

# LEWIS COUNTY SALARY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

TUESDAY, July 7, 2020

5:30 P.M.

County Courthouse Commissioner Meeting Room | Chehalis, WA 98532

## I. Call to Order

Robert Berg called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m., Tuesday, July 7, 2020. Those in attendance were:

Salary Commission Members:

Robert Berg (in person)	Martha Hunt (via Zoom)
Rick Kuykendall (in person)	<del>Matt Brock</del>
Eric Carlson (in person)	Kelly Bell (via Zoom)
<del>Sheri Belenski</del>	<del>Kelly Doege</del>
<del>Brandon Campbell</del>	<del>Cindy Tahl</del>
Donna Moody (via Zoom)	

Other attendees:

Becky Butler	Scott Tinney
Lara McRea	Frank Corbin
Lindsey Pollock	Cullen Gatten
Diane Dorey	

## II. Verification of a Quorum

There is a quorum of six (6) salary commission members.

## III. Introductions

Mr. Berg asked each member of the commission to re-introduce themselves; each member stated their name and if they represented a district, or one of four (4) sectors as provided in RCW 36.17.024(2)(b). Introductions included: Robert Berg, professional personnel management; Rick Kuykendall, District 1; Eric Carlson, legal profession; Donna Moody, District 2; Martha Hunt, business; Kelly Bell, District 3.

## IV. Approval of Meeting Agenda

Kelly Bell made a motion to approve the meeting agenda for July 7, 2020. Rick Kuykendall seconded the motion. The motion passed 6 to 0.

## V. Approval of Minutes for March 3, 2020

Mr. Berg asked the members to approve a change to the meeting minutes from March 3, 2020. Specifically, in § XI General Discussion of Information and Data Collected, Mr. Berg asked for the record to reflect that he supported "Option 2."

Kelly Bell made the motion to approve the change to the meeting minutes from March 3, 2020 to note that Mr. Berg supported "Option 2." Rick Kuykendall seconded the motion. The motion passed 6 to 0.

**VI. Public Comment - Limit of 3 minutes**

There was no public comment.

**VII. Review of Agenda Packet Materials**

Mr. Berg reviewed the agenda packet for the meeting: (1) an email from Mr. Berg to Mr. Carlson dated March 5, 2020; (2) a letter from eight certain Washington legislators to the Washington Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials, dated April 20, 2020; (3) a graph depicting the *Salary History of the State's Elected Officials 1962-2020*, which included the years of 2007 – 2020.

**VIII. Discussion of Proposals and Ideas from March Meeting.**

Mr. Berg opened the discussion by reviewing both *Option 1* and *Option 2* as discussed at the March 3, 2020 meeting. Due to the COVID-19 crises that ensued after the March 3, 2020 meeting, neither Mr. Berg nor Mr. Carlson were able to draft any language for proposals for the commission as the commission had originally decided to proceed in March.

Instead, because of the COVID-19 emergency, along with the unprecedented rapid changes in the economy, it was impossible to know what effect the governor's "stay home, stay healthy" order would have on the county's revenue for the 2020 budget. In other words, the economic landscape shifted so dramatically, the county may well be facing an economic crisis that would mean any increases to elected officials' salaries would be out of the question.

After some general discussion, a third, and new, *Option 3* emerged. This option would mean the commission would make no decision on increasing any salaries at this time with the understanding the commission would revisit the issue either during the fourth quarter of 2020, or in January, 2021. Martha Hunt made the point that so much has changed due to the COVID-19 crises, it would be irresponsible to hand out raises to publicly elected officials when the negative impacts to the county's budget were certainly coming.

Ms. Hunt went on to explain that she feels it is more appropriate to wait at least until September to see where "we are at." Further, she explained she is not comfortable deciding at today's meeting because "too much has changed." Finally, Ms. Hunt noted that the county's unemployment rate is now fifteen percent - a dramatic increase of over ten percent just since the last time the commission met.

