

**WHATCOM COUNTY COMMISSION ON SALARIES
FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS**

AGENDA

Thursday, March 30th 2023

4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

[Virtual Meeting](#)

- 1. Call to order**
- 2. Approval of minutes from March 16, 2023**
- 3. Public comment**
 - 3.1. Any interested attendee will be given 3 minutes for public comment
- 4. New Commissioner**
- 5. Presentation/Q&A with Executive Sidhu and Sherriff Elfo (invited)**
- 6. Commissioner discussion**
 - 6.1. Follow up items from last meeting
 - 6.1.1. Language from Snohomish salary commission that links Prosecutor pay to WA State Superior Court Judge pay
 - 6.1.2. Executive Data for Snohomish County
 - 6.1.3. Information on hiring of Sheriffs
 - 6.1.4. Size of Whatcom County deputies vs. City of Bellingham Police department
 - 6.1.5. Clarify pay for Undersheriff (higher than range)
 - 6.1.6. Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) approved for other employee groups
 - 6.1.7. Clarify benefits offered (and price) to elected officials
 - 6.2. Continued discussion regarding methodology and decision-making
 - 6.2.1. Review Chair Desler's memo
- 7. Next meeting**
 - 7.1. Scheduled for April 13th at 4 p.m.
- 8. Adjourn**

Attachments

- Attachment A (6.2.1): Memo from Dewey Desler, Chair
- Attachment B (6.1.1): Snohomish County language and Elected salaries
- Attachment C (6.1.3; 6.1.4; 6.1.5): Information about Whatcom County Sheriff's
- Attachment D (6.1.6): Updated COLA Information
- Attachment E (6.1.2): Updated Summary Data
- Attachment F (6.1.7): Benefits Information (follows unrepresented benefits)
- Attachment G: Email from Steve Oliver, Treasurer

Whatcom County Executive's Office is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: WC Salary Commission

Time: Mar 30, 2023 04:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85732601717>

Meeting ID: 857 3260 1717

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+1 564 217 2000 US

+1 646 931 3860 US

+1 689 278 1000 US

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+1 305 224 1968 US

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115.114.131.7 (India Mumbai)

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213.19.144.110 (Amsterdam Netherlands)

213.244.140.110 (Germany)

103.122.166.55 (Australia Sydney)

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149.137.40.110 (Singapore)

64.211.144.160 (Brazil)
149.137.68.253 (Mexico)
69.174.57.160 (Canada Toronto)
65.39.152.160 (Canada Vancouver)
207.226.132.110 (Japan Tokyo)
149.137.24.110 (Japan Osaka)
Meeting ID: 857 3260 1717

To: Whatcom County Salary Commission
From: Dewey Desler, Chair
Re: Setting salaries for elected officials (2024-2025)

My esteemed colleagues – I wanted to send out some thoughts that I believe are a collection of our leanings regarding the methodology for setting salaries for our elected officials. My hope in summarizing this is that we can move closer to agreement on how salaries will be set for 2024 and 2025.

As you are aware the Commission is obligated to complete its work and submit our decisions within the coming few weeks. Thus, I'm hopeful this submittal can assist the Commission.

I have requested Stacey to share this memo with all of you, place it as part of the record of Commission considerations and request your review. If any member has other points you would like to share with Commission, please do so in the coming days by sending them to Stacey.

Please note the Commission is scheduled to meet again on March 30 and April 13. These meetings should allow our decisions and salary schedule to be delivered to the County Council and County Auditor by the end of April.

1) Prosecuting Attorney

We've spent the most time on this position and it seems that we may be mostly aligned to continue with the intent established by the last Salary Commission to set pay of the position **to match the WA State Superior Court Judge**. It has been discussed that this intended action be done by linking the amount and the timing of the salary changes in 2024 and 2025 to the decisions made by the Washington Citizens Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials. This timing would include salary changes applied to all Washington State Superior Court Judges. It was noted that the Snohomish County Salary Commission uses language which directs a schedule for their Prosecuting Attorney salary that seems to accomplish the goal of salary comparability with Superior Court Judges. It is useful to note again that the State does reimburse the county 50% of the amount paid as salary of the Superior Court Judge as payment for the prosecutor's services. While this does not limit our ability to designate our own salary determination, it is relevant to the conversation of the appropriate pay for this position.

