

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

AGENDA

Thursday, February 16, 2023

4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

[Virtual Meeting](#)

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Approval of Minutes from January 31, 2023 Meeting**
- 3. Public Comment**
 - 3.1. Any interested attendee will be given 3 minutes for public comment
- 4. Discussion with elected officials**
 - 4.1. 5-minute presentation and Q&A with each official
 - 4.2. Read written responses (if any)
- 5. Commission Updates**
 - 5.1. Resignation from Commissioner Runyon
 - 5.2. Updated Commission Membership
- 6. Information Review**
 - 6.1. Updated market data (update to previously sent data)
 - 6.2. Commissioner Data Requests
 - 6.3. Summary Data
- 7. Next Steps**
 - 7.1. Additional information requests (if any)
 - 7.2. Next Meeting: Thursday, March 2nd 4 p.m. PDT
- 8. Adjourn**

Attachments

Attachment A (3.2): Oliver Written Response

Attachments B (4.1): Updated market data

Attachment C (4.2): Data Request from Commissioners

Attachment D (4.3): Summary Data Information prepared by Ms. Carroll

Attachment E: Written responses from Bradrick, Elfo and Xczar

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

Topic: WC Salary Commission

Time: Feb 16, 2023 04:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83393731069>

Meeting ID: 833 9373 1069

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+1 305 224 1968 US

+1 309 205 3325 US

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213.19.144.110 (Amsterdam Netherlands)
213.244.140.110 (Germany)
103.122.166.55 (Australia Sydney)
103.122.167.55 (Australia Melbourne)
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: 833 9373 1069



M E M O R A N D U M

To: Whatcom County Salary Commission members

From: Steve Oliver, Whatcom County Treasurer 

Date: February 9, 20223

RE: Requested Position Information and Salary Commentary

***PREFACE:** In addition to new information, some of the background information contained in this document will be repetitive for returning Commission members, but I wanted to provide this information for the new member's information and consideration.*

Let me start by thanking all the Commission members for volunteering to be part of this process. I've said this before and I'll say it again - publicly discussing elected officials' salaries is just plain awkward. Salary Commission offers a level of objectivity and thoughtfulness that has been sought by elected officials for many years. Whatcom County is blessed with highly qualified and dedicated elected officials that sincerely appreciate the opportunity to serve our community in our various capacities. I am personally committed to this process and conversation and I look forward to working with the Commission. Thank you for your continued consideration.

What does the County Treasurer do?

The County Treasurer holds a key position of public trust and transparency in the financial affairs of local government. This is exactly why the framers of the State Constitution created an independent, separately elected County Treasurer. Acting as the bank for the County, school districts, fire districts, water districts and other units of local government, the treasurer's office receives, accounts for, disburses, and invests the funds of each of these entities. On a local market share basis, the treasurer's office would be one of the largest banks in the county. In addition, the treasurer is charged with the collection of various taxes, assessments and fees that benefit a wide range of governmental units. A large majority of the workload of the County Treasurer is directed toward providing services to the taxing districts other than the County itself.

The major responsibilities of the County Treasurer can be summarized in the following areas:

- Independent and transparent treasurer – provides direct, independent treasury and financial services to approximately 115 local government entities.

- Receiving, accounting and disbursing of revenues – total annual cash flow of more than \$1 billion.
- Collection of taxes, assessments and fees – in 2023, over \$440 million will be billed and collected.
- Cash and investment management – manages an approximately \$600 million local government investment pool for the benefit of local government entities.
- Debt management – manages an approximately \$570 million local government debt portfolio.
- Agent for the State of Washington – represents the State of Washington’s interest in over 10,000 real estate transactions per year.

About Myself

I graduated with a bachelor of arts in Finance and moved to Whatcom County over 33 years ago. I have served nearly 25 years in the County Treasurer’s office, including nine years as the Chief Deputy before being elected to office. Before coming to the County, I served two terms on the Ferndale City Council, and worked in the fields of banking, community development and commercial development. I am a small business owner and have served for over a decade on the board of directors for one of the county’s largest employers. I am an enrolled member of the Lummi Nation.

Comments Regarding Compensation

Summary: 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.

Over the past two Salary Commission cycles, I have strongly urged the Commission to address the internal organizational equity and salary compression issues. The Commission has made good advancement on both issues over the last two cycles. However, there is work remaining on both issues. 2023 presents some unique circumstances that I believe will allow the Commission to close the loop on these issues. I’m not so sure that we will see as favorable set of variables in the future as we have right now.

- There was a major reworking of the Unrepresented Employee Salary Matrix at the end of 2022 and an approved 2023 salary matrix is in place now. The County finance director position was range 440 in the old matrix and is now range 14 in the new matrix. The new matrix consolidated the old matrix substantially and provides much better internal alignment between positions. The result of this work is a MINIMUM 6% increase for any unrepresented employee.

- There are numerous bargaining agreements that have been settled for 2023, 2024 and 2025. Nearly all of the agreements call for a 6% increase in 2023, a 4% increase in 2024 and a 3% increase in 2025. These settled agreements are likely to lead to the same or similar increases for unrepresented employees in the future.
- The County is on good financial footing and is programming these increases throughout the organization for the next several years.
- This is probably the clearest ‘roadmap’ of the County’s future salary intentions that any Salary Commission has ever had to work with.

Let’s look at the data

Position	ACTUAL			ESTIMATED	
	2% 2021	3% 2022	6%* 2023	4% 2024	3% 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

*In 2022, the County completed a salary survey of selected unrepresented positions. As a result, a new salary matrix for unrepresented employees was implemented effective 1/8/23. In addition to this matrix a general, across the board 4% salary increase was also added. The County’s implementation goal was for each employee to receive, at a minimum, a 6% increase in 2023. Some received increases as high as 9% depending upon individual circumstances. Range 440 in the old salary matrix is now Range 14 in the new salary matrix.

For 2023, the County Treasurer’s salary is more than \$16,000 below the top step of Range 14 in the new salary matrix. The cumulative salary deficit from 2021 through 2023 is more than \$32,500. This deficit was largely created by a 2% COLA implemented in 2021 after the Commission set salaries, 7% of additional COLAs across 2022 and 2023 and the implementation of a new salary matrix for unrepresented employees in 2023.

In the history of the Salary Commission, I don’t believe that the Commission has been provided as much information about what the County’s salary intentions are for the next two year. There are at least five settled bargaining unit agreements to date. Three of the settled agreements included COLAs of 6% in 2023, 4% in 2024 and 3% in 2025. The other two agreements have not been settled yet for 2024 and 2025. Several of the agreements were later amended to match the 2023 6% COLA received by the unrepresented employees. If County history is any indicator, the unrepresented employees’ agreement and the bargaining agreements typically follow each other very closely in regards to salary and wage increases. I believe that an appearance of equity across these employment agreements is important to the County.

