

**FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS
ELECTED OFFICIALS SALARY REVIEW COMMITTEE
December 15, 2021**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Judy Halstead, Chair, former Director, Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department
- Ginna Claussen, Director, Human Resources, CFO Systems
- Kerry Eagan, former Chief Administrative Officer, Lancaster County
- Mike Thew, former Chief Deputy Lancaster County Attorney
- Gwen Thorpe, former Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Lancaster County

SUPPORT STAFF

Facilitator – David A. Derbin, Chief Administrative Officer, Lancaster County

Professional Consultants - Doug McDaniel, Director, and Nicole Gross, Compensation Manager, Lincoln-Lancaster County Human Resources

Administrative Support – Leslie Brestel, Administrative Services Officer, Lancaster County Clerk’s Office

INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 23-1114, the Lancaster County Board of County Commissioners is required to set salaries for all County elected officials prior to January 15, 2022, a year in which a general election is held. Salaries shall be effective January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2026. The Elected Officials Salary Review Committee was established by the County Board to provide recommendations regarding appropriate salaries for County elected officials. The Committee is comprised of citizens with expertise in governmental, business, legal, and personnel matters.

PROCESS

The Committee met a total of six times. All incumbent elected officials were asked to submit to the Committee written information containing a summary of their duties; how their duties have changed during the last four years due to statutory changes, technological changes, and the pandemic; what they believe is an appropriate salary for their position; and feedback regarding the annual adjustment formula. Each elected official met with the Committee. Doug McDaniel, Director, and Nicole Gross, Compensation Manager, Lincoln-Lancaster County Human Resources, provided the Committee with information and consultation.

The Committee also reviewed the following materials and reports in formulating its recommendations:

1. [Nebraska Association of County Officials 2023-2026 Salary Recommendations for County Officials](#) (October 2021);
2. [Nebraska Association of County Officials Elected Officials Salary Data](#)
3. [Final Report and Recommendations from the Elected Officials Salary Review Committee](#) (December 12, 2017);
4. [Lancaster County Board Resolution No. R-17-0090, In the Matter of Setting Salaries for County Elected Officials for 2019-2022 Term](#) (December 19, 2017);
5. [Lancaster County Board Resolution No. R-21-0001, Annual Salary Increases for Appointed Directors, etc.](#) (January 5, 2021);
6. [Lancaster County Board Resolution No. R-21-0004, In the Matter of Fixing Salaries for Elected Officers' Chief Deputies for the 2021 Calendar Year](#) (January 12, 2021) ([Full attachment A to the R-21-0004](#));
7. Elected Officials Salary Survey, Lincoln-Lancaster County Human Resources Department for 2021 ([November 10, 2021](#); and updated [December 6, 2021](#));
8. [Lancaster County Elected Official Salaries for 2011 through 2021](#);
9. Verbal reports and written materials from County Elected Officials regarding duties, changes in duties, and salary recommendations (included

in the minutes for the [November 10, 2021](#), and [November 17, 2021](#), meetings); and

10. [Elected Official Wage Compression Review for 2021](#).

A copy of all Committee meeting agendas and minutes, and materials reviewed by the Committee, can be found on the Lancaster County website's Agenda Center at: <https://www.lancaster.ne.gov/agendacenter>

DISCUSSION

After meeting with elected officials and reviewing the materials presented, the Committee discussed what information and underlying principles should be used in formulating salary recommendations for Lancaster County elected officials.

As a preliminary matter, the Committee examined the salaries and cost of living formula applicable to elected official salaries for 2019 through 2022. Current salaries and the current formula were adopted by the Lancaster County Board pursuant to the recommendations of the Elected Officials Salary Review Committee, as set forth in its report dated December 12, 2017. The initial salary recommendations for 2019 were based on the following guiding principles: comparability and wage compression. The salaries for the subsequent three years were then based on a cost-of-living formula designed to maintain the fairness of the 2015 salaries and to keep pace with comparability. In addition to the general formulaic increases, in 2021 the Engineer, for comparability, and the Sheriff, for comparability and wage compression, received separate, one-time percentage increases.

The Committee then took a closer look at the projected elected official salaries for 2022 to determine whether the cost-of-living formula kept salaries up to date. The Committee determined the formula performed well in maintaining salaries within a reasonable range of fairness and comparability. Elected officials also indicated that the formula had performed relatively well. However, the Committee expressed concern that the formula may not be built to deal with the current inflationary environment.

