

**LEWIS COUNTY SALARY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**
(REVISED – 10/5/2021 – SEE PAGE 4)

**TUESDAY, AUGUST 4, 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 5:33 p.m., Tuesday, August 4, 2020. Those in attendance were:

Salary Commission Members:

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

Other attendees:

Becky Butler	Cullen Gatten
Lara McRea	
Frank Corbin	
Jonathan Meyer	

II. Verification of a Quorum

There is a quorum of seven (7) salary commission members.

III. Introductions

Mr. Berg confirmed that “everyone knows each other” and there was no need to reintroduce members of the salary commission.

IV. Approval of Meeting Agenda

Mr. Berg called for a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Kelly Bell made a motion to approve the meeting agenda for Aug. 4, 2020. Rick Kuykendall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 7 to 0.

V. Approval of Minutes for July 7, 2020

Mr. Berg called for a motion to approve the minutes, as submitted, for the meeting on July 7, 2020. Kelly Bell made a motion to approve the meeting minutes for July 7, 2020. Rick Kuykendall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 7 to 0.

VI. Public Comment - Limit of 3 minutes

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

VII. Review of Agenda Packet Materials

Mr. Berg reviewed the agenda packet for the meeting: (1) the meeting agenda; (2) meeting minutes for July 7, 2020 meeting; (3) draft document *Lewis County Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials (Salary Commission)* including Exhibits 1, 2, 3, 4.

VIII. Review of Draft Memorandum to County Commissioners

Mr. Berg presented his draft memorandum to the Salary Commission members. He noted that because the Salary Commission voted to approve a salary increase of ten percent (10%) for County Commissioners and a recommendation to the County Commissioners of a ten percent (10%) salary increase for all other elected officials during the July 7, 2020 meeting, that today's discussion of the draft document would be mostly on a "high level." Further, he noted there would be "no debate" at today's meeting on the previous decision from the July 7, 2020 meeting.

Mr. Berg then called for Salary Commission members to make both general and specific comments on the draft. First, Mr. Berg called for any comments or discussion of page 1; there were none. Next, he called for any comments or discussion of page 2; there were none. Finally, Mr. Berg called for any comments or discussion of page 3; Eric Carlson spoke up that he had several comments to make regarding page 3.

Mr. Carlson noted that on page 3, lines 16 – 17, the draft characterizes the total cost of the salary increases of "approximately 0.19% of the [County's] 2019 budget." Mr. Carlson pointed out that while this is true, the real cost to taxpayers is how much economic activity it will take to generate this amount of tax revenue in order to fund these salary increases for elected officials.

Specifically, when one considers that Lewis County's share of the sales tax is 1.3% of the 7.8% rate (the base rate of 6.5% goes to the State of Washington), it will take \$6,066,153.80 of sales of goods and services in the County to generate \$78,860 to fund the ten percent (10%) salary increases.

Mr. Carlson noted that it is all too common in government to compare line items of budgets to the whole budget without considering how much taxpayers must work to fund the government. That is, the real cost to taxpayers is how much they have to work in their own businesses and jobs to afford to spend the amount of money that the sales tax generates for the government to spend.

In summary, Mr. Carlson emphasized that the taxpayers would have to generate over \$6 million dollars of economic activity in order to pay for this salary increase at a time when the economy is so depressed from the COVID-19 emergency.

Kelly Bell joined the discussion and said she wanted Mr. Carlson to know she supported this line of thinking and reasoning. She went on to explain that the only

reason she had voted in favor of the salary increases at the last meeting [July 7, 2020] was she felt the salaries for the elected positions had fallen too far behind since the last salary increase from 2014. Ms. Bell explained how much she appreciated Mr. Carlson's analysis from the point of view of the taxpayer and the average resident of Lewis County. She referenced Mr. Carlson's report to the Salary Commission, *Research and Analysis on Per Capita Income*, (Exhibit 4) that Mr. Carlson prepared for the February 4, 2020 Salary Commission meeting.

Finally, Ms. Bell noted that she would base her support for any future salary increases for these positions on the per capita income analysis. "I like the idea of basing salary increases for these positions on what the average taxpayer in Lewis County has seen with their own income" Ms. Bell explained.

Martha Hunt commented that she "thought we had voted for only an eight percent (8%) increase at the last meeting." Mr. Carlson answered that the amount was in fact ten percent (10%). He noted that perhaps Ms. Hunt was recalling that Mr. Carlson had made an amendment to the motion to decrease the amount to eight percent (8%) in the July 7, 2020 meeting. However, Mr. Carlson's amendment to the motion failed for want of a second.

Mr. Berg asked Cullen Gatten to confirm that the commission may not make any salary increases retroactive. Mr. Gatten confirmed that, by statute, the Salary Commission may only set the salaries for the County Commissioners and to make its salary recommendations for the other elected offices from the present moving forward.

Mr. Carlson noted that the Salary Commission has put the County Commissioners in a terrible lose/lose, or no-win situation. That is, the Salary Commission is solely responsible for setting the County Commissioners' salaries – which, in these terrible economic times, the Salary Commission has increased by ten percent (10%). That decision leaves the County Commissioners with two bad options.

Bad Option #1: take the Salary Commission's recommendation to raise all other elected officials' salaries by ten percent (10%) during the COVID-19 emergency.

Bad Option #2: do not raise the other elected officials' salaries to save money while at the same time having their own salaries increased by the Salary Commission.

Mr. Carlson noted both options leave the County Commissioners open to substantial taxpayer criticism. On the one hand, if the County Commissioners feel they need to save money and cannot afford to give a ten percent (10%) salary increase to the other elected officials at this time, they are doing so while having to take the ten percent (10%) increase from the Salary Commission by statute.

On the other hand, if the County Commissioners accept the Salary Commission's recommendation to raise the other elected officials by ten percent (10%), then taxpayers could question if the County Commissioners are overspending during these tough economic times.

Mr. Berg agreed with Mr. Carlson and mentioned this was his concern back at the March meeting.

At the conclusion of this discussion, Mr. Berg said he would put the memo into a final draft to submit it to the County Commissioners.

Mr. Carlson called for a vote to approve the memo since there were other members of the Salary Commission present at this meeting who had not attended the previous meeting.

Mr. Berg agreed and called for a **Motion to Approve the Draft Memo Lewis County Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials 'Compensation Report.'**

Kelly Bell made the motion to approve the draft memo. Rick Kuykendall seconded the motion. Mr. Berg called the vote on the motion.

Kelly Bell	Yes
Martha Hunt	Yes No (Ms. Hunt corrected her vote on 10/5/21.)
Donna Moody	Yes
Rick Kuykendall	Yes
Eric Carlson	No
Robert Berg	Yes
Matt Brock	Yes

**Final Tally: The salary commission approved the motion 5 to 2.
(Revised 10/5/21).**

IX. Next Meeting, Tuesday September 14, 2021 @ 5:30 PM

As the current work of the Salary Commission is complete for 2020, the members agreed to meet next on Tuesday, September 14, 2021 at 5:30 pm.

X. Adjournment

Mr. Berg thanked all the members of the Salary Commission for their work and careful consideration of the issues surrounding the salaries of the Lewis County Elected Officials. Mr. Berg asked for a motion to adjourn. Kelly Bell made a motion to adjourn. Rick Kuykendall seconded the motion. The salary commission approved the motion 7 to 0. The Meeting ended at 5:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Eric Carlson
Clerk, Lewis County Salary Commission