



Wednesday, January 8, 2025, Meeting Minutes
Shilo Inn, Ocean Shores Blvd, Ocean Shores, WA 98569
TEAMS – Meeting ID: 286 477 900 678, Passcode: XW2h6Vx2

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

Jon read a land acknowledgement, stating the Commissioners are meeting in the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary land of the Quinault, Queets, Chehalis, Chinook, and Cowlitz Tribes of Peoples. The Commission acknowledges and respects the Indigenous individuals and communities who live on this land now, and those who were forcibly removed from their homelands. In offering this land acknowledgement, the Commission affirms Indigenous sovereignty, history, and experiences.

Commission Members Present:

Andrea, Vice Chair – via TEAMS
Carli – via TEAMS
Debbie
Ellen – via TEAMS
Erik, Vice Chair
Jason – via TEAMS
Jon, Chair
Kirby
Kirsten – via TEAMS
Lancer
Linda
Melody – via TEAMS

Nicholas
Sarah – via TEAMS
Steve
Stu – via TEAMS
Sue – via TEAMS

Staff Present:

Teri Wright, Executive Director
Lindsay Matthews, Executive Assistant

Teri took roll call.

Jon read the meeting opening statement. He added that if Commissioners reserve a sleeping room at the location of the meeting but end up needing to attend virtually, please let staff know as soon as possible to avoid charges related to canceling or no show.

Lindsay went over meeting folders and their contents.

Erik moved to approve the December 11, 2024, meeting minutes. Lancer seconded.

The motion was approved by a unanimous voice vote.

Public Testimony

Jon welcomed Eric Richey, a Whatcom County Prosecutor. Jon mentioned that Mr. Richey submitted a letter that was given to Commissioners. Mr. Richey thanked the Commissioners for taking his testimony. He shared that he sees a concerning salary disparity with the Attorney General's salary verses the most comparable positions which he said are the County Prosecutors. He is a County Prosecutor; one of 39 he shared. Mr. Richey went on to say that the responsibilities of a County Prosecutor are similar although the Attorney Generals role is far more complex, yet the Attorney General is paid significantly less. He gave the example that many counties like Whatcom match the Prosecutors salary to that of the Superior Court Judge's, which is roughly \$35,000 higher than that of the Attorney General's. In larger counties, like King and Snohomish, Prosecutors make even more, which reflects the challenges of managing a large office. He made note that the Attorney General's office is the largest law firm in the state and four times the size of the largest Prosecutors office. Only the smallest and least resourced counties pay the Prosecutors at the level of the current Attorney General's salary. He added that the Commission has prioritized competitive salaries, especially for the Judiciary, and the same logic should extend to the Attorney General. Mr. Richey said a competitive salary is essential to attracting and retaining top talent, to uphold justice in Washington State and to protect the community. He added that in his opinion the Attorney General's salary is far too low for the responsibilities, and he proposes increasing the positions salary to match that of the Supreme Court Justice, due to the work being of similar importance. He made note that in the late 90's the two salaries were aligned but since then the Attorney General's salary has fallen behind, and that should not happen just because the Attorney General has not requested an increase. He said that requesting a salary increase for yourself can be humbling and can also hurt you politically. He suggested to align the Governor's salary, the Attorney General's and the Supreme Court Justice's salaries. He said all three roles are the top positions in the state by importance and by how critical they are to the states function. In closing he said the compensation should reflect the importance of the position, and matching the salaries would suggest an appropriate balance of power. He added that a County Executives role is similar to that of the Governor but with fewer responsibilities, yet most County Executives make more than the Governor which also highlights and inequity in the state's salary structure. He urges the Commission to change the salaries to reflect the role of the positions, he noted that increasing the two positions he suggested would be a drop in the bucket of the whole states budget. He thanked the Commissioners for hearing him.

Jon thanked Mr. Richey for his testimony and for being a Prosecutor in Whatcom County.

Commissioners moved into a work session. Teri clarified that the hand-out given to Commissioners showing the total increases for the year, and total cost of increases for all positions for the biennium shows the Judiciary with the currently proposed top-down 5% differential, not the other approaches. She said if Commissioners would like to see it with one of the other approaches, she can have that ready or do it during the February meeting.

Commissioners agreed that they are looking forward to hearing more about the budget and from the economist at the February meeting. Jon added his insight into the differences between the Attorney General’s position and a County Prosecutor, including criminal justice versus civil justice. Discussion ensued around comparable states, comparable salaries, reasonable increases, and what our elected officials are paid versus nationally.

Teri shared that Commissioners scheduled to go off the Commission in 2026 will attend their last in person meeting in February, unless there is some extenuating circumstance. There are seven Commissioners leaving in 2026. Teri explained that the people that are on the Commission from areas of expertise are eligible to stay for a second term, but the only way a person from a district would be on for a second term is if they were randomly selected again, which has never happened.

Jon asked if there was any other business that needed to be discussed prior to adjournment.

Erik moved to adjourn the meeting; Steve seconded.

The meeting was adjourned by Jon at 6:39 p.m.



Jon, Chair

February 5, 2025

Date