Deputy Prosecutor George Roche has provided us with sample language that we could use and/or modify to create clarity in our intent. He has provided the following language:

"The salary paid to the Prosecuting Attorney shall be equal to the salary paid to Superior Court Judges, including adjustments thereto, as determined by the Washington Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials under Article XXVII of the Washington Constitution and chapter 43.03 RCW. The salary adjustments are applied to the salary of

the Prosecuting Attorney according to the same schedule as adjustments are applied to the salary of the Superior Court Judges.”

This policy of precisely linking the Prosecuting attorney salary to the salary of Superior Court Judges, if adopted by the Commission, would be likely a first for Whatcom County in compensation of the position. This is because the annual salaries of County positions are paid based on a calendar year (January through December) while judge’s annual salaries are paid based on our State’s fiscal year (July through June). Part of the impact of this change is Judicial salaries are only set and now publicly known only to June 30, 2025, while our County Commission salaries are to be set to December 31, 2025. Therefore, if this language is adopted, the last 6 months of 2025 will be recognized and established by the decisions of the State Salary Commission with their projected report and decisions likely issued in the spring of 2024. The County will be required to follow the decisions of the State Salary Commission made in 2024 for its Prosecutor salary in 2025.

At this point I’m choosing not to comment on the prosecutor’s request to adjust and increase his salary in 2024 by adding an amount that would equalize the Prosecutor and Judicial salaries prior to January 1, 2024

2) County Executive

The County Executive has a complex and important job. This job is the equivalent to the CEO of a small company with a large budget. It’s difficult to make comparisons to other counties based on many factors including the form of government (only 3 other Executive/Council forms in Washington State), the demographics of the county and other economic and political factors. For this reason, we discussed how hard it is to find comparable county data. One suggestion is to follow the policy set by earlier County Salary commissions **that ensured that this position is the highest paid position in the County Government by setting the salary as a % above the Prosecutor.**

I’m hopeful we will meet with and hear from the Executive on March 30.

3) Sheriff

We briefly discussed the intention of the salary for the Sheriff. I’m hopeful we will review comments received earlier from Sheriff Bill Elfo and/or have the presence of the Sheriff at our next meeting on March 30. We noted a comparison to the City of Bellingham Police Chief salary as a comparable data point. The Sheriff Department is larger and often faces different issues with responsibility for the Jail which provides a host of other complexities to this job. If we choose to, we can **set a wage that is in line with the City of Bellingham Police Chief, as well as above the current and projected salary of the 2nd in command, the Undersheriff. As is the case for other elected official salaries we also will need to decide how we want to adjust for wage increases between 2024 to 2025.** We have CPI data (backwards information) and we have information on the negotiated COLA provided to other union employees.

4) Assessor, Auditor and Treasurer

These positions are unique to County government and likely should reflect the same position salaries at comparable counties. The uniqueness of the position is such that the best comparison is not solely with other County non-elected management positions, but with other Assessors, Auditors and Treasurers in Washington State. As well, the 3 positions are traditionally set at the same amount in our County and other counties in Washington. This may be the direction of our conversation for how to set the salaries for these positions. In addition, **we've had discussions about what are the comparable counties, (as have previous Commissions). I would ask for you each to consider what counties you want to use for comparable data and be prepared to discuss on March 30.**

5) County Council

We have heard from our Councilmembers and it's in line with my own experience in county government - that the job of a County Councilmember has changed dramatically in the last decade or two. Often viewed as a part-time, public service position; the nature of the job has changed in the expected time commitment, the complexity of the work and as a result, the requirement for wisdom in their decisions affecting the health and welfare of our Whatcom communities. The time commitment and demands can and likely will vary by a number of factors. But it's my belief that the work of a Council member is approaching a three-quarter time position. As such, the compensation should reflect the time commitment involved. **A good starting point for consideration is the recently adjusted salaries for the City of Bellingham Councilmembers.**

There is a lot to consider at our next meeting and I'm looking forward to the discussion. If possible and if you have a desire to share – send your comments to Stacey on questions and comments on the matters, we need to address at our meeting so it can be distributed to other Commissioners.

