per capita *employed/payroll* income for the average Lewis County resident was \$43,453. By 2020, the average payroll increased to \$48,214, or \$4,761. Therefore, the average Lewis County employee / payroll saw an increase of 10.95% of their annual earning from 2018 to 2020.
8. The BOCC current salaries are \$90,886 (base salary) before any benefits. In 2020 the Salary Commission recommended an increase of 8% of the other elected officials' salaries. Then, shortly thereafter, the BOCC gave the other elected officials another salary increase of 10% for a combined raise of approximately 18%. Those officials currently make \$92,442 per year as a base salary.
9. Next, if the Salary Commission were to apply the *per capita metric* it had decided to use back in 2020, then the BOCC would receive a 10.95% increase on their current salary of \$90,886, or \$9,952.01 for a total annual salary before any benefits of \$100,838.01.

B. General Discussion.

Rick Kuykendall made the following general comments:

- The Salary Commission has been working over the past three plus years and as a result has put together a pretty robust metric (*per capita payroll income*) framework to use to set Lewis County Elected officials' salaries.

- It makes sense to use the average Lewis County employed person's salary and any increase (or decrease) to set the salaries of the elected officials – linked to the same rate.
- As a federal worker, a salary of \$100,000 is not that much. All federal salaries are going up.
- BOCC elected officials do not make that much.
- It is appalling that we did not give the BOCC members a raise last year – the last time when we met.
- \$100,000 was a lot of money ten years ago, but it not that much now.
- When the Salary Commission did not give a raise to the BOCC last year – it was as if the Salary Commission was completely abandoning its own framework on how raises should be given. It is, instead, arbitrary, and capricious.

Martha Hunt made the following general comments:

- How much are the BOCC making currently?
- Agreed with not giving a raise last year, but now is willing to do so moving forward.

Eric Carlson made the following general comments:

- It is important to remember we decided to use the Employment Security Department's data on the *per capita* payroll income because it included only working / employed people. We do not want to include any non-payroll income in the *per capita* payroll calculations (Don't use St. Louis income data source because it includes non-payroll income.)
- The average Lewis County worker made \$48,214 per year in 2020 and not \$47,752 – which is assumed to be a typo in the meeting packet. (Bob Berg confirmed it was a typo.) Therefore, the increase is 10.95% and not 9.7%.
- Disagreed with Rick regarding the Salary Commission “abandoning” its own framework last year. The Salary Commission decided last year the BOCC had to face some consequences for their actions – giving into the other elected officials' demands for even more of salary increase of above the 8% the Salary Commission recommended. The fact is the Salary Commission recommended an 8% increase because that is how much the Lewis County *per capita* payroll income increased during the relevant period. Instead, the

BOCC gave another 10% on top of the 8% for a total of 18%, while the average Lewis County worker received only an 8% increase during the same time.

Brandon Campbell made the following general comments:

- Generally, agrees that 10.95% is reasonable based on the *per capita* metric.

*** **

MOTION. Mr. Berg asked for a motion that the Salary Commission increase the base salaries for the BOCC members at the rate of 10.95%, effective immediately. Kelly Bell made a motion to increase the BOCC members base salaries at the rate of 10.95%. Rick Kuykendall seconded the motion.

Discussion: Mr. Berg called for any more discussion related to the motion in addition to the general discussion that already had taken place.

Ms. Hunt inquired as to the total amount of the proposed newly adjusted salaries. The amount was confirmed to be \$100,838.01 after the 10.95% proposed increase.

Mr. Carlson offered an amendment to the motion to make the increase effective April 1, 2023 so that it would be reasonable to start at the beginning of a pay period and not in the middle of one. All members agreed this would better.

Mr. Berg called for a vote on the amended motion.

The amended motion passed 7-0.

IX. Announcements / Assignments

Subsequent to a few minutes of discussion, the Salary Commission agreed it would meet again on April 6, 2023 for the purposes of a special meeting (telephone/virtual only) to approve the minutes from this meeting only in order to approve the minutes/decisions made at this meeting.

X. Next Meeting, April 6, 2023 at 5:30 PM

XI. Adjournment

MOTION. Bob Berg asked for a motion to adjourn. Matt Brock made a motion to adjourn. Brandon Campbell seconded it. The commission approved the motion 7 to 0. The meeting ended at 6:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Carlson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Eric G. Carlson
Attorney at Law;
Clerk, Lewis County Salary Commission