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%

Salary compression

My proposal also addresses the salary compression issue between the elected official and their second in command. With the implementation of the new unrepresented employee salary matrix, many previous ranges were combined into a single new range. The number of ranges went from 37 to just 20. This has the effect of consolidating many department head salaries and second in command salaries. The wage separation of the County finance manager and his second in command is 16%. My second in command is compensated at the same level of the second in command to the County finance manager, so implementing my proposal would also solve the long-standing salary compression issue in an equitable manner.

For many years, most County departments have maintained a 20% or greater gap between the salaries of County department head and their second in command. Most of the salary commissions had to face the issue where elected official second in commands made nearly the same salary of the elected official. In some cases, the second in command made more than the elected official. Although some progress has been made through the efforts of the Commission, elected officials have generally not been able to achieve the same salary gap as other County departments.

Other Pertinent Information

About the County General Fund financial health

Much of the general government operations of the County are funded through the County General Fund including the Assessor, Auditor, County Council, County Executive, Judges, Prosecutor, Sheriff and Treasurer.

The County General Fund finished 2022 with a cash balance of over \$24 million, one of the highest levels in the last 15 years. As shocking as it may sound, the County may have exited the pandemic in equal or better financial condition than before the pandemic. Growth has been very strong across the County's major revenue streams. Property tax revenue continues to grow including a substantial increase in 2023 with the passage of a renewal EMS levy and the new Healthy Children's Initiative. Sales tax revenues have hit repeated monthly and annual revenue records including a 14% increase in year over year revenues in 2022. January 2023 sales tax revenues are 50% higher than they were in 2019. Real estate excise tax revenues continue to show strength on record high housing costs. Investment income has started to grow substantially after nearly a decade of a record low interest rate environment.

The future sentiment amongst economists continues to moderate on the inevitability of a recession in the next two years and the length and depth of a recession if one might occur. Unemployment rates are at 50-year lows and consumer-facing inflation rates continue to slow. Local cost of living affordability continues to struggle under the weight of high housing costs and lower local wages. Over the past two years, our local housing cost index has at times been one of the highest in Washington.

The County Treasurer is an independent elected official AND a department head

Many of the duties and responsibilities rest solely with the County Treasurer alone. As a constitutionally created officer many of these duties and responsibilities are mandated by state law. The County Council or Executive have very limited control of the County Treasurer's operation outside of the fact that the County is required by state law to pay for its operation. The final decision-making authority largely rests with the County Treasurer. This isn't a flaw in the system but it was thoughtfully created and structured this way on purpose. The idea is to insulate the public trust and transparency from politics and to keep the County from wielding unreasonable power over the public treasury that could negatively impact the other 114 public entities that the County Treasurer represents.

So, let's examine the County Treasurer and the County finance director. Both offices are of similar size. Both offices are financial operations. The County Treasurer is responsible for the revenue side of the picture and the finance director is responsible for the budget side of the picture. The scope and nature of both offices are similar and impactful. So why are they compensated differently within the same organization?

From my perspective, it is due to the fact that the County finance director only serves the County in its organizational capacity while the County Treasurer serves approximately 114 other public entities in addition to the County organization. Over 90% of the County Treasurer's operations are in service to other public entities. The County is just one of 115 customers and they get the same great service as everyone else. From a purely organizational perspective, the County finance director is more important to County operations. However, from a larger perspective of local government operations, the County Treasurer is more important. This perspective has caused this compensation gap between the two positions to continue for decades.

About the Comparable Counties Model

The Salary Commission should reject this concept in its entirety. This mechanism was developed decades ago as a County bargaining tool for negotiating with the numerous bargaining units that represent County employees. The elected officials have never been in a position to bargain for their compensation before and are not bargaining with the Salary Commission. In fact, the elected officials requested the creation of the Salary Commission in search of fairness and equity.

Summary Elected Official 2022 Salary Comparison - Updated

Sorted by	Assessor	Auditor	Executive	Prosecuting Attorney	Sheriff	Treasurer
Population	\$ 9,911	\$ 9,911	\$ -	\$ 16,470	\$ 11,786	\$ 9,911
Assessed Value	\$ 10,015	\$ 10,015		\$ 16,529	\$ 12,303	\$ 10,015
Annual Expenditures	\$ 9,851	\$ 9,851		\$ 16,373	\$ 11,961	\$ 9,851
Full-Time Employees	\$ 9,818	\$ 9,818		\$ 16,575	\$ 11,913	\$ 9,818
Average:	\$ 9,899	\$ 9,899		\$ 16,487	\$ 11,991	\$ 9,899
Whatcom County:	\$ 11,111	\$ 11,111		\$ 16,640	\$ 14,730	\$ 11,111

Salary Difference	\$ 1,212	\$ 1,212		\$ 153	\$ 2,739	\$ 1,212
Percentage Difference	12.24%	12.24%		0.93%	22.85%	12.24%

**Commissioner Data Requests
February 7, 2023**

The following information was requested by Commissioners at the January 31, 2023 Salary Commission Meeting.

1. Information about Legislator salaries
2. Information about Superior Court Justice salaries
3. Information about any salary changes proposed in the legislature

For 1-3, information provided on the wa.gov website in this [link](#).

4. Comparator Data – including information by different cuts (population size, FTE count, etc.)

Data provided in the following pages. Data provided by population, assessed value, annual expenditures and full-time employees.

5. Information on CPI

[Link to CPI-U West Region](#)

6. Information on any proposed state salary changes

[Link to OFM Wage Adjustment and Salary Increases](#)

7. A description of how the "comparable counties" were selected.

The comparator counties are: Benton, Cowlitz, Kitsap, Skagit, Thurston, Yakima. This was determined during interest arbitration for the Deputy Sheriffs Guild in 2001. It was adopted for other employee groups (Teamsters Master, PROTEC17 and in the 2023 Unrepresented Resolution) and continues to be monitored for applicability. The basis of the decision by the arbitrator can be found [here](#) in Section V (beginning on page 12).

