

**COMMISSIONERS' MINUTES
KITITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON
COMMISSIONERS AUDITORIUM
SPECIAL MEETING**

TUESDAY

1:00 P.M.

APRIL 27, 2010

Board members present: Chairman Mark McClain; Vice-Chairman Paul Jewell; Commissioner Alan Crankovich.

Others: Catherine Dunn, Deputy Clerk of the Board; Gene Dana, Sheriff; Jerry Pettit, Auditor; Deanna Panattoni, Treasurer; Greg Zempel, Prosecuting Attorney; Joyce Julsrud, Clerk; Joseph Whalen, Human Resources Director.

SPEC MEETING ELECTED OFFICIALS PRE-FILING COMPENSATION COMMISSIONERS

At 1:00 p.m. **Chairman McClain** opened a special meeting to discuss setting the compensation of elected officials prior to the filing date for election.

Jerry Pettit, Auditor said the reason the Elected Officials asked for this meeting was to get a sense of where the Board of County Commissioners are regarding the salaries for next year for the Elected Officials. He said they wished to get a feeling for the thoughts and opinions of the Board and they have had some meetings to discuss their strategies, but wanted to know if this was on the Board's radar and what the Board was thinking about it. He said the Elected Officials didn't want to be unreasonable, but were considering the amounts in the newly signed Union contracts.

Vice Chairman Jewell said a Resolution needed to be passed setting the compensation before the start of the filing period for the 2010 elections.

Jerry Pettit said that in the past, the salaries were set for four years with the Resolution, and the last time it was set for a percentage each year for the four years. He said that some counties had a salary commission that sets the salaries and other counties do other methods. He said that the salaries are for Auditor, Assessor, Clerk, Prosecuting Attorney, Sheriff, Treasurer and Commissioner District 3.

Vice Chairman Jewell asked what increases were approved in 2006. **Joseph Whalen, Human Resources Director** said that the increase was 3.9% year after year. **Mr. Jewell** asked what the District 1 & 2 increases were for the next four years. **Commissioner Crankovich** said it was 2.5% for the next 2 years and 3.2% after that.

Joseph Whalen reminded the Board that the union contracts vary in percentage of increase and over how many years.

Vice-Chairman Jewell asked about the wage survey done by Human Resources. **Mr. Whalen** said that all positions are within the relative range except the Sheriff and Prosecutor. The Sheriff's is within \$59 of the average compensation and the Prosecutor's was due to a conscious effort to not increase the County share.

Greg Zempel, Prosecuting Attorney said they came in and there was a restructuring discussion which was denied. The Legislature tied the State's contribution for the Prosecutor to the Superior Court Judges, but the Counties didn't have to increase their contribution to match the State's contribution. **Chairman McClain** said the County stopped the escalator clause to stop the increase on the County's part, which was done with Resolution 2008-55.

Vice-Chairman Jewell said this was all good information. He said the Corrections, Road and Probation Unions have settled their contracts for 7% over 3 years.

Chairman McClain said he didn't think this Resolution should be done in the election year, but in the year before the election.

Jerry Pettit said to look at this in a positive light, few other sets of Elected Officials have this kind of discussion with their Board of County Commissioners. The Boards just set the salaries and unfortunately, no one thinks of setting the compensation ahead of time. He said that sometime budget issues come up that would be different from the year before. He said that a Resolution could be set with the caveat that it will be revisited each year. He said that three Elected Officials are currently turning back their salary increases this year. He said the Elected Officials will have another meeting once they have an idea of the Boards' thoughts and bring forward documents.

Gene Dana, Sheriff, said a citizen advisory committee had been recommended a number of years ago but the Board did not agree to it at that time. He said it was necessary to make compensation attractive to people so they will run for office.

Commissioner Crankovich said the public doesn't understand salary is for the position, not the person. He said it was hard to change that feeling.

Sheriff Dana said it was good to have any increases consistent with the union contracts. **Commissioner Crankovich** said the union

contracts have been approved at 7% over 3 years and merit pay adds 3.8%, 4.8% or 5.8% depending on evaluation.

Jerry Pettit said he didn't remember incremental increases.

Prosecutor Greg Zempel said there were incremental increases tied to Cost of Living which were done from 1990 to 1996.

Commissioner Crankovich said the County has a one million dollar shortfall which it had started the year with. The departments are not doing a good job of holding salaries in check and most evaluations have "Above Average" rates, which puts the salaries and benefits out of kilter. He said if we don't do another levy shift, the County is in trouble with salaries and benefits and just last fall, we couldn't get parity between union and non-union and had to lose people. He said he thought pay raises for any position is problematic.

Vice-Chairman Jewell said doing something with District 3 cannot be avoided because Districts 1 & 2 are compensated higher than District 3.

Jerry Pettit said if the Board believes it doesn't make sense to raise salaries, that's it and the best thing is the opportunity to have this discussion.

Commissioner Crankovich said he is thinking along the lines of the Constitution with the ability to change the Board salaries. He said he agreed with the Sheriff that the impetus needs to go to the Department Heads and Elected Officials to manage their budget and salaries.

Joyce Julsrud, Clerk said she could only speak for herself, but she knows there is no money available but she wants to keep people and the office open. She asked if the Resolution could be written with no increase for two years and to be revisited at mid-term when the other Commissioner Districts are considered. **Vice-Chairman Jewell** said it couldn't be done with the Commissioners Districts.

Jerry Pettit said there is always a problem with parity.

Commissioner Crankovich said it went back to 2004 when District 3 made \$8,000 more. **Prosecutor Zempel** said this problem needs to be corrected.

Vice-Chairman Jewell said he thought it was a good idea to consider the union contracts as they were done in economically problem times. He said they needed to make sure as Elected Officials, they are leading the way and being conservative in their leadership. He said he liked Ms. Julsrud's idea. He said the County is right on the forecast - not bleak, but not as good as he would like.

Jerry Pettit said these comments gave the Elected Officials some thoughts to work on and it was very helpful.

Clerk Joyce Julsrud asked what the time frame for the Resolution would be. She said she thought the feeling on public perception was exact.

Jerry Pettit said they could hold off until the June 1, 2010 agenda but they should have something for the second meeting in May. He said the Elected Officials would come up with a proposal and the Board could hold a public hearing.

Chairman McClain said they could set the public hearing at the next Agenda. **Prosecutor Greg Zempel** said to set a public hearing for May 18 and the documents would be due on May 13.

Jerry Pettit said they need to get this done and with the possibility of a continued meeting, May 18, 2010 looks like the best date.

Chairman McClain said the Board will do the public hearing notice and the Elected Officials will prepare the documents.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:57 p.m.

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD



Catherine Dunn

KITTITAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
KITTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON



Mark McClain, Chairman