



WASCO COUNTY
COMPENSATION COMMITTEE
MARCH 10, 2021
Held via Zoom

PRESENT: John Hutchison (Chair)
Jorge Barragan
Mike Woodside

STAFF: Tyler Stone, Administrative Officer
Mike Middleton, Finance Director
Nichole Biechler, Human Resources Manager
Kathy Clark, Executive Assistant

Chair Hutchison convened the meeting at 3:07 p.m. and reviewed the agenda. He called for nominations for Chair and Vice-Chair.

{{{Mr. Woodside nominated John Hutchison to serve as Chair of the Wasco County Compensation Committee for 2021. Mr. Barragan seconded the nomination. The vote was unanimously in favor of Mr. Hutchison serving as Chair.}}}

{{{Chair Hutchison nominated Mr. Barragan to serve as Vice-Chair of the Wasco County Compensation Committee for 2021. Mr. Woodside seconded the nomination. The vote was unanimously in favor of Mr. Barragan serving as Vice-Chair.}}}

{{{Mr. Barragan moved to approve the Wasco County Compensation Committee minutes of April 7, 2020. Mr. Woodside seconded the motion which passed unanimously.}}}

REVIEW OF LAST YEAR.

Ms. Biechler reminded the Committee that at last year's meeting, the Committee decided to move forward with performance evaluations for elected officials and placing them on the salary matrix for consistency and equity with appointed County staff.

Mr. Barragan noted that the memo indicates that one elected official opted out of the performance evaluation. He asked who that was. Ms. Biechler replied that Commissioner Schwartz opted out.

Mr. Barragan asked why Commissioner Schwartz had opted out. Commissioner Schwartz stated that she thought it was an odd request of elected officials. She said that she learned that the evaluations are public documents and she was not comfortable with that. She stated that she talked to colleagues, Mr. Stone and 13 citizens and did what she felt was an evaluation.

Chair Hutchison asked how she got the 13 people. Commissioner Schwartz replied that she called supporters.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ms. Biechler reviewed the memo included in the materials she sent out to the Committee. All of the elected officials are now on the salary matrix and all but two of them have topped out – meaning they have reached the highest level of pay possible for their position. The two that have not are the Sheriff and Assessor – both are recommended for the 2.5% increase for which they are eligible. In addition, it is recommended that the Sheriff continues to receive a stipend for his oversight of 911 Dispatch and Community Corrections.

Chair Hutchison asked if any of the elected officials present would like to comment. County Clerk Lisa Gambee said that we talked about this 2 or 3 years ago to standardize how elected officials are compensated and bring that in line with how the appointed directors are compensated. Once an employee has topped out, the only way that the pay range moves is when the market survey is done and demonstrates a need to increase compensation for a particular position.

Chair Hutchison said that he recalls Vice-Chair Barragan expressing some concern around structuring pay in order to keep talent.

Vice-Chair Barragan asked if there is concern about maintaining staffing levels in light of the economic impact of the pandemic and the possibility of a rise in the default rate for property taxes. Mr. Stone responded that he does not have that concern. The County has been at full staff throughout the pandemic.

Vice-Chair Barragan asked if there has been an impact to the County's revenue streams. Mr. Stone said that he has seen some impacts and will continue to see impacts. He stated that County leadership has spent the last 10 years setting the County up to be able to weather a storm like this. The County is in a good position right now and he is confident that Wasco County will be okay for the duration of this.

Chair Hutchison said that he should be commended for that; probably only a handful of counties are in that enviable position. Vice-Chair Barragan agreed.

Vice-Chair Barragan asked if the Treasurer's pay is adequate to compensate for the duties of that office. Mr. Stone replied that for what they are asking the Treasurer to do, he thinks it is fair. He explained that the Finance Director does the lion's share of the work. The Treasurer and Administrative Officer spend time ensuring that things are on track. The work that the Treasurer is not compensated for is the management of the Veterans Service Office to which he probably gives a day a week w/o any additional compensation.

Ms. Biechler stated that we did not have the posting re-evaluated when those extra duties were added as there was nothing to compare the hybrid position to. There just are no other Treasurers overseeing Veterans Service Offices. The position is fairly compensated but we could increase the Treasurer's hours.

Mr. Woodside commented that it should be done. The Treasurer should not be doing that work for gratis. Vice-Chair Barragan concurred, saying that the Treasurer did not have that responsibility previously; those hours should be recognized.

Mr. Stone said that he would like to look at that office's budget to see what it can handle. Ideally, we want them to stay within budget. Ms. Biechler added that originally we thought that it would only be an hour or two a week but Mr. Preston has stepped up to do more.

*****The Committee was in consensus to ask County staff to analyze the Veterans Service Office budget in order to determine if they can adequately compensate the County Treasurer for hours spent in oversight and support of that office.*****

Chair Hutchison expressed his hope that the County will continue to operate frugally in order to continue to maintain a surplus.

Commissioner Schwartz said that she has heard concerns around the county about people not being able to pay property taxes. She reported that she had recently attended a presentation from a State economist who commented that given the type of jobs lost in our region, most of the property tax payers are working remotely and still getting paid. The State of the State address

revealed that they are not as bad off as predicted – it will probably be a flat economy rather than seeing a dip. She said she agrees that the County needs to continue its frugality. She thanked the Committee for their work.

Commissioner Kramer also thanked the Committee for their work.

Mr. Middleton explained that as of the end of February our executed property tax revenue is at 97% of budget and about \$500,000 more than it was at that time last year. He said that it could change but is not expected to.

Chair Hutchison asked how much is in contingency. Mr. Middleton replied that there are two reserve funds – one with \$2 million and the other with \$5 million – and a contingency fund with \$3 million.


Mr. Woodside observed that the County has paid down a substantial portion of their PERS liability. That is fantastic and will allow the County to continue to support future reserves. It is incredible.

Mr. Middleton stated that the County has put approximately \$7 million into that program and it is getting 7% interest, far more than we could have gotten by investing in the LGIP which is currently paying 0.06%. All of that interest will go toward what is owed on PERS.


}}}Mr. Woodside moved that the 2021 Compensation Board pass a recommendation that the Assessor's and the Sheriff's salaries receive a 2.5% increase for performance and that the current stipend payment for the Sheriff (\$10,000) continue. Vice-Chair Barragan seconded the motion which passed unanimously.}}}

The meeting adjourned at 3:38 p.m.


WASCO COUNTY
COMPENSATION COMMITTEE



John Hutchison, Committee Chair



Jorge Barragan, Vice-Chair



Mike Woodside, Committee Member