WHATCOM COUNTY SALARY COMMISSION

2022 Salaries Sorted by Population

Jurisdiction	Population	Form of Government	Hours/Week	Salaries - Formal High or Flat Rate					
				Assessor	Auditor	Executive	Prosecuting Attorney	Sheriff	Treasurer
Columbia County	3,950	Commission	40	\$5,676	\$5,676		\$12,068	\$7,232	\$5,676
Wahkiakum County	4,525	Commission	?	\$6,591	\$6,591		\$12,829	\$8,335	\$6,591
Ferry County	7,300	Commission	40	\$4,267	\$4,267		\$11,106	\$5,496	\$4,267
Lincoln County	11,050	Commission	40	\$8,382	\$8,382		\$12,607	\$8,382	\$8,382
Skamania County	11,900	Commission	40						
Pend Oreille County	13,625	Commission	?	\$5,824	\$5,824		\$6,830	\$7,987	\$5,824
San Juan County	18,150	Home Rule Charter	40	\$9,485	\$9,485		\$15,808	\$12,480	\$9,485
Adams County	21,100	Commission	40	\$6,708	\$6,708		\$12,931	\$8,600	\$6,708
Asotin County	22,600	Commission	40	\$5,528	\$5,528		\$12,214	\$6,290	\$5,528
Klickitat County	23,150	Commission	40	\$7,137	\$7,137		\$13,903	\$8,233	\$7,137
Pacific County	23,600	Commission	40	\$5,787	\$5,787		\$13,312	\$8,320	\$5,787
Okanogan County	42,700	Commission	40	\$6,656	\$6,656		\$13,133	\$8,419	\$6,656
Douglas County	44,000	Commission	40	\$6,625	\$6,625		\$14,144	\$10,682	\$6,625
Kittitas County	47,200	Commission	40	\$8,214	\$8,214		\$16,640	\$9,861	\$8,214
Whitman County	47,800	Commission	40	\$6,965	\$6,965		\$13,805	\$9,846	\$6,965
Walla Walla County	62,625	Commission	?	\$7,181	\$7,181		\$13,336	\$9,557	\$7,181
Mason County	66,200	Commission	40	\$7,144	\$7,144		\$16,640	\$12,245	\$7,144
Grays Harbor County	76,400	Commission	40	\$7,155	\$7,155		\$13,312	\$10,982	\$7,155
Clallam County	77,625	Home Rule Charter	40	\$8,320	\$8,320		\$14,809	\$11,981	\$8,320
Chelan County	80,650	Commission	40	\$8,486	\$8,486		\$14,726	\$10,742	\$8,486
Lewis County	83,400	Commission	40	\$7,571	\$7,571		\$15,946	\$11,314	\$7,571
Island County	87,700	Commission	40	\$7,669	\$7,669		\$15,576	\$9,373	\$7,669
Grant County	100,000	Commission		\$8,051	\$8,051		\$16,785	\$9,917	\$8,051
Cowlitz County	112,350	Commission	?	\$8,320	\$8,320		\$15,104	\$10,298	\$8,320
Skagit County	131,250	Commission	40	\$9,485	\$9,485		\$15,946	\$12,479	\$9,485
Benton County	212,300	Commission	40	\$9,769	\$9,769		\$16,785	\$11,234	\$9,769
Whatcom County	231,650	Home Rule Charter	40	\$11,111	\$11,111	\$17,138	\$16,640	\$14,730	\$11,111
Yakima County	259,950	Commission	40	\$8,924	\$8,924		\$16,785	\$10,347	\$8,924
Kitsap County	280,900	Commission	40	\$12,190	\$12,190		\$16,785	\$14,265	\$12,190
Thurston County	300,500	Commission	40	\$10,992	\$10,992		\$16,785	\$13,580	\$10,992
Clark County	520,900	Home Rule Charter	40	\$11,561	\$11,561		\$16,785	\$12,168	\$11,561
Spokane County	550,700	Commission	?	\$9,529	\$9,529		\$16,785	\$14,976	\$9,529
Snohomish County	847,300	Home Rule Charter	\$40	\$11,647	\$11,647	\$15,788	\$16,640	\$13,804	\$11,647
Pierce County	937,400	Home Rule Charter	40	\$12,493	\$12,138			\$14,446	
King County	2,317,700	Home Rule Charter	?	\$16,969	\$19,616		\$18,635	\$21,481	\$14,698
Franklin County		Commission							
Garfield County		Commission							
Jefferson County		Commission							
Stevens County		Commission							
				Assessor	Auditor	Executive	Prosecuting Attorney	Sheriff	Treasurer
Average				\$9,911.46	\$9,911.46	\$0.00	\$16,470.00	\$11,786.05	\$9,911.46
				\$11,111	\$11,111	\$0	\$16,785	\$14,730	\$11,111
				12.10%	12.10%	#DIV/0!	1.91%	24.98%	12.10%

WHATCOM COUNTY SALARY COMMISSION

2022 Salaries Sorted by Full Time Employees

Jurisdiction	Form of Government	# of Employees			Salaries - Formal High or Flat Rate					
		Full-Time	Part-Time	Hours/Week	Assessor	Auditor	Executive	Prosecuting Attorney	Sheriff	Treasurer
Columbia County	Commission	69	14	40	\$5,676	\$5,676		\$12,068	\$7,232	\$5,676
Wahkiakum County	Commission	97	19	?	\$6,591	\$6,591		\$12,829	\$8,335	\$6,591
Asotin County	Commission	106		40	\$5,528	\$5,528		\$12,214	\$6,290	\$5,528
Ferry County	Commission	108	14	40	\$4,267	\$4,267		\$11,106	\$5,496	\$4,267
Lincoln County	Commission	130	15	40	\$8,382	\$8,382		\$12,607	\$8,382	\$8,382
Skamania County	Commission	148	11	40						
Pend Oreille County	Commission	170	8	?	\$5,824	\$5,824		\$6,830	\$7,987	\$5,824
Adams County	Commission	174	3	40	\$6,708	\$6,708		\$12,931	\$8,600	\$6,708
Pacific County	Commission	178	13	40	\$5,787	\$5,787		\$13,312	\$8,320	\$5,787
San Juan County	Home Rule Charter	187	40	40	\$9,485	\$9,485		\$15,808	\$12,480	\$9,485
Whitman County	Commission	205	13	40	\$6,965	\$6,965		\$13,805	\$9,846	\$6,965
Douglas County	Commission	217	3	40	\$6,625	\$6,625		\$14,144	\$10,682	\$6,625
Klickitat County	Commission	234	7	40	\$7,137	\$7,137		\$13,903	\$8,233	\$7,137
Okanogan County	Commission	276	1	40	\$6,656	\$6,656		\$13,133	\$8,419	\$6,656
Walla Walla County	Commission	280	45	?	\$7,181	\$7,181		\$13,336	\$9,557	\$7,181
Kittitas County	Commission	334	12	40	\$8,214	\$8,214		\$16,640	\$9,861	\$8,214
Clallam County	Home Rule Charter	356	22	40	\$8,320	\$8,320		\$14,809	\$11,981	\$8,320
Mason County	Commission	364	2	40	\$7,144	\$7,144		\$16,640	\$12,245	\$7,144
Grays Harbor County	Commission	397	50	40	\$7,155	\$7,155		\$13,312	\$10,982	\$7,155
Island County	Commission	408	52	40	\$7,669	\$7,669		\$15,576	\$9,373	\$7,669
Chelan County	Commission	452	5	40	\$8,486	\$8,486		\$14,726	\$10,742	\$8,486
Cowlitz County	Commission	513	68	?	\$8,320	\$8,320		\$15,104	\$10,298	\$8,320
Lewis County	Commission	521	7	40	\$7,571	\$7,571		\$15,946	\$11,314	\$7,571
Grant County	Commission	552	35		\$8,051	\$8,051		\$16,785	\$9,917	\$8,051
Benton County	Commission	600	32	40	\$9,769	\$9,769		\$16,785	\$11,234	\$9,769
Skagit County	Commission	670	27	40	\$9,485	\$9,485		\$15,946	\$12,479	\$9,485
Whatcom County	Home Rule Charter	859	12	40	\$11,111	\$11,111	\$17,138	\$16,640	\$14,730	\$11,111
Yakima County	Commission	983	5	40	\$8,924	\$8,924		\$16,785	\$10,347	\$8,924
Kitsap County	Commission	1,079	31	40	\$12,190	\$12,190		\$16,785	\$14,265	\$12,190
Thurston County	Commission	1,113	31	40	\$10,992	\$10,992		\$16,785	\$13,580	\$10,992
Clark County	Home Rule Charter	1,550	45	40	\$11,561	\$11,561		\$16,785	\$12,168	\$11,561
Spokane County	Commission	1,796	8	?	\$9,529	\$9,529		\$16,785	\$14,976	\$9,529
Snohomish County	Home Rule Charter	2,870	64	\$40	\$11,647	\$11,647	\$15,788	\$16,640	\$13,804	\$11,647
Pierce County	Home Rule Charter	2,969	22	40	\$12,493	\$12,138			\$14,446	
King County	Home Rule Charter	14,519	1,479	?	\$16,969	\$19,616		\$18,635	\$21,481	\$14,698
Franklin County	Commission									
Garfield County	Commission									
Jefferson County	Commission									
Stevens County	Commission									

