

MINUTES
LANCASTER COUNTY ELECTED OFFICIALS' SALARY REVIEW COMMITTEE
COUNTY-CITY BUILDING, HUMAN RESOURCES CONFERENCE ROOM, THIRD FLOOR
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 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 November 16, 2021. Notice was also published in the Lincoln Journal Star print and digital editions on November 12, 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

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. and the location of the Nebraska Open Meeting Act was announced.

1) APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR NOVEMBER 10, 2021

MOTION: Eagan moved and Claussen seconded approval of the minutes. Thorpe, Thew, Eagan, Claussen and Halstead voted yes. Motion carried 5-0.

2) SALARY COMPRESSION DATA

The item was held until later in the meeting.

3) ELECTED OFFICIAL INTERVIEWS

3.I County Clerk

Dan Nolte, County Clerk, stated the office has a budget of \$1,500,000 and thirteen staff members, divided between the Records Division and the Accounting Division. In addition to the responsibility of vendor payments, the Clerk's office is also responsible for payroll duties. Payroll has been centralized and modernized with the conversion to the newly implemented Oracle system. Approximately 2,000 marriage licenses are issued a year. The Clerk's Office oversees Content Manager, a records management software system. The Clerk's Office also attends the County Board meetings and is responsible for the minutes. Nolte said the number of meetings has grown significantly over the past four years, which has caused more work on the part of the Clerk's Office to ensure meetings are properly advertised, attended and meeting minutes completed in a timely manner. He felt the Records Division will need more staff in the future. Additionally, the Clerk's Office has taken on a leadership role in the County's website management.

Halstead asked about the impact of the pandemic on the office. Nolte said marriage licenses have been issued both in person and by mail. He noted the mailed applications, while a popular option for applicants, take more staff time due to additional follow ups with the applicants. Additionally, property valuation protest hearings have been offered both in person and by telephone. All employees are back in the office.

Regarding the salary calculation practices, Nolte stated he felt the previous practices have been adequate and fair.

3.II County Assessor/Register of Deeds

Rob Ogden, Assessor/Register of Deeds, reviewed a handout containing his thoughts on the position of the County Assessor/Register of Deeds (Exhibit 1). The office has 43 staff members. Over the past few years, there has been a significant amount of turnover, which Ogden said has led to the need to develop and attract

new talent with technological skills. Technology use has increased as virtual inspections with property owners, use of the County's Geographic Information System (GIS) and Microsoft Teams meeting options. In person property inspections and meetings will be held as needed.

Ogden voiced his support of the County Assessor/Register of Deeds Office being an appointed position as opposed to an elected position. He noted the State of Kansas has an appointed County Appraiser. There are not many individuals in the appraisal field or those who are willing to run for office.

Regarding the future office make up, Ogden stated the office holds a lot of data that other agencies request and use. The ability for the office to continue to have professional communication, be service oriented and technically adept is key.

Thew said Douglas County is the only other county listed on the Human Resources Salary comparables that has a combined Assessor/Register of Deeds Office. He inquired if Ogden knew of any other places that combined the offices. Ogden answered no other Nebraska counties outside of Douglas County, nor any of the Iowa or Kansas offices in the list of comparables are combined in the same way as Lancaster County.

County Treasurer

Rachel Garver, County Treasurer, was available for discussion and a handout with Garver's thoughts about the County Treasurer position was distributed (Exhibit 2). Most of the Treasurer responsibilities are dictated by the State statutes. Major changes for the Treasurer's Office were the adoptions of LB1107 (Adopt the ImagiNE Nebraska Act, Key Employer and Jobs Retention Act, Renewable Chemical Production Tax Credit Act, Customized Job Training Act, Nebraska Transformational Projects Act, and Nebraska Property Tax Incentive Act and change and provide other related provisions), which resulted in technological changes having to be made to the real estate software system and LB781 (Provide for annual continuing education for treasurers of certain local governments, change and eliminate county treasurer statement requirements, and provide a duty for the Auditor of Public Accounts) which requires continuing education hours for county treasurers. She felt having an individual who understands finances and investment markets is key to the role of Treasurer.

She added other changes to the office have been the conversion to a new motor vehicle registration system, an appointment system for the public for motor vehicle transactions, and the fact that the County is now paying banking fees due to extremely low interest rates. The County is contracting with Three + One for investment market advice.

Regarding the Treasurer's salary, Garver stated it is the lowest of the elected officials in the County. Also, Sarpy and Douglas counties' treasurers are both paid more than Lancaster County's.

