



December 12, 2018, Meeting Minutes
Hilton, 301 West 6th Street, Vancouver

The meeting of the Washington Citizens' Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials was brought to order by Vice-Chair, Greg Dallaire, at 6:00 p.m.

Commission Members Present:

Jon Bridge
Greg Dallaire, Vice-Chair
Sandi LaPalm
Andrew Malidore
Anastasia Potapova
Gary Ratterree
Don Robinson
Kozen Sampson
LeAnna Chauvin
Gerry Sherman
Steven Starkovich – Phoned in
Larry Turner

Commission Members Excused:

Melissa O'Neill Albert, Chair
Libby Hart
Linda Peterson
Karen White

Staff Present:

Teri Wright, Executive Director
Lindsay Matthews, Executive Assistant

Greg read the meeting opening statement.

Lindsay and Teri went over the meeting folder contents including a chart that applied inflation history from 2008-forward. Anastasia explained she made the chart for the Commission to demonstrate what salaries for elected officials would look like now if during the recession's salary freeze, they had continued to receive a 2% cost of living adjustment (COLA) each year. She used data from the Department of Labor and Social Security Administration websites to calculate an average COLA over the 10 years. The chart demonstrated all but one position is significantly behind the average COLA increase of 2% per year since 2008.

Jon moved to approve the meeting minutes. Larry seconded.

The motion was approved by a unanimous voice vote.

Public Testimony

After reading the procedure for public testimony, Greg welcomed John Worthington who had signed up for public testimony. Mr. Worthington disagrees with the 2019-2020 proposed salary schedule for the executive, judicial, and legislative branches. He said the Willis Study doesn't take into consideration the elected official's performance. He also referenced federal grants that go to the State of Washington; he believes that when an elected state official signs a federal grant to adopt a federal policy that would make their function federal and if the elected official signs a federal grant they are doing work for the federal government not the state. So the Commission has no jurisdiction over those salaries. Mr. Worthington further believes that elected officials do not deserve a raise because they are functioning for their own political party.

Greg welcomed the next speaker Clark County Superior Court Judge Suzan Clark. She spoke briefly about her school and work history. She said of the ten Judges at the Clark County Superior Court, Judge Clark is the only female, she would like to see more diversity on the bench. She mentioned that she encourages private attorneys who have been in practice a while to move forward toward the Superior Court bench. She said a competitive salary is one thing that would help to attract the best candidates to the bench. She thanked the Commission for the work they do and said she supports the 2019-2020 proposed salary schedule.

Greg welcomed Cowlitz County Superior Court Judge Anne Cruser. Judge Cruser echoed Judge Clark's thanks to the Commissioners for their time and effort. Judge Cruser talked about competitive salary being important when making career choices and recruiting the best individuals to public service. Those choices can be limited in terms of being able to contribute to public service when there is a lack of competitive salary.

Greg welcomed Clark County Superior Court Judge Bernard Veljacic. He spoke briefly about his work history. Judge Veljacic echoed Judge Clark and Judge Cruser's thanks to the Commissioners for their time and effort as Commissioners.

Greg welcomed the next speaker, Tim Eyman. Mr. Eyman said that the Commissioners as well as himself have been receiving E-mails from taxpayers opposing the 2019-2020 proposed salary schedule. Mr. Eyman strongly believes there should not be any salary increases for the next two years. He would like to see salaries of elected officials reduced. Mr. Eyman said he will gather signatures to file a referendum opposing any salary increase the Commission enacts. He said when the elected officials took the jobs, they knew the salary for the position and that is all they should receive.

Greg read a statement to Mr. Eyman:

"Mr. Eyman. I read with interest your November 16 comments about this Salary Commission on your website.

You report appearing before the “rigged, corrupt 17-member “regular citizen” salary commission.”

For the record: You or anyone else can disagree with any decision made by these Commissioners. But your mischaracterization of the Commission and those serving on the Commission are wrong and misleading. Your comments are an insult to these Commissioners who, on their own time with no pay, serve our state in a constitutionally directed activity.

Shame on you.”

Mr. Eyman replied that he believes that the Commissioners should be able to take criticism.

Kozen added that he doesn't disagree with some of Mr. Eyman's points. He then read the definition of corrupt, “having or showing a willingness to act dishonestly in return for money or personal gain.” Kozen said he and the other Commissioners do the best they can for the Commission. He continued by saying if Mr. Eyman disagrees with decisions the Commission has made Kozen supports his right to say so, but to call the Commissioners corrupt is an error in the reality of things. He asked that Mr. Eyman not be disparaging to the Commissioners themselves.

Mr. Eyman clarified that he believes the system is corrupt. He went on to say that he believes the Commissioners are not all regular citizens.

Greg welcomed the next speaker, Frank Bown. Mr. Bown asked the Commissioners to remember that the 2019-2020 proposed salary schedule is not consistent with wage and salary trends that most ordinary Americans experience. He believes that a salary schedule that stays consistent with the prevailing rate of inflation may be reasonable, but he sees no justification for the current proposed salary increases. Mr. Bown believes that America's founders intended for public office to be held by volunteer citizens.

There being no other requests to speak, the Commissioners moved into a work session.

