

MINUTES
LANCASTER COUNTY ELECTED OFFICIALS' SALARY REVIEW COMMITTEE
COUNTY-CITY BUILDING, HUMAN RESOURCES CONFERENCE ROOM, THIRD FLOOR
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2021 AT 1:30 P.M.

Advanced public notice of the meeting was posted on the County-City Building bulletin board and the Lancaster County, Nebraska, website and emailed to the media on October 25, 2021. Notice was also published in the Lincoln Journal Star print and digital editions on October 22, 2021.

Members Present: Judy Halstead, Gwen Thorpe, Mike Thew, Kerry Eagan, retired City and County employees; Ginna Claussen, CFO Systems LLC Human Resources Director; David Derbin, Chief Administrative Officer; Doug McDaniel, Human Resources Director; Nicole Gross, Compensation and Classification Manager; and Leslie Brestel, County Clerk's Office

A copy of the Nebraska Open Meeting Act was available from the Lancaster County Clerk's staff.

1) INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS AND STAFF

Introductions were made by those in attendance.

2) STATUTORY GUIDANCE FOR SETTING OF SALARIES FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

Derbin reviewed Neb. Rev. Stat. 23-1114 (County officers and deputies; salaries; fixed by county board; when; method of payment).

3) ELECTED OFFICIALS COVERED BY STATUTE

Derbin noted the affected individuals are the County Attorney, Public Defender, Assessor/Register of Deeds, County Engineer, County Treasurer, County Sheriff, County Clerk, District Court Clerk and the County Commissioners. McDaniel noted the Election Commissioner's salary is governed by a different statute.

4) ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

MOTION: Thorpe moved and Thew seconded to nominate Halstead as Chair and Eagan as Vice Chair.

ROLL CALL: Thorpe, Thew, Eagan, Claussen voted yes. Halstead abstained. Motion carried 4-0 with one abstention.

5) REVIEW OF PROCESS

McDaniel stated the Committee will review material of comparable salaries from outside agencies and comparable counties. The Committee may also choose to have presentations from applicable staff and elected officials. The Committee will set the benchmark for the salaries as well as the formula for the following three years. It was noted the salaries are set for the positions and not the specific individuals who fill those positions. Derbin added the reason for the compensation science is that the salary and formula must be set per State Statutes.

Halstead said what she had found most helpful in previous meetings was a memo was sent to elected officials inquiring as to what statutory responsibilities and what duties in the office had changed in the prior four years. The elected officials were then invited to give a presentation on their answers. She recommended following that practice. Thew thought asking how the pandemic has impacted the office and job responsibilities would be beneficial.

Claussen asked what happens if an elected official is not performing their duties. Halstead answered the individual can be removed from office if certain benchmarks are met.

6) REVIEW OF NACO MARKET DATA

McDaniel distributed and discussed the Nebraska Association of County Officials (NACO) market data salary recommendations report and current salary report (see agenda packet). Thorpe noted some of the elected positions have no position qualifications, such as expertise or experience in a certain field, while other positions have qualifications that are set by the State Statutes.

Gross stated the committee will receive information from Human Resources that will include counties outside of Nebraska that are of like size to Lancaster County for comparison purposes.

Thew asked if elected officials were consulted in the preparation of the presented comparable salaries. Gross answered yes as well as some staff members. McDaniel added having accurate comparable information is very important to the committee's work. General discussion on fair compensation for a well-functioning government followed.

7) OTHER MARKET DATA

7.I Final Report and Recommendation from Elected Officials Salary Committee, December 12, 2017

McDaniel distributed the final report from the 2017 Elected Officials Salary Review Committee (see agenda packet).

7.II Resolution R-17-0090, In the Matter of Setting Salaries for Elected County Officials

Halstead inquired how long the Consumer Price Index (CPI) formula had been factored as part of the discussion. Eagan said since approximately 1998. It became a factor when setting salaries in subsequent years to be in compliance with the statutes. Halstead stated the elected officials were asked if they felt the CPI process was fair and she found the feedback helpful. Thew felt given what is happening with inflation that it is a fair question to ask. Derbin stated he will add the question regarding CPI to the elected officials' memo.

7.III Resolution R-21-0001, Annual Salary Increases for Appointed Directors, Etc.

McDaniel led discussion on the philosophy about salaries for elected officials versus salaries for other County employees and on salary compression. The elected officials are at will employees depending upon the vote of the citizens. Chief deputies are appointed by the elected officials and employed at will and can be released with or without cause. Their salaries are a percentage of the elected official's salary. Eagan noted a chief deputy cannot be paid less than 65% of the corresponding elected official's salary. McDaniel stated classified position salaries are fixed and it takes many steps to remove them from their position.

Halstead asked if there are currently any departments where there are wage compression issues between classified employees and elected official positions. McDaniel replied it would depend on the total compensation package and whether direct or indirect compensation is being used. For employees who earn overtime, he felt there is enough distance between the salaries but there could be situations where that distance could be shortened. It was noted that the amount of overtime may come into play when employees are able to advance to higher positions. Claussen inquired if the elected official knows all of their employees' salaries. McDaniel answered yes.

When asked about the benefits plans, McDaniel stated a 38-40% increase to the salary amount could be estimated for the cost of the benefits package. The elected officials have access to the benefits except for sick leave and vacation leave.

7.IV Lincoln-Lancaster County Human Resources Department Elected Officials Salary Data

Elected officials' salary data was distributed (see agenda packet).

8) NEXT MEETING DATE

It was the consensus of the committee to set the following meeting dates:

- November 10, 2021 from 1:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m.
- November 17, 2021 from 1:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m.
- December 8, 2021 from 1:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 2:28 p.m.

Submitted by Leslie Brestel, County Clerk's Office