Please come prepared to share your point of view on the appropriate way to set pay for each of these positions, possibly using some of the prompts I have outlined above. Our deadline is looming but I'm confident we'll be able to make our decisions soon.

Thank You

Dewey



SNOHOMISH COUNTY
2020 Citizens' Commission on Salaries of Elected Officials

Elected Official Salary Schedule
January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2022

The Snohomish County Citizen's Commission on Salaries of Elected Officials, pursuant to chapter 2.105 SCC and Charter Section 6.120, hereby adopts the following salary schedule for elected officials for 2021 and 2022:

1. The annual salaries paid to the following elected officials for the fiscal year beginning January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021 shall be the amounts stated below:

County Councilmember	\$126,571
County Executive	\$189,457
Assessor	\$139,765
Auditor	\$139,765
Clerk	\$139,765
Sheriff	\$165,646
Treasurer	\$139,765

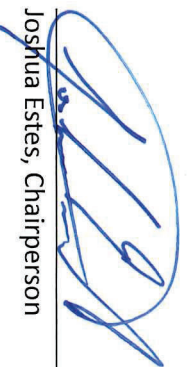
2. The annual salaries paid to the County Councilmember, County Executive, Assessor, Auditor, Clerk, Sheriff, and Treasurer identified in Section 1 for the fiscal year beginning January 1, 2022, shall be the annual salary paid to the elected official for the fiscal year 2021.

3. In addition to the amount established in Sections 1 and 2 above for a County Councilmember, the annual salary of the Chair of the County Council shall include an additional amount equal to ten percent (10%) of the regular Councilmember for that year.

4. Normally, the salary paid to the Prosecuting Attorney shall be equal to the salary paid to Superior Court Judges, including adjustments thereto, as determined by the Washington Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials under Article XXVII of the Washington Constitution and chapter 43.03 RCW. Normally, salary adjustments are applied to the salary of the Prosecuting Attorney according to the same schedule as adjustments are applied to the salary of the Superior Court Judges. However, at the request of Prosecuting Attorney Adam Cornell, for fiscal years 2021 and 2022, the Prosecuting Attorney's salary will remain the same as it is on December 31, 2020.

Pursuant to SCC 2.105.060(1), Joshua Estes certifies as follows:

That he is the Chairperson of the Snohomish County Citizens' Commission on Salaries of Elected Officials. That this salary schedule has been adopted in accordance with the provisions of chapter 2.105 SCC, Charter Section 6.120 and the rules, if any, of the Commission. That he has made this certification under penalty of perjury of the laws of the State of Washington this 11th day of June, 2020 at Everett, Washington.



Joshua Estes, Chairperson

2023 ELECTED OFFICIALS SALARY SCHEDULE

Effective 1-1-2023

40 HOUR (Monthly, Hourly & Annual Rates)

Official	Elected	PAY GRADE	RATE
COUNTY EXECUTIVE	Somers <i>Term 2020-2023</i>	006	17,130.07
		006	98.827
		006	205,560.85
COUNTY ASSESSOR	Hjelle <i>Term 2020-2023</i>	001	12,637.09
		001	72.906
		001	151,645.03
COUNTY AUDITOR	Fell <i>Term 2020-2023</i>	002	12,637.09
		002	72.906
		002	151,645.03
COUNTY CLERK	Percy <i>Term 2020-2023</i>	003	12,637.09
		003	72.906
		003	151,645.03
COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY	Cummings <i>Term 2023-2026</i>	007	18,053.95
		007	104.157
		007	216,647.38
COUNTY SHERIFF	Fortney <i>Term 2020-2023</i>	008	14,977.16
		008	86.407
		008	179,725.91
COUNTY TREASURER	Sullivan <i>Term 2020-2023</i>	005	12,637.09
		005	72.906
		005	151,645.03

Rates per Snohomish County Citizen's Commission on Salaries of Elected Officials, pursuant to SCC 2.105 and Charter Section 6.120.