3.III Clerk of the District Court

Troy Hawk, Clerk of the District Court, reviewed his letter to the committee, focusing on the functions of the Court (Exhibit 3). There are eight District Court judges and one child support referee. Lancaster County is one of three counties in Nebraska that has a separate Juvenile Court which has four judges. Between those two courts, the Clerk of the District Court handles 10,000-12,000 new and reopened cases per year and \$1,000,000 in fees, judgements and bonds per month. He noted there is a significant increase in pro se individuals, or those individuals who choose to represent themselves in court as opposed to having an attorney. This increase has led to an increased demand on the staff's time and procedural explanations as the State has determined it is the Clerk's job to assist filers, while the judges view it could be construed as giving legal advice. Other duties include acting as the jury commissioner for both the County and District Courts and being the recordkeeper for the Mental Health Board. Concerning the Mental Health Board duties, Hawk noted many of the duties currently performed by his staff used to be piecemealed out. His staff has created consistency and streamlined how those processes are handled.

Hawk recommended a 2.5% salary increase for the District Court Clerk.

Thorpe asked if other counties, especially Sarpy and Douglas Counties have a Mental Health Board. Hawk answered all counties have a Mental Health Board, though Lancaster, Douglas, Sarpy and Hall counties have the most volume.

Claussen inquired how the Court handles various language barriers. Hawk said there are language interpreters available for courtroom cases. If an individual comes into the office, there is a State operated assistance phone number the Clerk can call for interpretation services.

3.IV County Treasurer

Item moved forward on agenda.

SALARY COMPRESSION DATA

Halstead asked if the committee members have additional questions for the elected officials.

Thew inquired if there were no comparables for the Clerk of the District Court position because the position is not elected in other jurisdictions. McDaniel answered yes.

Thew asked about the Public Defender comparable positions as they are not all elected positions. Gross stated the positions that most closely correlate to Lancaster County's Public Defender in Sedgewick County and Polk County are the District Attorney and Assistant County Attorney, respectively. She continued the Human Resources Salary Study was to give the committee as much information as possible while comparing positions, whether elected or not, that most closely match Lancaster County's positions. She suggested in future year's positions that are not elected positions will be noted in the footnotes. McDaniel added the difference in the duties may not be known between all the positions. The data is useful as market data.

Claussen questioned why the State statutes are able to dictate how counties operate. McDaniel gave the correlation of the State and county relationship as a corporate headquarters and its subsidiary.

Halstead requested the committee review the materials presented in preparation for the salary discussions at the December 8 meeting.

3.V County Engineer

Pam Dingman, County Engineer, reviewed her comments about the County Engineer role and compensation, noting only the States of Nebraska and Ohio elect County Engineers (Exhibit 4). She stated Lancaster County has become a leader in partnering with surrounding counties to complete structural repairs. The federal infrastructure bill will require additional certifications and certified project representatives to be able to receive certain funding streams. A challenge for her office is the documentation of the roads and bridges as pertaining to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regulations, which require documentation for projects to be no older than one year. FEMA is also proposing an emergency threshold be increased from \$1,000,000 to \$4,500,000. The Engineer's Office is also now involved in the County's Long Range Transportation Plan and has been able to provide input. The care for subdivision roads continues to be a drain on department resources. The Douglas County Special Interest District (SID) system is responsible for designing and constructing roads, whereas the Lancaster County Engineer's Office is responsible for the same.

The pandemic has caused an increase in supply chain issues and staff challenges.

Thew inquired if there will be avenues to pursue federal funds for roads and bridges separate from the County or State. Dingman responded ARPA funds are not set aside for infrastructure. With the federal infrastructure bill, the County will be able to apply directly to the Federal Highway Administration for federal grants for corridors. She has multiple projects developed that would be eligible to compete for grant funds.

Dingman also said there is funding available to the County through the Municipal Planning Organization (MPO) which she hopes to use for the paving of 98th Street, including opening 98th Street from A to O Streets as well as three additional projects.

Regarding the comparison counties chart, McDaniel asked if the miles of roads are the miles maintained by Lancaster County or the number of miles of road in the County. Dingman said it is the number of miles the County is maintaining.

Halstead requested Dingman's thoughts on the salary process and calculations. Dingman stated the position is underpaid and a salary increase, with the majority being in year one, would be most beneficial to the position.

4) NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting will be December 8 for salary discussion. The committee will hold a final meeting on December 15 at 1:30 p.m. to discuss its final recommendations.

5) ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Thew moved and Eagan seconded to adjourn at 3:12 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Submitted by Leslie Brestel, County Clerk's Office