Average of 8 Comparable	\$9,818	\$9,818	\$0	\$16,575	\$11,913	\$9,818
Whatcom County	\$11,111	\$11,111	\$17,138	\$16,640	\$14,730	\$11,111
Percentage Difference	13.17%	13.17%	#DIV/0!	0.39%	23.65%	13.17%

WHATCOM COUNTY SALARY COMMISSION

2022 Salaries Sorted by Assessed Value

Jurisdiction	Assessed Valuation in thousands**	Form of Government	Hours/W eek	Salaries - Formal High or Flat Rate					
				Assessor	Auditor	Executive	Prosecuting Attorney	Sheriff	Treasurer
Garfield County	\$ 543,517	Commission							
Wahkiakum County	\$ 687,481	Commission	?	\$6,591	\$6,591		\$12,829	\$8,335	\$6,591
Ferry County	\$ 753,925	Commission	40	\$4,267	\$4,267		\$11,106	\$5,496	\$4,267
Columbia County	\$ 1,029,198	Commission	40	\$5,676	\$5,676		\$12,068	\$7,232	\$5,676
Lincoln County	\$ 1,772,920	Commission	40	\$8,382	\$8,382		\$12,607	\$8,382	\$8,382
Pend Oreille County	\$ 1,862,151	Commission	?	\$5,824	\$5,824		\$6,830	\$7,987	\$5,824
Asotin County	\$ 1,990,385	Commission	40	\$5,528	\$5,528		\$12,214	\$6,290	\$5,528
Skamania County	\$ 2,101,788	Commission	40						
Adams County	\$ 2,656,779	Commission	40	\$6,708	\$6,708		\$12,931	\$8,600	\$6,708
Pacific County	\$ 3,671,635	Commission	40	\$5,787	\$5,787		\$13,312	\$8,320	\$5,787
Klickitat County	\$ 4,175,702	Commission	40	\$7,137	\$7,137		\$13,903	\$8,233	\$7,137
Whitman County	\$ 4,696,331	Commission	40	\$6,965	\$6,965		\$13,805	\$9,846	\$6,965
Okanogan County	\$ 4,818,677	Commission	40	\$6,656	\$6,656		\$13,133	\$8,419	\$6,656
Stevens County	\$ 5,195,870	Commission							
Jefferson County	\$ 7,098,416	Commission							
Douglas County	\$ 7,240,923	Commission	40	\$6,625	\$6,625		\$14,144	\$10,682	\$6,625
Walla Walla County	\$ 8,039,783	Commission	?	\$7,181	\$7,181		\$13,336	\$9,557	\$7,181
Grays Harbor County	\$ 9,426,684	Commission	40	\$7,155	\$7,155		\$13,312	\$10,982	\$7,155
San Juan County	\$ 9,765,313	Home Rule Charter	40	\$9,485	\$9,485		\$15,808	\$12,480	\$9,485
Kittitas County	\$ 10,465,533	Commission	40	\$8,214	\$8,214		\$16,640	\$9,861	\$8,214
Mason County	\$ 10,977,776	Commission	40	\$7,144	\$7,144		\$16,640	\$12,245	\$7,144
Franklin County	\$ 11,694,245	Commission							
Clallam County	\$ 11,968,469	Home Rule Charter	40	\$8,320	\$8,320		\$14,809	\$11,981	\$8,320
Lewis County	\$ 12,501,172	Commission	40	\$7,571	\$7,571		\$15,946	\$11,314	\$7,571
Grant County	\$ 15,622,693	Commission		\$8,051	\$8,051		\$16,930	\$9,917	\$8,051
Cowlitz County	\$ 15,791,527	Commission	?	\$8,320	\$8,320		\$15,104	\$10,298	\$8,320
Chelan County	\$ 16,157,112	Commission	40	\$8,486	\$8,486		\$14,726	\$10,742	\$8,486
Island County	\$ 18,978,977	Commission	40	\$7,669	\$7,669		\$15,576	\$9,373	\$7,669
Yakima County	\$ 24,085,892	Commission	40	\$8,924	\$8,924		\$16,785	\$10,347	\$8,924
Skagit County	\$ 25,206,462	Commission	40	\$9,485	\$9,485		\$15,946	\$12,479	\$9,485
Benton County	\$ 25,648,056	Commission	40	\$9,769	\$9,769		\$16,785	\$11,234	\$9,769
Whatcom County	\$ 43,157,476	Home Rule Charter	40	\$11,111	\$11,111	\$17,138	\$16,640	\$14,730	\$11,111
Thurston County	\$ 47,274,991	Commission	40	\$10,992	\$10,992		\$16,785	\$13,580	\$10,992
Kitsap County	\$ 50,020,818	Commission	40	\$12,190	\$12,190		\$16,785	\$14,265	\$12,190
Spokane County	\$ 68,475,842	Commission	?	\$9,529	\$9,529		\$16,785	\$14,976	\$9,529
Clark County	\$ 81,956,570	Home Rule Charter	40	\$11,561	\$11,561		\$16,785	\$12,168	\$11,561
Pierce County	\$ 159,137,006	Home Rule Charter	40	\$12,493	\$12,138			\$14,446	
Snohomish County	\$ 170,299,966	Home Rule Charter	\$40	\$11,647	\$11,647	\$15,788	\$16,640	\$13,804	\$11,647
King County	\$ 719,295,748	Home Rule Charter	?	\$16,969	\$19,616		\$18,635	\$21,481	\$14,698
				Assessor	Auditor	Executive	Prosecuting Attorney	Sheriff	Treasurer
Average:				10,015	10,015	14,379	16,529	12,303	10,015
				\$11,111	\$11,111	\$17,138	\$16,640	\$14,730	\$11,111
				10.94%	10.94%	19.19%	0.67%	19.73%	10.94%