Attachment C

From: [Melissa Keeley](#)
To: [Stacey Carroll](#)
Subject: RE: Follow up from last nights salary commission meeting
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 3:29:49 PM
Attachments: [COLA by Group.xlsx](#)
[Snohomish Elected Salaries.2023.pdf](#)

From: Stacey Carroll <stacey@hrexpertsoncall.com>
Sent: Friday, March 17, 2023 9:44 AM
To: Melissa Keeley <MKeeley@co.whatcom.wa.us>
Subject: Follow up from last nights salary commission meeting

Melissa - Happy Friday!

I have a few requests from the salary commission meeting last night.

- 1) Can you get data for the Executive of Snohomish County? (Attached) This is the only county they requested data for. I'm not sure if they will re-think that after seeing the data - so if it's not too much trouble to get data from the other charter counties that would be helpful. I'll work on this.
- 2) The commission wanted to know if there have been challenges with hiring County Sheriffs. Has it been difficult? We have not had difficulty hiring Sheriff Deputies since the settlement of their 2023-2025 CBA which was adopted last Fall and created new incentives for lateral hires, a retention bonus, and educational incentive. We currently have a list of several on our eligible register whom we expect to hire to fill upcoming vacancies due to retirements. We ARE having difficulty hiring Corrections Deputies. Also, they wanted to know the size of the Bellingham Police Department (# of officers) vs. Whatcom County Sheriffs (# of deputies). 2023 Sheriff Deputies: 77 ; 2024 Sheriff Deputies: 82 I'm waiting to get the number from City of Bellingham.
- 3) To confirm, the salary that was provided for the Whatcom County Sheriff includes all compensation - there is no additional pay? This came up because they noted that the pay for the current Deputy Sherrif was higher than the top step. I said that I thought it had to do with "longevity pay" in the contract, but would also confirm that. I apologize - I know we talked about this before, but can you confirm again? The pay reported for the Undersheriff includes longevity which is currently +7% for Undersheriff Chadwick for 27 years +.
- 4) Can you confirm for the benefits provided - is full family coverage provided at no cost to the elected? I think I got it wrong when talking with the commission, but told them I would confirm. I apologize, I think I was getting it mixed up with City of Bellingham. Yes, for 2023 full family medical at no cost is provided to Elected.
- 5) Have COLA's been set for 2024 or 2025 for any bargaining groups and/or non-reps? If not, is there language in the contracts that have been ratified that state what COLA is set to (such as CPI, etc?) Yes, COLA's have been set for certain unions (attached revised COLA by Group) at 4% in 2024 and 3% in 2023. Unrep Resolution for 2024 will go to Council in November I anticipate for the same 4% pattern settlement as other groups but to be recommended by the Executive later this year.

Let me know if you have any questions about my questions!

Thanks -

Stacey

stacey@hrexpertsoncall.com

From: Melissa Keeley <MKeeley@co.whatcom.wa.us>
Sent: Monday, March 27, 2023 12:35 PM
To: Stacey Carroll
Subject: FW: Police Officers

Hi Stacey,

See below for City numbers. I reported earlier we have 77 deputies in 2023 plus there are 10 Sergeants.

Melissa

From: Monahan, Elizabeth H. <ehmonahan@cob.org>
Sent: Monday, March 27, 2023 12:26 PM
To: Melissa Keeley <MKeeley@co.whatcom.wa.us>
Subject: RE: Police Officers

We have 122 budgeted FTE's. We also have the ability to hire 6 extra "training pool" positions which means we when we have planned retirements , we can hire and get new officers trained prior to the retirement date. Let me know if you need anything else.

Elizabeth Monahan
Director, Human Resources
City of Bellingham
Human Resources Department
104 W. Magnolia Street
Bellingham WA 98225
(360) 778-8234 office
(360) 927-4402 cell
ehmonahan@cob.org

My incoming and outgoing email messages are subject to public disclosure requirements per RCW 42.56

From: Melissa Keeley <MKeeley@co.whatcom.wa.us>
Sent: Friday, March 24, 2023 5:06 PM
To: Monahan, Elizabeth H. <ehmonahan@cob.org>
Subject: RE: Police Officers

All commissioned officers up to and including Police Chief would be great, thank you!