Steve commented about a part of an email written to the Commissioners in reference to an elected official, “If they want an increase then they should work in the private sector.” Steve believes that speaks volumes to the why elected officials salaries should be competitive. He said he can't imagine a less democratic, more elitist, less citizen-orientated government if the only people serving in those positions were people were well off. It would be very undemocratic if it was limited to only those whose families could pay their way through school and start them with no debt so they didn't have to consider wages.

Larry read from the Willis point factor evaluation system, “Judicial branch-Judges on the federal bench. The position of Supreme Court Justice is benchmarked to the judges on the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.” He asked Commissioners to view Tab 14, page ten, in the 2018 judiciary salary presentation. He pointed out that their presentation uses many different comparisons positions instead of only using U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals as called for in Willis. Larry made the point that instead of moving toward a degree of parity, the proposed salary schedule has made the salaries equal.

Greg asked staff to do a comparison of the Federal U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals salaries to Washington State judicial salaries.

Gerry added the Willis Study states that, as the Commission develops compensation policy for the judiciary for the next biennium, it would be appropriate to consider a cost-of-living increase consistent with the Department of Labor’s index (currently 2.6 percent) and to add a small one or two percentage point increase each year of the biennium to recognize the similarities with the federal bench.

Greg mentioned he read that statement a little differently. He reads it as a suggestion for the year it was written, not for every year. The study says, “a reasonable course of action is to move toward a degree of parity with the federal bench over time.”

Teri reminded Commissioners that they cannot consider benefits when looking at salary increases.

Gary mentioned that it would be helpful to see all elected official’s salaries on the form that Anastasia made for the Commission, to show what the salaries would be with only cost of living adjustments (COLA) from the salary freeze in 2008 to current. Gary also noted after looking at specific levels of court jurisdictions that the lowest level of judge appears to be above the federal judiciary in 2020, so he would like to review those numbers in February. He also talked about setting the salary for the future, and how people don’t know what the future holds, but if the Commission doesn’t make decisions on current data then nothing will ever happen. The Commission has to use the data available and do the best they can with that information.

Jon added that it is inappropriate to be discussing loans, benefits, or the individual holding the position. The Commission considers position descriptions, duties, and responsibilities as well as expanded scope of work and so forth.

Gary echoed Jon's comment and added that some positions require specialized education and it is the Commission's position to set a salary that helps attract the best-qualified candidates to the positions.

Teri spoke about the handout to Tab 7 from the Office of Financial Management (OFM). It is a biennial study of the duties and salaries of agency officials who are subject to appointment by the Governor. This study has a few changes for the information in Tab 7. It will be updated for the Commissioners by the January meeting.

Gary asked about the Willis Study points. He said the points don't directly drive the salaries for the appointed officials. He would like more information as to why OFM has put each position into a band because the points don't equally break into dollars and he would like to understand better.

Teri asked if the Commissioners think it is time to request another Willis Study for any of the three branches. She noted that Willis Studies are effective until responsibilities have changed, at which time the Commission would request a new study. She asked specifically about the Executive Branch and the Judiciary.

Sandi added that when any kind of study or job audit is undertaken it is done very thoroughly by professionals who understand and specialize about job classifications and job functions. The elected officials are not in the market of being able to describe their jobs. That is why those professionals meet with an elected official and gather necessary information to identify and verify the job duties of each position. Sandi also wondered if the Willis Study is the best option for evaluations or if the Commission should look into converting to the job value assessment chart (JVAC) instead. Teri said that she would look into that issue and have the information at the next meeting.

Kozen noted growing cyber security issues at the State Auditor's Office (SAO) and that it seems to show an expanded scope of work for the SAO. Although the actual job description may not have changed, responsibilities have increased over time. He added that cyber security is not just a State Auditor's issue, but an issue for many positions. Kozen said he would like to see updates due to the changes that have occurred over time to the positions, not only with cyber security.

Greg said Steve had made a good point at an earlier meeting when he pointed out that the job description tells only a part of what is actually happening. Parts of the job description may still be there from the start of the position when the Constitution was enacted, but the actual duties are likely different now. For example the Insurance Commissioner with the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Jon made note that in some cities the elected mayor and even some elected county executives make more than the Governor. He would like to look at the dislocation in the state with hierarchies.

Steve asked if the Commission does request a Willis Study when it would be available for the Commissioners to view, and is there a way to ask whoever does the study for some guidance to help the Commissioners understand how the job description may not change, but the work load can double. He said that must be incorporated into the description. Is there a way to do that? Teri replied last time she requested a Willis Study it took about six months. She said the question can be asked, but she is not sure what study would include work load. Steve suggested the Commission make a list of items that concern the Commissioners and ask whomever conducts the study to pay particular attention to those items.


Greg suggested the Commissioners continue this conversation at the next meeting. He added that Sandi made a great point, the professionals do the job descriptions, and they look at how things have changed overtime with regard to the duties and responsibilities.

Teri went over the newly implemented travel policy for the Commissioners.

Commissioners asked to discuss the Auditor's position at the next meeting.

Andrew moved to adjourn at 7:38 p.m., Larry seconded.

The vote was unanimous and the meeting adjourned at 7:38 p.m.



Melissa O'Neill Albert, Chair

January 9, 2019

Date