WHATCOM COUNTY SALARY COMMISSION

2022 Salaries Sorted by Annual Expenditures

Jurisdiction	Form of Government	Annual Expenditures*	Hours/W eek	Salaries - Formal High or Flat Rate						
				Assessor	Auditor	Executive	Prosecuting Attorney	Sheriff	Treasurer	
Garfield County	Commission	\$ 7,191,640								
Columbia County	Commission	\$ 10,877,924	40	\$5,676	\$5,676		\$12,068	\$7,232	\$5,676	
Ferry County	Commission	\$ 11,499,012	40	\$4,267	\$4,267		\$11,106	\$5,496	\$4,267	
Wahkiakum County	Commission	\$ 11,971,759	?	\$6,591	\$6,591		\$12,829	\$8,335	\$6,591	
Asotin County	Commission	\$ 19,236,072	40	\$5,528	\$5,528		\$12,214	\$6,290	\$5,528	
Skamania County	Commission	\$ 21,609,426	40							
Adams County	Commission	\$ 23,288,601	40	\$6,708	\$6,708		\$12,931	\$8,600	\$6,708	
Pend Oreille County	Commission	\$ 24,340,154	?	\$5,824	\$5,824		\$6,830	\$7,987	\$5,824	
Lincoln County	Commission	\$ 25,038,897	40	\$8,382	\$8,382		\$12,607	\$8,382	\$8,382	
Pacific County	Commission	\$ 25,425,922	40	\$5,787	\$5,787		\$13,312	\$8,320	\$5,787	
Whitman County	Commission	\$ 30,512,015	40	\$6,965	\$6,965		\$13,805	\$9,846	\$6,965	
Klickitat County	Commission	\$ 33,445,766	40	\$7,137	\$7,137		\$13,903	\$8,233	\$7,137	
San Juan County	Home Rule Charter	\$ 39,255,435	40	\$9,485	\$9,485		\$15,808	\$12,480	\$9,485	
Jefferson County	Commission	\$ 42,014,923								
Okanogan County	Commission	\$ 42,779,347	40	\$6,656	\$6,656		\$13,133	\$8,419	\$6,656	
Walla Walla County	Commission	\$ 43,370,777	?	\$7,181	\$7,181		\$13,336	\$9,557	\$7,181	
Douglas County	Commission	\$ 45,539,119	40	\$6,625	\$6,625		\$14,144	\$10,682	\$6,625	
Franklin County	Commission	\$ 46,811,385								
Stevens County	Commission	\$ 47,867,959								
Kittitas County	Commission	\$ 50,976,405	40	\$8,214	\$8,214		\$16,640	\$9,861	\$8,214	
Mason County	Commission	\$ 61,857,382	40	\$7,144	\$7,144		\$16,640	\$12,245	\$7,144	
Grays Harbor County	Commission	\$ 65,671,187	40	\$7,155	\$7,155		\$13,312	\$10,982	\$7,155	
Clallam County	Home Rule Charter	\$ 65,833,431	40	\$8,320	\$8,320		\$14,809	\$11,981	\$8,320	
Island County	Commission	\$ 78,175,510	40	\$7,669	\$7,669		\$15,576	\$9,373	\$7,669	
Chelan County	Commission	\$ 81,280,091	40	\$8,486	\$8,486		\$14,726	\$10,742	\$8,486	
Grant County	Commission	\$ 90,480,156		\$8,051	\$8,051		\$16,930	\$9,917	\$8,051	
Lewis County	Commission	\$ 91,473,797	40	\$7,571	\$7,571		\$15,946	\$11,314	\$7,571	
Benton County	Commission	\$ 107,725,660	40	\$9,769	\$9,769		\$16,785	\$11,234	\$9,769	
Cowlitz County	Commission	\$ 109,336,499	?	\$8,320	\$8,320		\$15,104	\$10,298	\$8,320	
Skagit County	Commission	\$ 149,863,298	40	\$9,485	\$9,485		\$15,946	\$12,479	\$9,485	
Whatcom County	Home Rule Charter	\$ 150,484,995	40	\$11,111	\$11,111	\$17,138	\$16,640	\$14,730	\$11,111	
Yakima County	Commission	\$ 151,592,698	40	\$8,924	\$8,924		\$16,785	\$10,347	\$8,924	
Thurston County	Commission	\$ 232,370,170	40	\$10,992	\$10,992		\$16,844	\$13,580	\$10,992	
Kitsap County	Commission	\$ 315,697,353	40	\$12,190	\$12,190		\$16,785	\$14,265	\$12,190	
Clark County	Home Rule Charter	\$ 366,760,936	40	\$11,561	\$11,561		\$16,785	\$12,168	\$11,561	
Spokane County	Commission	\$ 517,810,947	?	\$9,529	\$9,529		\$16,785	\$14,976	\$9,529	
Pierce County	Home Rule Charter	\$ 634,936,093	40	\$12,493	\$12,138			\$14,446		
Snohomish County	Home Rule Charter	\$ 640,709,208	\$40	\$11,647	\$11,647	\$15,788	\$16,640	\$13,804	\$11,647	
King County	Home Rule Charter	\$ 3,470,196,139	?	\$16,969	\$19,616		\$18,635	\$21,481	\$14,698	
				Assessor	Auditor	Executive	Prosecuting Attorney	Sheriff	Treasurer	
				Average of 8 Comparable	\$9,851	\$9,851	\$0	\$16,373	\$11,961	\$9,851
					\$11,111	\$11,111	\$17,138	\$16,640	\$14,730	\$11,111
					12.79%	12.79%	#DIV/0!	1.63%	23.15%	12.79%