Melissa

From: Monahan, Elizabeth H. <ehmonahan@cob.org>
Sent: Friday, March 24, 2023 5:04 PM
To: Melissa Keeley <MKeeley@co.whatcom.wa.us>
Subject: RE: Police Officers

Hi Melissa,

stacey@hrexpertsoncall.com

From: Melissa Keeley <MKeeley@co.whatcom.wa.us>
Sent: Friday, March 24, 2023 5:09 PM
To: Stacey Carroll
Subject: RE: Follow up from last nights salary commission meeting

Hi Stacey,

Elizabeth is supposed to get me Bham police numbers on Monday.

Authorized Corrections Deputies for 2023: 65 Sergeants: 10

Sorry for the hassle with your payment! I hope you receive that soon!

Melissa Keeley, CLRP (she/her)
Human Resources Manager
Whatcom County
360-778-5305 | mkeeley@co.whatcom.wa.us |

My incoming and outgoing messages are subject to public disclosure requirements per RCW 42.56



From: stacey@hrexpertsoncall.com <stacey@hrexpertsoncall.com>
Sent: Friday, March 24, 2023 2:13 PM
To: Melissa Keeley <MKeeley@co.whatcom.wa.us>
Subject: RE: Follow up from last nights salary commission meeting

Melissa – Just doing some follow up for the meeting next week. Have you received information about the size of the Bellingham police department yet?

Also, can you confirm the size of the jail employees? Corrections Officers?

Thanks –
Stacey

From: Melissa Keeley <MKeeley@co.whatcom.wa.us>
Sent: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 3:30 PM
To: Stacey Carroll <Stacey@HRExpertsOncall.com>
Subject: RE: Follow up from last nights salary commission meeting

Whatcom County
COLA History by Group
REVISED WITH CORRECTIONS 2/17/23
REVISED WITH ADDITIONS 3/21/23

Group	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Unreps	2.25%	2.50%	2.25%	3% 32 hrs furlough	0% 2% effective July	3%	1.9% one time for		
Unreps Binding Arb	2.50%	2.5% 1/1/18 2.5% 7/1/18	2.0% 1/1/19 1.0% 7/1/19	3% 32 hrs furlough	3% - Sheriff 2.5% - Corr	3%	6%	4%	3%
Teamsters Master	2.25%	2.50%	2.50%	2% - 1/1/20 1% - 7/1/20 32 hrs furlough	0% 2% effective July	3%	Bargaining		
WSNA	2.25%	2.50%	2.50%	2% - 1/1/20 1% - 7/1/20	0% 2% effective July	3%	6%	4%	3%
Local 17	2.25%	2.50%	2.50%	2% - 1/1/20 1% - 7/1/20 32 hrs furlough	0% 2% effective July	3%	6%		
MMP/IBU	2.25%	2.50%	2%	2% - 1/1/20 1% - 7/1/20	2.5%	2.25%	6%	4%	3%
Corrections	2.25%	2.50%	2.0% -1/1/19 1.0%-7/1/19	2.15%- 1/1/20 1.0%-7/1/20	2.5%	3%	Bargaining		
Deputy Sheriff	2.50%	2.5% 1/1/18 2.5% 7/1/18	2.0% 1/1/19 1.0% 7/1/19	3%	3%	2.75%	6%	4%	3%
Fraternal Order of Police (Sheriff Command Staff)				3% 32 hrs furlough	3%	3%	6%	3%	

COVID Wage Impacts: 2020 furloughs, frozen wages for most groups in 2021, hiring freeze

Summary of Data

	Assessor	Auditor	Treasurer	Executive	Prosecuting Attorney	Sheriff	County Council
Previous Methodology:	Set compensation to align with the top step of Range 440 of the 2021 Unrepresented Employees Salary Matrix; applied 2.4% COLA for 2023.			3% above the Prosecuting Attorney for 2022 and 3% above the Prosecuting Attorney for 2023	Match the Washington State Superior Court Judge Pay***	2.5% COLA for 2022 and 2023 (based on CPI-U five year average)	Match the WA State Legislator pay for 2022 and 2.4% COLA for 2023***
Current Pay (2023):	\$ 11,378	\$ 11,378	\$ 11,378	\$ 17,439	\$ 16,931	\$ 15,099	\$ 4,854
2022 Whatcom County:	\$ 11,111	\$ 11,111	\$ 11,111		\$ 16,640	\$ 14,730	
2022 Average (8 county average**):	\$ 9,899	\$ 9,899	\$ 9,899	N/A	\$ 16,487	\$ 11,991	N/A
2022 Average (6 county comparable):	\$ 9,947	\$ 9,947	\$ 9,947		\$ 16,248	\$ 12,034	
2022 Average (NonRep 5 County Comparisons):	\$ 10,403	\$ 10,403	\$ 10,403		\$ 16,502	\$ 12,426	