Mr. Berg countered that he believed elected officials should receive an increase to their salary even though COVID-19 created serious budget problems for the county. He cited the fact that the increases would amount to a "very small dollar amount" in relation to the total county budget.

Moreover, Mr. Berg proposed that the commission adopt *Option 2*, as outlined in the March 3, 2020 meeting with one change. Mr. Berg proposed to add two percent to the original proposal of eight percent, for a total increase of ten percent.

Mr. Berg explained that this additional two percent per year – as outlined in *Option 2* – would provide for a two percent per year salary increase for the years 2015 – 2019 when elected officials did not receive any salary increase. He noted that while the commission is not able to approve retroactive salary increases, this full 10% increase would be in lieu of the previous five-year period.

Mr. Carlson disagreed. Even though Mr. Carlson originally authored *Option 2*, his analysis was based on the pre-COVID-19 economic environment. He explained that everything had changed since the last time the commission met in March, 2020. Those changes meant the county would likely be facing a severe decrease in revenue. Like Martha Hunt, Eric Carlson did not believe it was appropriate for any salary increases at this time. Because *Option 2* was based on what the “average Lewis County resident” had experienced for their own salary increases, the same reasoning should be applied to the dramatic economic shock the same “average Lewis County resident” is facing today.

Ms. Bell expressed her support of a modified *Option 2* that would provide for a 10% increase to all elected officials’ salaries. Ms. Bell stated that “I would like to go with the *Option 2* for a ten-percent increase to their salaries now.”

Donna Moody voiced her support of a modified *Option 2* and her agreement with Ms. Bell. Ms. Moody said, “I agree with Kelly.”

Rick Kuykendall gave his support for a modified *Option 2* as well. Mr. Kuykendall reiterated that the elected officials had not received “any raises since 2014.”

**Motion to increase the Lewis County Commissioners’ salaries by ten percent and to recommend to the Lewis County Commissioners to increase all other Lewis County elected officials’ salaries by ten percent.**

After each member of the commission participated in the above discussion, Kelly Bell made a motion to:

- (1) grant a ten-percent salary increase to the three Lewis County Commissioners; and
- (2) to recommend to the Lewis County Commissioners that they grant a ten-percent salary increase to all other Lewis County elected officials; and
- (3) that Mr. Berg draft a letter to the Lewis County Commissioners that Mr. Berg will distribute to all members of the salary commission within two (2) weeks of this meeting so salary commission members will have a sufficient opportunity to review the document prior to the next commission meeting, scheduled for August 4, 2020.

Mr. Kuykendall seconded the motion.

Prior to voting on the pending motion, Mr. Berg confirmed he would be willing to produce a draft letter/report to the Lewis County Commissioners. He confirmed he would send the draft to Lara McRea within two weeks, by July 21, 2020. Lara McRea would, in turn, send this draft letter to each salary commission member. Commission members would have two weeks to review the draft and to note any changes, suggestions, or comments.

Eric Carlson moved to amend the pending motion. Mr. Carlson's amendment called to reduce the salary increase from ten percent to eight percent. The amendment failed for want of a second in support of the amendment.

Mr. Berg initiated the roll call vote on the motion before the salary commission.

Kelly Bell	<b>Yes</b>
Martha Hunt	<b>No</b>
Donna Moody	<b>Yes</b>
Rick Kuykendall	<b>Yes</b>
Eric Carlson	<b>No</b>
Robert Berg	<b>Yes</b>

**Final Tally: The salary commission approved the motion 4 to 2.**

**IX. Next Meeting, Tuesday August 4, 2020 @ 5:30 PM**

The salary commission agreed to meet again on August 4, 2020 at 5:30 pm.

**X. Adjournment**

Rick Kuykendall made a motion to adjourn. Donna Moody seconded the motion. The salary commission approved the motion 6 to 0. The Meeting ended at 6:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



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Eric Carlson,  
Clerk, Lewis County Salary Commission