Summary of Data

	Assessor	Auditor	Treasurer	Executive	Prosecuting Attorney	Sheriff	County Council
Current Pay (2023):	\$ 11,378	\$ 11,378	\$ 11,378	\$ 17,439	\$ 16,931	\$ 15,099	\$ 4,854
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
2022 Whatcom County:	\$ 11,111	\$ 11,111	\$ 11,111	\$ 17,139	\$ 16,640	\$ 14,730	\$ 4,740
2022 Average (8 county average**):	\$ 9,899	\$ 9,899	\$ 9,899	N/A	\$ 16,487	\$ 11,991	N/A

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
Unrep COLA (2022)	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Unrep COLA (2023)*	6%*	6%*	6%*	6%*	6%*	6%*	6%*
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	
WA State Superior Judge Pay 2023					\$ 18,116		
WA State Superior Judge Pay 2024					\$ 18,659		
WA State Legislators 2023							\$ 5,016
WA State Legislators 2024							\$ 5,166
CPI-U West Region 5-year Average							2.41%

Data considered: comparable market data (six comparable counties); second in command pay; Other Management positions; historical adjustments, written and verbal statements from incumbents,

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

** previously the commission asked to see data for the 4 counties below and 4 counties above Whatcom County.

To say that my office records documents, licenses vehicles, and runs elections is a very high level description of my responsibilities. Aside from understanding the technical and legal requirements of those actual functions it is also necessary that I have an in-depth understanding of cyber-security, historic records preservation, GIS, records retention, accessibility, physical security, public records requests, microfilm and scanning technology and a myriad of other technical functions. Not only is it reasonable to expect compensation commensurate with the scope and scale of the job, it is essential in order to attract the best candidates into the position.

About Myself

I have worked in public sector since 1978 and earned an MBA in 1989. I have been a Recording Manager, Assistant Washington State Archivist, and Assistant Assessor/Recorder/Clerk for San Diego County. I came to Whatcom County in 2012 as Chief Deputy Auditor and was elected as Auditor in 2019.

It is important to note that I will be retiring at the end of my term in January 2024. My recommendations for equitable compensation for the County Auditor has nothing to do with my personal income, and everything to do with what is a fair salary for the position along with a desire to protect the office by attracting the best and brightest to serve as Auditor.

Salary Equity

When I addressed the Commission two years ago I stressed salary equity between the elected officials and other county department heads. I also focused on compression issues between the elected official and the Chief Deputy – the second in command. By setting the 2022 salary to align with the top step of Range 440 of the 2021 Unrepresented Employees, Group B-Management Salary Matrix and applying a 2.4% COLA increase for 2023 the 2021 Salary Commission made a positive move toward resolving equity and compression concerns, however there is more to be done.

Intervening COLAs for unrepresented employees and a salary matrix restructuring as a result of a salary survey in 2022 has increased the divide between the Auditor's compensation and other department heads. With the salary matrix revision, the old Range 440 became the new Range 14, and the matrix was consolidated and realigned with most positions receiving a 6% increase, and some as much as 9%.

As a result of these realignments, the top step of Range 14 (the old Range 440) is now \$152,592 effective January 1, 2023 while the Auditor's salary is \$136,532 – **a difference of \$16,060.**

Salary compression between the elected officials and their second in command also remains an issue. While improvement has been made in this area, with the recent adjustments to the unrepresented salary matrix there is now significantly less wage separation between the Auditor's salary and the Chief Deputy Auditor. The Chief Deputy is compensated at the same range (Range 11) as other second in command positions for department heads compensated at Range 14. For those department heads, the compression is 16% while for the Auditor and Chief Deputy the wage separation is only 10%. In fact, countywide the salary gap is at least 16%, and in some cases higher – the exception being the elected officials.

Department Head Responsibilities

The County Auditor is a department head as well as an elected official. Like other county department heads I manage people, budgets, grants, contracts and functional areas of responsibility. I issue requests for proposals, maintain a web site, provide public outreach and training, and structure and maintain on-line remote access to services.

Unlike other departments, however, my office is in fact three departments. There is no commonality of purpose between elections, recording and licensing. Each has its own set of RCWs, WACs, and other codes it must comply with. Each has a different governmental agency that we coordinate with. We are an agent of Washington State Department of Licensing, follow WACs and policies developed by the Secretary of State for elections, and work with the Recording Standards Commission for recording. Each department also has its own technology, specialized equipment, computer systems and legal requirements for providing service. We operate under legal mandates for open hours, levels of service and timeliness for completion of work.

Further, elections has been designated by the federal government as critical infrastructure. Regardless of whatever emergency the county is dealing with, elections must continue and has priority second only to health and safety. It is the Auditor's responsibility to ensure that priority.

Other county administrative departments such as Finance, Human Services or IT serve county departments. The Auditor's office serves the entire county population as well as other county departments – there is no comparison in terms of span of control.

Given these comparisons, I would argue that there is no logical basis for compensating the Auditor at a lower rate than other department heads.

Recommendation

I urge the Commission to continue to seek parity for the County Auditor salary for 2024 and 2025 building on the work done in 2021. Utilizing the recent matrix realignment, and the 2021 decision to compensate the Auditor at the top step of Range 440 which is now Range 14, I recommend setting the 2024 salary at \$158,695 and \$163,456. Those recommendations are based on the current Range 14 top step with a 4% COLA for 2024 and 3% for 2025. This adjustment will not only provide parity in the compensation, but will also address the compression issue.

Attachment E

WHATCOM COUNTY
SHERIFF'S OFFICE

BILL ELFO
SHERIFF



PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING
311 Grand Avenue
Bellingham, WA 98225-4038
(360) 778-6600

February 16, 2023

Stacey Carroll
President/Principal Consultant
HR Experts On-Call

Dear Stacey:

I want to first thank you and all members of the Salary Commission for your engagement in this important work.

1) **Please describe the duties of your office.**

The principal job duties for the Office of Sheriff in Whatcom County are defined and prescribed by the Whatcom County Charter, Whatcom County Ordinances, the Revised Code of Washington and the Washington State Constitution.

The Office of Sheriff is a Constitutional Office. The Sheriff is the chief law enforcement officer of the County. ⁱ Established by Article XI, Section 5 of the Washington State Constitution, the duties of the Office of Sheriff were reaffirmed by Section 3.52 of the Whatcom County Charter and the "powers and duties" of Sheriff "are as provided by general law." The specific duties are prescribed in numerous sections of the statutes and are very diverse. They include not only law enforcement responsibilities, but additional duties that range from search and rescue to the enforcement of civil orders to sex offender/kidnapper registration.