Snohomish County Executive				\$ 17,130			
WA State Superior Judge Pay eff 7/1/2023					\$ 18,116		
WA State Superior Judge Pay eff 7/1/2024					\$ 19,022		
City of Bellingham Police Chief						\$ 17,555	
WA State Legislators 2023							\$ 5,016
WA State Legislators 2024							\$ 5,166
City of Bellingham Council 2023							\$ 5,583
City of Bellingham Council 2024							\$ 5,750

Second-in-Command Actual	\$ 10,676	\$ 9,197	\$ 10,676	\$ 15,794	\$ 13,764	\$ 15,176	N/A
Second-in-Command Top Step	\$ 10,676	\$ 10,676	\$ 10,676	\$ 17,017	\$ 14,288	\$ 14,605	N/A
Step 20 of 2023 Salary Matrix (Unrepresented EE's)	\$ 18,038	\$ 18,038	\$ 18,038	\$ 18,038	\$ 18,038	\$ 18,038	
Step 19 of 2023 Salary Matrix (Unrepresented EE's)	\$ 17,017	\$ 17,017	\$ 17,017	\$ 17,017	\$ 17,017	\$ 17,017	
Unrep COLA (2022)	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Unrep COLA (2023)*	6%*	6%*	6%*	6%*	6%*	6%*	6%*
CPI-U West Region 5-year Average							2.41%

*Avg based on 4% COLA + salary study implementation (0-9%)

** previously used by commission

***State salaries are updated on 7/1 vs. Whatcom County adjustments which are effective 1/1

FRINGE BENEFITS - 2023

Changes highlighted in yellow

BENEFIT	PLAN	ADMINISTRATOR	COVERED GROUP	COVERAGE FOR	2023 COUNTY PAID	2023 EMPLOYEE PAID	2023 TOTAL
Medical 6245	Wa Teamsters Welfare Trust (WTWT) Medical Plan "B" Employee Time Loss Plan D 9-Mo Disability Waiver	Northwest Administrators	Master Unrepresented	Family	\$ 1,397.10	\$ -	\$ 1,397.10
	Wa Teamsters Welfare Trust (WTWT) Medical Plan "B" Employee Time Loss Plan D 9-Mo Disability Waiver	Northwest Administrators	Corrections	Family	\$ 1,397.10	\$ -	\$ 1,397.10
	Wa Teamsters Welfare Trust (WTWT) Medical Plan "B" Employee Time Loss Plan D 9-Mo Disability Waiver	Northwest Administrators	AFSCME Pub Defender FOP Corrections Protec17	Family	\$ 1,390.40	\$ 6.70	\$ 1,397.10
	WCIF 200	WA Counties Insurance Fund (WCIF)	IBU, MMP	Family	\$1,367.13	\$ -	\$ 1,367.13
	WCIF 500	WA Counties Insurance Fund (WCIF)	WSNA	Family	Varies - tiered rate	Varies	Varies
	LEOFF Trust Plan FX (Medical & Vision)	LEOFF Health & Welfare Trust	Dep Sheriff's Guild	Family	Varies - tiered rate	Varies	Varies
Dental 6255	Delta Dental of WA Enhanced Plan D-3	WA Counties Insurance Fund (WCIF)	DepSher, WSNA, Protec17, IBU, FOP, MMP	Family	\$ 116.30	\$ -	\$ 116.30
	WTWT Dental Plan "A"	Northwest Administrators	Master Unrepresented Corrections AFSCME Pub Def FOP Corrections	Family	\$ 120.50	\$ -	\$ 120.50
Vision 6255	Vision Service Plan (VSP) Standard Plan	WA Counties Insurance Fund (WCIF)	WSNA, Protec17, IBU, MMP	Family	\$ 15.76	\$ -	\$ 15.76
	WTWT Extended	Northwest Administrators	Master Corrections Unrepresented, FOP, AFSCME Pub Def, FOP Corrections	Family	\$ 17.10	\$ -	\$ 17.10
Life 6255	Standard Basic + AD&D per \$1,000 (1X base salary, annual salary max \$50,000)	WA Counties Insurance Fund (WCIF)	All employees	Employee	\$ 0.15	\$ -	\$ 0.15
Disability 6255	Long Term Disability (Unreps) x base salary (max of \$6000/mo benefit)	Sunlife (brokered by Gallagher)	Unreps	Employee	\$ 0.00356	\$ -	\$ 0.00356
	Long Term Disability (Health) x base salary (max of \$1200/mo benefit)	Sunlife (brokered by Gallagher)	WSNA, Protec17	Employee	\$ 0.00786	\$ -	\$ 0.00786
	Reliance Standard Life	Fraternal Order of Police	Deputy Sheriff's Guild	Employee	\$ 50.00	\$ 7.50	\$ 57.50
	Reliance Standard Life	Fraternal Order of Police	Unrep SBA (Undersherriff only)	Employee	\$ 57.50	\$ -	\$ 57.50
	Reliance Standard Life	Fraternal Order of Police	Fraternal Order of Police	Employee	\$ 57.50	\$ -	\$ 57.50
EAP 6255	KEPRO Acquisitions	KEPRO Acquisitions	All employees (including districts)	Household	\$ 2.45	\$ -	\$ 2.45



