



## COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

John Hutchings  
District One

Gary Edwards  
District Two

Tye Menser  
District Three

## HUMAN RESOURCES

### **THURSTON COUNTY CITIZENS' COMMISSION ON SALARIES FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS**

Meeting Minutes – September 30, 2019 Revised

Members present: Chair Karen White, Bill Ireland, Rafael Lozano, Travis Matheson, and Megan Walsh.

Members absent: John Christiansen, Jason Fueston, and Rachel Morriss.

Members excused: None.

Staff present: Ruth Elder and Devon Smith

Elected Officials present: Auditor Mary Hall, County Commissioner Tye Menser, Sheriff John Snaza, Prosecuting Attorney Jon Tunheim, and Coroner Gary Warnock.

Others present: Mary Kincy and Cameron Mullins.

Chair Karen White called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Welcome and Introductions: The Commission members introduced themselves.

Coroner Gary Warnock addressed the Commission. He stated that he took office in 2007 and is in his fourth term as the Elected Coroner. He stated that Kitsap County is the most comparable county. He explained that death does not take a holiday, so his office is a 24-hour response service agency and he is on call 24/7. Coroner Warnock explained that when he first took office, the Coroner was paid less than the other Elected Officials. He explained that there were several years when the Salary Commission did not meet and that the Elected Officials' salaries did not change for several years.

Sheriff John Snaza addressed the Commission. He explained that the Sheriff has the responsibility to enforce all laws countywide, and that he must provide service to the citizens that he serves. He stated that the Sheriff must prepare his staff and ensure that they have adequate leadership training. Sheriff Snaza reported that the Thurston County Sheriff's Office ranks 37th out of Washington's 39 counties in staffing per thousand population. He reported that his office has 92 full-time equivalent positions for patrol and 107 to 111 full-time equivalent positions for corrections. Sheriff Snaza discussed the other services provided by his Office including civil services, investigations, and search and rescue.

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He explained that he restructured the management in the Office five to six years ago to put more deputies on the road. Sheriff Snaza explained that the salaries of the bargaining unit employees impact the salaries for the Captains, Chiefs, and Undersheriff, but not the Elected Sheriff. He stated that with the current salary for the Sheriff, Captains would lose \$5,000 to \$8,000 if they were to become the Sheriff, and that the Chiefs and the Undersheriff would lose even more. He stated that Lieutenants who work patrol and work overtime every month earn more than the Sheriff. Sheriff Snaza explained that the Salary Commission stopped meeting for a period of years due to a downturn in the economy.

Prosecuting Attorney Jon Tunheim addressed the Commission. He reported that he has worked for Thurston County for 31 years. He stated that he was elected in 2010 and took office in 2011. Prior to his election, he was Chief Deputy Prosecuting Attorney. Prosecuting Attorney Tunheim explained that his Office has the responsibility and authority to prosecute all felonies countywide, all juvenile offenses countywide, and all misdemeanors in the unincorporated county. He explained that his office also prosecutes all misdemeanors for the City of Tumwater and the City of Rainier by contract. Prosecuting Attorney Tunheim reported that there are 23 attorneys on the criminal side of the Office who file approximately 8,000 cases annually. He explained that the civil division has 10 full-time equivalent positions and is responsible for advising all county Elected Officials and Department Directors, bringing lawsuits on behalf of Thurston County, and defending Thurston County in lawsuits. He explained that Thurston County has insurance through the Washington Counties' Insurance Risk Pool, so the Risk Pool hires outside attorneys to defend the County, and these attorneys work with liaisons from the Prosecuting Attorney's Office. He explained that Thurston County joined the opioid lawsuit against Purdue Pharma. Prosecuting Attorney Tunheim explained that his Office contracts with the State of Washington for child support enforcement and that there are approximately 9 full-time equivalent positions in that unit. He explained that the Prosecuting Attorney manages 33 staff who are hired to argue for a living, along with 37 support staff. He explained that the total number of full-time equivalent positions varies between 70 and 72, depending on grants. Prosecuting Attorney Tunheim reported that the Prosecuting Attorney's Association conducted a salary survey 10 to 11 years ago. He explained that the Legislature eventually passed a statute found that the Prosecuting Attorney is the Executive Branch peer of the Superior Court Judge in the Judicial Branch. He explained that the State reimburses Thurston County for 50 percent of the Prosecuting Attorney's salary, as they do with the Superior Court Judges.