Most law enforcement responsibilities of the Sheriff are prescribed by Section 36.28.010 of the Revised Code of Washington.ⁱⁱ While most law enforcement duties are performed in unincorporated Whatcom County, the duties of Sheriff are countywide and exist irrespective of the existence of a municipal police department.ⁱⁱⁱ The Whatcom County Sheriff's Office regularly assists municipal police departments, enforces the law within the city limits and is responsible for regional law enforcement services such as the Whatcom Gang and Drug Task Force, the Mutual Aid Response Team, the Northwest Regional Prisoner Transport Network, and specialized services including the marine patrol.

While all Sheriffs in Washington have county wide law enforcement responsibilities, not all are responsible for the operation of jails or are in charge of their county's emergency management functions. The Office of Sheriff in Whatcom County is responsible for the operation of the Whatcom County Jail system that often holds over 320 inmates and supervises others on various jail alternative and release programs. The operation of the jail not only includes

housing inmates that the county is legally required to detain, but also managing a facility that contractually provides jail services and other jail services to cities and tribes.

Pursuant to County Ordinance, the Sheriff serves as the County's Director of Emergency Management which provides services to all municipalities, the Port of Bellingham, a school district and a water district. ^{iv} As director, the Whatcom County Sheriff is responsible for preparation, response and mitigation to natural and manmade disasters and emergencies. This includes overseeing the disbursement and accounting for state and federal relief funds authorized by Council. Not all counties vest this responsibility with the Sheriff.

Whatcom County is also unique in that it is home to an approximately 100-mile land border with Canada, hydroelectric facilities, refineries and an international airport resulting in complex vulnerabilities and challenges. It is important that the Sheriff have the sophistication, credibility and respect to deal with a myriad of federal, state and local partners in on-going efforts to keep the homeland safe.

The total budget for all Sheriff's Office functions is approximately \$43.295 million. The Office oversees millions more through the administration of homeland security and law enforcement grants for local first-responders.

It is important that the Sheriff be regarded as a community leader and to be engaged in community efforts related to crime prevention, youth and matters related to behavioral health. The Whatcom County Sheriff is also an ex officio member of several important commissions and task forces that include among others, the Whatcom Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force; the Whatcom-Bellingham Commission Against Domestic Violence; the Behavioral Health Advisory Committee; the Stakeholder Advisory Committee; and the Medical Examiner Advisory Committee. I actively take part in the important work of these groups. I previously held gubernatorial appointment as a commissioner (including vice chair) of the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission where I served for nearly 12 years. The Commission is responsible for design and delivery of all basic and advanced law enforcement and corrections in the State as well as the certification and de-certification of general authority peace officers and reserves.

In addition, I was previously elected by my fellow Sheriffs to serve as both vice president and president of the Washington State Sheriff's Association and by my fellow Police Chiefs and Sheriffs to serve on the Executive Board of the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs.

I am also a past member of the board of directors and advisory board member of Brigid Collins Family Service Center. I served for ten years on the board of the Boys and Girls Clubs, and also served on a statewide committee that worked to reduce the rate of juvenile incarceration and delinquency. I testify before the Legislature on bills affecting public safety and testified before a Congressional House Committee of the United States House of Representatives on northern border security and coordination. This testimony resulted in over \$6 million in grants to the

county for area law enforcement agencies for which the Sheriff's Office was charged with audit and accountability requirements.

The Sheriff's Office operates 24 hours per day /7 days per week /365 days per year, and the majority of employees work in hazardous positions that require a high degree of effective decision making.

2) Do you feel the compensation is appropriate for your position? If not, why?

I sought the position of Sheriff, not for the salary, but to serve the people of Whatcom County. I have a passion for what I do. In determining the salary for the Office of Sheriff, I would like the commission to consider several comparison factors that may be relevant:

a). The 2023 salary for the Whatcom County Sheriff is **\$181,193**.

b). The 2023 salary for the Whatcom County Undersheriff -- who reports to the Sheriff -- is **\$184,524 (\$175,260 base pay; \$6,864 longevity pay and at least \$2,400 in duty officer pay)**. The undersheriff also earns benefits that are not accorded to the sheriff (after hours call out pay) and an ability to cash out accumulated sick and vacation time upon resignation or retirement. (Sheriff and other elected officials do not earn sick or vacation time.) If the current Undersheriff were to retire, I estimate his payout would be in the area of \$65,000.

c). The 2023 salary for the City of Bellingham Chief of Police is **\$209,720**. Chief Mertzig was appointed to the position last year and is also entitled to vacation and sick leave benefits. The Chief is only responsible for law enforcement, not a jail system or emergency management.

d). As an elected official, I perform the duties required of the Office of Sheriff as well as maintain the same general duties that the county's "department heads" are responsible for. The salary for the Office of Sheriff is significantly lower than some of top range salaries for those Department Heads that, in many cases, lead fewer personnel. The Office of Sheriff is also currently compensated similarly to those leading far less personnel and to those occupying lesser leadership responsibilities than a department head or elected official.

- Parks Director **\$181,740**
- District Court Administrator **\$181,170**
- Chief Deputy Public Defender **\$181,170**
- Chief Criminal Deputy Prosecuting Attorney-criminal **\$181,740**
- Chief Civil Deputy Prosecuting Attorney-civil **\$181,740**
- Public Works Director **\$192,936**
- Deputy County Executive-**\$205,282**

3) Is there something else you think we should be aware of?

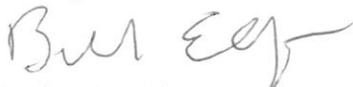
The State sets very minimal requirements for a person to hold the Office of Sheriff. The Administrative Code requires a sheriff to obtain certification as a peace officer within six months (which would require completion of the academy within six months).^v This is essentially the same basic requirements our state sets for entry-level peace officers. Over the past few years, the Criminal Justice Training Commission adopted a rule that allows newly elected Sheriffs without any law enforcement experience to achieve certification over a course that is just a few weeks in duration. This exempts Sheriffs from the requirement that they attend the 720-hour basic law enforcement or equivalency (for officers who attended basic training out-of-state). There are also no requirements that a newly elected sheriff meet any educational requirements. However, effective performance and fulfilling duties requires much more in terms of preparedness credibility and the ability to lead both within the organization and in a community as large and complex as Whatcom County.

I hold both bachelors and masters degrees in criminal justice and a juris doctorate. I have completed over 2,200 hours of law enforcement and management training including the FBI Command College, the University of Louisville graduate level police administration program and the United States Department of Justice National Sheriffs' Academy. I am admitted to the Washington State Bar and the Bar of the United States District Court for the Western District of Washington. I hold Executive Level certification from the Washington Criminal Justice Training Commission. I formerly served as a police chief, municipal prosecutor and have worked in nearly all facets of local law enforcement.