The Committee determined that comparability, increased official duties, and taxpayer and budgetary interests should be the guiding principles in establishing salary recommendations for 2023. Although wage compression was examined, it was not a major factor based on current data.

For purposes of comparability, the Committee emphasized the importance of using a consistent methodology in gathering the data used to determine comparability. The

Committee noted that the Elected Officials Salary Survey for 2021, conducted by the Lincoln-Lancaster County Human Resources Department, uses the same array of counties for each elected official and for the County's employees. Additionally, the survey was based on the most currently available market information.

With respect to statutory duties, the Committee noted that it was important to look at changes to the scope of the elected official's position, based on reports from the elected officials about statutory changes, technological changes, and the pandemic. The Committee also took special note of the increasingly technical nature of work in certain fields that may result in a greater level of subject-matter expertise from certain elected officials.

Finally, the Committee discussed taxpayer and budgetary concerns. This consideration contains countervailing interests. On the one hand, the current CPI formula combined with the current inflationary environment could result in large salary increases in 2024 through 2026. On the other hand, it is in the taxpayers' best interest to attract and retain talent to these elected offices. The Committee wished to strike a reasonable balance between these two interests, and the Committee also noted that any comparability changes for 2023 could be spread over the term.

Applying this analysis, the Committee then determined that 2023 salaries for all Lancaster County elected officials should be increased as provided in Attachment A. For 2024 through 2026, all elected officials should receive an annual cost of living increase based on an updated formula in 2024 through 2026. The updated formula caps increases at a maximum of five-percent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the foregoing analysis, the Elected Officials Salary Committee hereby makes the following salary recommendations to the Lancaster County Board of County Commissioners for the 2023 - 2026 term:

For 2023, salaries for all Lancaster County elected officials should be increased for purposes of comparability as detailed in Attachment A.

For 2024 – 2026, each elected official should receive an annual salary increase based on the following formula. If the U.S. Department of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index (CPI) for all Urban Consumers Midwest Region, as published for the November immediately preceding each January for 2024 through 2026 is:

- (A) Not less than 2.5% and not greater than 3.5% - then each elected official should receive a 3% salary increase;

(B) Less than 2.5% - then the salary increase should be 3%, **minus** 50% of the amount by which the CPI is less than 2.5%; and

(C) Greater than 3.5% - then the salary increase should be 3%, **plus** 50% of the amount by which the CPI exceeds 3.5%, provided that the maximum salary increase shall not exceed 5%.

See Attachment A.

Respectfully submitted this 15th day of December, 2021, on behalf of the Lancaster County Elected Officials Salary Review Committee.

Judy Halstead, Chair

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RECOMMENDED SALARIES

OFFICIAL	2023	2024 - 2026
County Attorney	Biweekly: \$6,923.08 (~\$180,000 annually)	Annual increases effective January 1 st based on the following formula. If the U.S. Department of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index (CPI) for all Urban Consumers Midwest Region, as published for the November immediately preceding each January for 2024 through 2026 is: (a) Not less than 2.5% and not greater than 3.5% - then the salary increase for each elected official shall be 3%; (b) Less than 2.5% - then the salary increase for each elected official shall be 3%, minus 50% of the amount by which the CPI is less than 2.5%; and (c) Greater than 3.5% - then the salary increase for each elected official shall be 3%, plus 50% of the amount by which the CPI exceeds 3.5%, provided that the maximum salary increase shall not exceed 5%.
Public Defender	Biweekly: \$6,923.08 (~\$180,000 annually)	
Assessor/Register of Deeds	Biweekly: \$5,384.62 (~\$140,000 annually)	
Engineer	Biweekly: \$5,576.92 (~\$145,000 annually)	
Sheriff	Biweekly: \$5,961.54 (~\$155,000 annually)	
County Treasurer	Biweekly: \$4,307.69 (~\$112,000 annually)	
County Clerk	Biweekly: \$4,076.92 (~\$106,000 annually)	

District Court Clerk	Biweekly: \$4,423.08 (~\$115,000 annually)	
County Commissioners	Biweekly: \$2,267.31 (~\$58,950 annually)	

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