Auditor Mary Hall addressed the Commission. She thanked the Commission members for their service and for volunteering their time. She explained that the Auditor is the Chief Election Officer for the County, oversees all vehicle and vessel licensing, issues marriage licenses and passports, and handles the financial management and reporting. Auditor Hall pointed out that the duties of the Auditor are quite different in the charter counties. She explained that the Auditors in the charter counties do not manage finance as the Thurston County Auditor does. She reported that two employees in her Office earn more than the Auditor. Auditor Hall explained that her Office brings in revenue to the County. She stated that she is a big believer in LEAN government. She explained that her Office examined financial processes for potential savings. She reported that by moving to the daily processing of warrants, her office reduced late fees and earned discounts of \$34,663 and rebates of \$35,400 in 2018. Auditor Hall reported that the Clerk's Office stopped offering passport services as the result of budget cuts. She reported the Auditor's Office is the only government office in Thurston County currently offering passport services and that over 2,000 passports have been issued. Auditor Hall reported that her Office has tightened up financial controls and sought grants for important projects including security enhancements and the software used by the public records unit. She explained that her Office's activities are subject to auditing and oversight by several agencies, including the State Auditor's Office, the Secretary of State's Office, the Department of Licensing, and the US State Department. Auditor Hall reported that she has 23 years of election experience and

ran an electronic document business prior to her election. She was involved with the creation of the cybersecurity task force that brought County Offices and Departments together for training and the implementation of anti-phishing software. Auditor Hall explained that all of Thurston County Elected Officials work on Legislative issues and that this effort is nearly a second job during the Legislative sessions.

County Commissioner Tye Menser addressed the Commission. He started as a County Commissioner in January 2019. He worked as an attorney for approximately 21 years prior to being elected. Commissioner Menser explained that there are four tracks in his work as a County Commissioner: (1) Setting policies, budget, and county code, (2) Serving as a direct representative for residents in unincorporated Thurston County and responding to citizen complaints, (3) Representing Thurston County on 13 of the 40 multi-jurisdictional boards and commissions where Thurston County is represented, and (4) Serving as a County Commissioner out in the community, attending ribbon cuttings, charity events, and meeting with community groups. He explained that Thurston County is one of the largest counties that has not gone to a charter county form of government. He explained that the number of hours involved are substantial and that he works longer hours than when he was working as an attorney.

The Commission thanked the Elected Officials for attending the meeting and for sharing their comments.

Approval of the Minutes of August 19, 2019: **M/S/P TRAVIS MATHESON/MEGAN WALSH**  
**That the minutes of the August 19, 2019, meeting be approved as submitted.**

**New Business:**

- a. Discussion of 2020 Salary Setting Process: The Commission members discussed the next steps in the 2020 salary setting process. The Commission members identified the salaries in comparable counties, salary compression and inversion in the Elected Offices, the CPI-W, cost-of-living adjustments for Thurston County employees, and cost-of-living adjustments for other public employees such as State employees as important items to be considered.

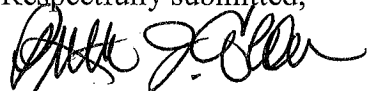
The Clerk reminded the Salary Commission members that a minimum of the six Salary Commission members must agree to set and to recommend salaries for Elected Officials.

- b. Data Gathered by Staff: The Commission members reviewed the information gathered by the staff. The Clerk explained that the data includes Kitsap County salaries and a history of the Thurston County Elected Officials' salaries.
- c. Commission Directions to Staff: The Commission directed the Clerk to inform the County Commissioners that they are currently unable to act on the 2020 salaries for the Elected Officials, since there are only five Salary Commission members actively participating in the meetings. The Commission requested that the Clerk provide the Commission with the Social Security cost of living increase for 2020.

Next meeting date: The Commission members discussed the next meeting, which is scheduled for October 21. The Commission members agreed that it does not make sense for the Salary Commission to meet until another member is appointed, so that it would then be possible to act on the salaries.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ruth Elder', written in a cursive style.

Ruth Elder, Clerk of the Commission