



ELECTED OFFICIALS COMPENSATION BOARD MEETING MINUTES

9:00 am

FRIDAY February 21, 2025

Allen Room
Live Streamed Video

Present were Board members Jim Fister (via Zoom); Krisanna Clark-Endicott (via Zoom); and Judy Trego. Also present were County Administrator Nick Lelack; Deputy County Administrator Erik Kropp; Deputy County Administrator Whitney Hale; Chief Financial Officer Robert Tintle; Budget & Financial Planning Manager Cam Sparks; and BOCC Executive Assistant Brenda Fritsvold.

This meeting was audio and video recorded and can be accessed on Deschutes County's YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3hWD4KcNong&feature=youtu.be>.

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 9:03 am.

Deputy County Administrator Whitney Hale provided an overview of the meeting agenda and said the goal is to get direction on which comparables to use going forward so data can be gathered and compiled. Hale reminded that in April of 2024, the Board directed that Jackson County no longer be used as a comp for the purpose of assessing compensation levels.

Laurie Grenya, president and owner of HR Answers, reviewed relevant statutory obligations and limitations pertaining to County Compensation Boards, noting that the Board is bound by State law to establish compensation for certain positions but not others. In Deschutes County, the Board has historically established compensation for other elected officials not named in the ORS—e.g., the District Attorney and the Judge who oversees the County's Justice Court.

Trego recalled the Board previously discussed the need to compare compensation with other counties in view of the cost of living in each county. With regard to the pending expansion of the Board of County Commissioners from three positions to five and in consideration of the County's budget situation, she supported distributing the total compensation now provided to the current three Commissioners between the five members of the expanded Commission.

Grenya said although this would likely be lawful, she was unsure if it would result in the Commissioners being paid a competitive wage. She allowed that an organization's financial considerations are always a factor when deciding compensation issues.

Fister suggested that when the BOCC is expanded, the County can assess the workload of each Commissioner to determine whether the same amount of work is being done as before with three Commissioners. If the amount of work done is unchanged but newly spread out between five Commissioners, that would result in each of their workloads being 65% of what they were before. Fister stressed the need to look at comparables and workloads and consider how work is distributed across the BOCC.

Fister added that although the Sheriff has the ability to set the pay rates for his subordinates, State law requires that the Sheriff be paid more than any subordinate in DCSO. With respect to the comparables, he emphasized the need to ensure that jobs are compared with like jobs and said it's useful to take into consideration what an elected official is making as well as what their next-in-line person is making.

Grenya confirmed that State law requires this analysis.

Clark-Endicott said it's important to keep in mind that County Commissioners are elected officials, not employees. She agreed it will be necessary to identify what their jobs entail and how the work is distributed when the Commission expands from three to five members, and questioned if the cost to taxpayers should increase if the same amount of work is being done with five Commissioners as was done with three.

Fister cautioned against making assumptions about what may happen and said data is needed before any adjustments are made. He urged that the Board base its decisions on data.

Clark-Endicott said the compensation for the new positions should be determined before candidates file for office so everyone is clear on the salaries before filing.

Trego expected that if the work being done by three Commissioners will instead be done by five, each Commissioner will be doing less work.

Fister said in addition to looking at the cost of living in various regions, the Board also needs to consider the scope of job duties—for example, the number of parcels/properties overseen by the Assessor's Office.

In response to Trego, Grenya said State law requires that all comparable jurisdictions/organizations be located in Oregon.

Trego said the data she has seen indicates that the Sheriff is underpaid.

Fister advised looking at population sizes and the total square mileage of counties when considering which comparables to use, saying the goal should be to have one common set of comparables with very few exceptions for certain positions.

Grenya spoke to the importance of being consistent in using comparables to determine compensation, noting this will require evaluating variations which have been previously recognized to determine if they remain valid. She reviewed compensation best practices, saying the primary factors for comparables are comparison of duties and responsibilities, budget size, and staff size. Some positions will have comparables in the private sector, but others may not.

In response to Deputy County Administrator Erik Kropp, Grenya said the use of private sector comparables is appropriate if public sector staff are recruited and hired from the private sector, and if the private sector draws staff away from the public sector. Grenya explained that the transfer of skills between those sectors can and does happen.

Continuing, Grenya reviewed data elements for compensation, as follows: base pay; differential payments (e.g. longevity); and benefits (health/retirement/deferred compensation). She recommended that the City of Bend not be used as a comparable; that the counties of Marion, Lane, Clackamas counties be used; and that private industry data as filtered according to budget/staff size and geographically leveled by Deschutes County using two survey sources also be used.

Responding to Trego, Hale said Marion County has three Commissioners while Lane and Clackamas have five.

In response to Fister, Grenya said the use of "geographical leveling" can account for Deschutes County's cost of living as compared to the cost of living in other locations. Fister said some employers underpay staff in Deschutes County because simply living and working here is viewed as a benefit, outside of whatever compensation one receives for their work.

Fister suggested looking into whether COIC would serve as a good comparable. Grenya agreed to research its budget and employee numbers.

Fister asked if three comparable counties are sufficient. Grenya said having two comparables is best practice, and using three plus private industry comps will be enough.

Discussion ensued regarding appropriate comps for the Sheriff's position,

specifically: whether the City of Bend would be an appropriate comp, although the Sheriff is elected and Bends' police chief is appointed; the number of staff who switch employment between DCSO and Bend's Police Department; the fact that Bend and Redmond deal with tourism-related issues as the County does. Trego asked if the other counties have stabilization centers and/or Search and Rescue operations.

Grenya reminded that HR Answers will evaluate duties and responsibilities of the positions used as comps.

The Board members stated their concurrence with the proposal to use

In response to discussion regarding the recommended removal of the City of Bend as a comp for elected officials, Grenya said the reason for this recommendation is because the scope of responsibility of the positions are very different.

The Board members stated their concurrence with the recommendation to remove the City of Bend as a comp for elected officials.

With regard to use of private industry data, Fister asked to review this when it is available and stated his concern that it may not be helpful. Clark-Endicott agreed that although it will be interesting to review, the information will be disparate from that involving elected officials.

NEXT MEETING: 9:00 am on Friday, March 14th

ADJOURN:

Being no further items to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 10:18 am.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:



RECORDING SECRETARY