M E M O R A N D U M

To: Whatcom County Salary Commission members

From: Steve Oliver, Whatcom County Treasurer *Steve N. Oliver*

Date: March 17, 2023

RE: Follow-up Comments from March 16th Salary Commission Meeting

I thought I would take an opportunity to respond in writing to a number of issues raised by the Commission at its March 16th meeting. I appreciate your continued thoughtfulness and hope that you will find this information helpful to your future considerations.

Comments Regarding Recommended Compensation

In my February 3rd memo to the Commission, I made the following recommendation:

In 2021, the Commission reached the following conclusion: "After deliberation, the Commission set 2022 compensation to align with the top step of Range 440 of the 2021 Unrepresented Employees, Group B-Management Salary Matrix and applied a 2.4% COLA increase for 2023."

Utilizing the 2021 Commission decision, I recommend the Commission to continue to seek parity in setting the County Treasurer salary for 2024 and 2025*. Using settled bargaining agreements as a bellwether for likely cost of living increases for all County employees in 2024 and 2025, I would recommend setting the County Treasurer salary at \$158,695 in 2024 and \$163,456 in 2025. Approval of this recommendation would address internal equity and salary compression issues in 2024 and 2025.

ALTERNATE RECOMMENDATION: Set the County Treasurer salary to the top step of the Salary Matrix for Unrepresented Employees where the County Finance Manager is placed. The effect of this recommendation would automatically change the County Treasurer salary whenever the top step of the County Finance Manager's range is modified in the future.

*Note: Range 440 is now represented as Range 14 in the 2023 Salary Matrix for Unrepresented Employees. The County Finance Manager was placed in Range 14.

Below is a table I included in my February 3rd memo to the Commission:

Cost of Living Increase	ACTUAL			ESTIMATED	
	2%	3%	6% minimum	4%	3%
Position	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
County Treasurer	\$126,264	\$133,332	\$136,532	\$158,695	\$163,456
County Finance Manager	\$136,008	\$140,088	\$152,592	\$158,695	\$163,456
Range 440 (old matrix)					
Range 14 (new matrix)					
top step					
Difference	\$(9,744)	\$(6,756)	\$(16,060)	\$0	\$0

Had the County acted timely and approved a 2021 Salary Matrix for Unrepresented Employees prior to the 2021 Salary Commission proceeding, I believe that that 2022 county treasurer salary would have been \$136,008 and \$139,272 in 2023 with the recommended 2.4% cost of living increase.