It is critical that the County be able to maintain the ability to interest those with sufficient experience, education and proven leadership abilities to seek election to the Office of Sheriff.

Thank you for your time, commitment to civic responsibilities and for your careful analysis of the information provided by all elected officials. Please extend my appreciation to all members of the Commission for their commitment of time, civil responsibility and their careful analysis of the information provided by all elected officials.

Sincerely,



Bill Elfo, Sheriff

ⁱ Washington Attorney General Opinion 90-4

ⁱⁱ RCW 36.28.010:

General duties.

The sheriff is the chief executive officer and conservator of the peace of the county. In the execution of his or her office, he or she and his or her deputies:

- (1) Shall arrest and commit to prison all persons who break the peace, or attempt to break it, and all persons guilty of public offenses;
- (2) Shall defend the county against those who, by riot or otherwise, endanger the public peace or safety;
- (3) Shall execute the process and orders of the courts of justice or judicial officers, when delivered for that purpose, according to law;
- (4) Shall execute all warrants delivered for that purpose by other public officers, according to the provisions of particular statutes;
- (5) Shall attend the sessions of the courts of record held within the county, and obey their lawful orders or directions;
- (6) Shall keep and preserve the peace in their respective counties, and quiet and suppress all affrays, riots, unlawful assemblies and insurrections, for which purpose, and for the service of process in civil or criminal cases, and in apprehending or securing any person for felony or breach of the peace, they may call to their aid such persons, or power of their county as they may deem necessary.

ⁱⁱⁱ Washington State Attorney General Opinions 61-62 and 74-96

^{iv} Whatcom County Code Section 2.40.020

^v Washington Administrative Code 139.05.200 and RCW 36.28.025

Whatcom County

Assessor's Office

County Courthouse
311 Grand Ave, Suite 106
Bellingham, WA 98225
assessor@co.whatcom.wa.us



Rebecca M. Xczar

County Assessor

John E. Romaker

Chief Deputy

Memorandum

To: Whatcom County Salary Commission

From: Rebecca Xczar, Whatcom County Assessor

Date: February 14, 2023

RE: Requested Position Information and Salary Commentary

Salary Commission members,

Thank you for your service on this commission. The Salary Commission plays a vital role in the County and your willingness to participate and contribute is appreciated.

Responsibilities of the County Assessor

The duties of an elected Assessor are set in statute. The assessor values all property in the county for property tax purposes, updates and maintains records of ownership, maintains tax maps of all property in the county, and calculates levies for taxing districts. Property tax accounts for approx. 30% of the total state and local taxes. It is the primary revenue source for public schools, fire protection, libraries, and parks. State law requires assessors to appraise property at 100% of market value, revalue every property annually, physically inspect 1/6th of the county per year, add all new construction annually, correctly calculate personal property listings, etc. Accuracy, uniformity, and correct reporting are vital to the public and all taxing districts, which includes the County. The Assessor is an elected position to maintain a separation of power. The Assessor answers to the people, the taxing districts, and the Department of Revenue. The Assessor must learn and maintain working knowledge of an extensive number of RCW's, WAC's, Dept of Revenue advisories and guidelines, and keep track of pending legislation annually that may impact property value, property tax, taxing districts, or administration of any of those.

The Assessor is also a Department Head. I manage an office of 31 people. I have all the same requirements as other department heads, with the exception that the sole responsibility rests with me. I answer to the public.

About me

I have been in office just over 3 years, as County Assessor. This is my first term in office, and I did not work for the County previously. I am a Certified Residential Real Estate Appraiser, with 20 years' experience appraising property in Whatcom County. I previously served on the Ferndale City Council in addition to running my own appraisal business, with prior years served on the Ferndale Planning

Commission and other city boards and commissions. I have a BA in Business from Western Washington University. I am a small business co-owner, and current chairperson of two volunteer groups. I am also the current president of the Washington State Association of County Assessors.

Internal Equity

The Assessor is an elected official and a department head. In 2021, the Salary Commission aligned the 2022 Assessor pay with the top step of Range 440 for 2021. This was an attempt to align the elected offices of the Assessor, Treasurer, and Auditor, with the lowest-paid department heads/ administrative managers. However, the Range 440 staff then received a 2% COLA for 2021, after the salary commission set elected officials’ salaries. Since then, the other Dept Heads have received COLAs for 2022 and 2023, and a reorganization. Due to the reorganization, Range 440 has become Range 14. The top step of Range 14 now makes \$152,592, as of Jan 8, 2023. The Assessor’s salary is \$136,532, which is a \$16,060 difference.

Below is the new 2023 salary matrix range for each department head position, the top step of each range, and number of FTE’s that department head is responsible for.

My office is near the median for FTE responsibilities, yet my salary is at the bottom of the range, and significantly below the county departments of non-elected officials.

Title	Range	Top Step	FTE's
Finance Manager	14	\$152,592	16
HR Manager	14	\$152,592	8
IT Manager	14	\$152,592	22
Project & Operations Manager	14	\$152,592	26
District Court Administrator	15	\$161,748	37
Parks Director	17	\$181,740	28
Health Director	17	\$181,740	139
PDS Director	17	\$181,740	49
Superior Court Director	17	\$181,740	85.2
Public Defender	17	\$181,740	43
Public Works Director	18	\$192,636	181
Assessor		\$136,532	31
Auditor		\$136,532	17
Treasurer		\$136,532	13
Prosecuting Attorney		\$203,169	54
Sheriff		\$181,193	214

*FTE totals taken from 2023 budget documents.

In addition to internal inequity between department heads, there is also internal inequity within my office. My Chief Deputy is Range 11, Step 11, with his current salary within 6% of mine. All other departments have 3 or more ranges between the Dept Head and their second in command. Parity to

that would align my salary to the top step of range 14, which includes the positions the 2022 salary was targeted to align with.

	2023 salary	Range
Assessor	\$136,532	
Chief Deputy Assessor	\$128,112	11

Conclusion

I believe my position should be paid equal to other department heads within the county. While the Assessor is an elected position, it is required to function as a department head as well. It is important to attract and retain qualified elected officials to fill this vital role.

The County has recently conducted a salary study for non-union positions, which includes the department heads and managers. They have also set some future COLA agreements with some bargaining units. This provides the Salary Commission with current comparative data within the county positions, to ensure equity. My salary for 2024 should be set at the top step of Range 14, with an anticipated 4% COLA, for 2024.

My recommendation:

2024	2025
Range 14, top step w/4% COLA	3% COLA
\$158,696	\$163,457

Thank you for your time and consideration as a member of the Salary Commission, and for allowing me to provide information and input. I look forward to being involved in this process, and am happy to provide any additional information needed.

