

Meeting Minutes for
Cowlitz County Commissioners Salary Commission Meeting Held on April 21, 2020

Salary Commission Members Present: Alan Engstrom, Adena Grigsby, Rich Gushman, Marlene Jones, Roy Maier, Chris Smith, Caren Teigen

Salary Commission Members Absent: Robbin Fahn, Leah McElyea

Cowlitz County Staff Present: Sabrina Fraidenburg, Human Resources Deputy Director, Cowlitz County

The GoToMeeting started at approximately 6:08 pm with some attendees participating by phone and others via computer. There were no members of the general public participating or listening to the meeting.

First order of business was the election of 2020 Commission Officers:

Alan Engstrom was elected to Salary Commission Chair by a unanimous vote.

Rich Gushman was elected Salary Commission Secretary by a unanimous vote.

General Discussion:

Occurred in which comparative commissioner wages from peer counties was discussed, wages of other elected officials in Cowlitz County was discussed and compared to Cowlitz County Commissioner salaries, and wage increases of the various employee classifications/groups of County employees between 2010 and 2020 was discussed and compared to Cowlitz County Commissioner wage increases over the same time period.

Roy indicated that public school district staffs across the state are receiving a 1.6% cost of living wage adjustment for 2021 from the state.

Discussion occurred regarding Commissioner Weber's submission of how his time on the job was spent in January 2020 and his request for retirement compensation from the County. Sabrina Fraidenburg indicated that Commissioner Mortensen declined to provide any information regarding his activities or on commissioner salary to be set for 2021. Sabrina Fraidenburg summarized activities that Commissioner Gardner reviewed with that he does as part of his performing his commissioner job duties and that he was not asking the Salary Commission for a raise.

Discussion also occurred regarding Commissioner Weber's request for retirement benefits commensurate with the other 2 commissioners and Commissioner Weber's position that he does not receive the same total compensation as the other 2 commissioners because he does not receive retirement benefits. Mr. Maier indicated that he believed that Commissioner Weber should have commensurate retirement benefits as the other two commissioners. Mr. Engstrom indicated that Commissioner Weber is drawing on his teacher public pension as a retired teacher and Ms. Fraidenburg indicated the State Department of Retirement Systems determines retirement benefit eligibility. Mr. Engstrom indicated he did not think it was within the purview of the Salary Commission, as he understands it, to address Commissioner Weber's request for retirement benefits.

A motion was made by Marlene to approve a 2.5% salary increase for 2021 for the commissioners and was seconded by Chris Smith. The vote was 5-2 in favor (Commissioners Gushman, Jones, Maier, Smith

& Teigen voted yes, Commissioners Engstrom & Grigsby voted no), however, the motion failed because Cowlitz County Resolution 08-109 that created the Salary Commission requires a minimum of 6 votes in favor of a proposed salary increase for the increase to pass and become effective.

Additional discussion occurred after which Roy made a motion to approve a 1.6% salary increase for 2021 for the commissioners and was seconded by Chris Smith. The vote was 5-2 in favor (Commissioners Gushman, Jones, Maier, Smith & Teigen voted yes, Commissioners Engstrom & Grigsby voted no), however, the motion failed for the same reason noted in the above paragraph.

Additional discussion occurred after which Chair Alan Engstrom made a motion to approve a 1% salary increase for 2021 for the commissioners. This motion died for lack of a second.

After further discussion, the Salary Commission requested Sabrina Fraidenburg to schedule another meeting for 5:30 PM on April 28, 2020 after all attending commissioners indicated they were available at this date and time for a meeting and to see if one or both of the commissioners absent for this meeting could attend. If both absent commissioners cannot attend on April 28, 2020, Sabrina will send out an email Doodle schedule poll to determine the date and time for the next meeting.

If the next meeting occurs on April 28, 2020 at 5:30, the County General Meeting room at the County Administration Building in Kelso will be made available for commission members that would like to participate in person while also maintaining appropriate social distancing and wearing personally provided masks if they desire to wear masks.

The meeting was then adjourned at 6:47 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by



Richard A. Gushman, Secretary
2020 Cowlitz County Salary Commission