Settled Bargaining Agreements

Entity	ACTUAL		
	2023	2024	2025
WA State Nurses Association	6%	4%	3%
Deputy Sheriff's Guild	6%	4%	3%
Fraternal Order of Police	6%		
PROTEC17 (Environmental Health)	6%		
International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots and Inlandboatmen's Union	6%	4%	3%

This table was previously included in my February 3rd memo to the Commission as well. I included this table because historically cost of living increases between represented and unrepresented employees have been the same or very close to the same. I think this the best indicator of the County’s future salary intentions that the Salary Commission has ever had.

“Directionally Close”

I firmly believe that the County needs a more aspirational view of future county government operations to effectively solve the wage, salary and human resources issues it faces throughout its operations. I think the concept of “directionally close” fits into that perspective. To a certain extent, I think the Salary Commission already exercises this perspective.

The Commission could collect a warehouse of data, draw a bunch of graphs, apply mathematical algorithms and regression models to the data that considers dozens of variables, and pinpoint an exact salary for each elected official. Is that what the County or the taxpayers expect? I don’t think so. I do think that many expect the Commission to consider relevant data, apply qualitative values and observations (the “directionally close” and “aspiration” elements) and then articulate a result that demonstrates how the Commission arrived at its final decision. From an elected official’s perspective, that clear explanation of how the Commission came to

its final decision is important as it will help build continuity from Salary Commission to Salary Commission.

As one of the few elected officials that experienced elected official salary setting prior to the establishment of the Salary Commission and participated in every Salary Commission since creation, I feel the Salary Commission process is a significant improvement over prior County practices and every iteration of the Commission process seems to be an improvement over the last. Prior to the Commission, discussions occurred on an ad-hoc basis between the elected officials and the County Executive. At times, the process was subjected to many of the same processes as a bargaining unit negotiation even though the elected officials had no bargaining authority. That experience drove the elected officials to request the creation of the Salary Commission. For me personally however, the prior experience left a lingering feeling to need to mathematically 'prove' that you deserved a salary increase using an inadequate county-framed data set that seemingly never supported that conclusion beyond a modest cost of living adjustment.

How does the County fund salary increases that are unknown when the budget is adopted?

I do not believe that this issue should be a concern the Commission should consider. The county code is clear that the County must implement the Salary Commission filed salary schedules without further action by the County Council or administration. That being said, the County generally budgets appropriately to address situations like this. Historically, the County administration has made budget allowances for cost of living increase, wage and salary changes, and other related circumstances in future budgets when constructing the County budget. For example, when bargaining unit contracts are not settled in time to include updated wage and salary levels for budget approval, the County administration often sets aside a certain amount of money in the budget to cover a future contract settlement based upon what they believe the contract settlement is likely to cost. If the cost exceeded the amount set aside in the budget, the County administration would have to option to go back to the County Council for a budget modification.

Catch-Up Payments

There was considerable discussion around a catch-up payment for the County Prosecutor due to timing differences of when state and County salary adjustments are made. I would ask that if the Commission is going to consider catch-up payments that we consider all positions that were negatively affected by the timing of changes made to underlying salary data that determined an elected official's salary. The County was not timely in setting 2021 salaries for unrepresented employees prior to the action of the Salary Commission. When the Commission set the salaries for certain elected officials at the top step of range 440, it was using the salary matrix from 2020. In June of 2021, the salary matrix was amended with a cost of living increase. If the 2021 salary matrix was available to the Commission timely, certain elected official salaries would likely have been \$2,676 higher in 2022 and \$64 higher in 2023. This is similar to the situation the County Prosecutor raised. This doesn't address the significant change to the salary matrix in 2023 that left a large salary gap (approximately \$16,000) between the County Finance Manager and the County Treasurer.

I would also note that the only persons that were affected are the elected officials in 2021 at the time the Commission set salaries for 2022 and 2023. A newly elected official in 2024 would

not have been affected by the previous decision of the Commission. We know for certain that a new County Auditor will be elected for a term beginning in 2024.

From my perspective, perhaps tying the County Treasurer salary to the top step of the County Finance Director's range in the salary matrix would rectify this situation now and into the future.