

**Morrow County Compensation Board Meeting Minutes**  
**March 16, 2017**  
**Bartholomew Building Upper Conference Room**  
**Heppner, Oregon**

**Present**

Lisanne Currin, Chair  
Rob Brown  
Andy Fletcher  
Eileen Hendricks  
Jill Martin  
Karen Wolff, Human Resources Director

**Call to Order:** 9:32 a.m.

**Minutes**

The Board reviewed the Minutes from last year.

*Mr. Brown moved to approve the minutes of March 29, 2016 and March 31, 2016 as presented.  
Mr. Fletcher seconded. Unanimous approval.*

**Introductions**

Ms. Wolff thanked the Board for their time and thanked their employers for allowing them the time to participate on this Board.

**Public Comment**

Chair Currin asked if there was any Public Comment. No comments.

Ms. Wolff explained that the Board of Commissioners believed it was important for the Board to be able to have free deliberations and therefore Public Comment is being limited to prior to and following the deliberations.

Mr. Fletcher asked what was the COLA increase for non-Elected Officials this year. Ms. Wolff said it was 3% for this current Fiscal Year and has not been determined for the next Fiscal Year. Ms. Wolff anticipates that 3% may be the amount used.

**Deliberations**

**Commissioner**

Mr. Brown noted that the Board of Commissioners have recognized that the job of Commissioner is more than a half-time commitment. Mr. Brown asked Commissioner Doherty, who was in the audience, if the Commissioners were asking for a raise. Commissioner Doherty

said yes. Commissioner Doherty provided some background information leading to the decision of the Board of Commissioners. If it is a full-time commitment, then what do we do?

Ms. Wolff commented that the packet of information to the Board included the portion of the Board of Commissioner Minutes where this discussion and action took place. In the Minutes Commissioner Russell states that they are not looking for a change in compensation. Ms. Wolff explained that she believes his intent was to mean that they were not asking for a change in compensation at that time, because it has to go through the Compensation Board and Budget Committee before there can be a change in the Elected Official's wage.

Chair Currin said that from a voter perspective, we transitioned from a full-time Judge and two part-time Commissioners to a County Administrator and three part-time Commissioners. That was the message presented to the voters. Chair Currin added that she believes that if you are doing a full-time job you should receive full-time pay. That is only fair. She is not sure what that process should be, from a voter perspective. Maybe this is just the start of that. Had that been decided before the election, it may have changed all kinds of things, including who may have filed for election. She believes there should be some public process with the change.

Chair Currin noted that some additional members of the audience arrived and asked if they had any comment. Undersheriff Bowles said that the Sheriff would not be attending today and he asked Undersheriff Bowles and Melissa Ross, Sheriff's Office Administrative Assistant to attend and take notes for him.

Ms. Wolff advised that Justice of the Peace, Judge Ann Spicer is attending by phone. Judge Spicer said she would like to have her salary increased to the same level as the Gilliam County Justice Judge. Only six of the Justice Courts have full service Court such as ours, and only three are in Eastern Oregon. Gilliam County, Wheeler County and Morrow County. Gilliam County is currently paying \$73,800 with an anticipated increase this year. Because of the similarities in the Courts and the revenue that they bring into the county, Judge Spicer believes she should be paid the same as that Court. (Judge Spicer returned to her conference.)

Ms. Wolff noted that the County Surveyor, Steve Haddock joined and asked if he had any comment. He said no.

Ms. Wolff stated that she received a question from a Board member about Home Rule, which came up in some of the comments that were received. Ms. Wolff provided a copy of testimony from 2015 from the League of Oregon Cities Legal Counsel and Association of Oregon Counties Legal Counsel commenting on Measure 91, the marijuana legislation. The testimony included a brief explanation of Home Rule. This is being provided only as information. Home Rule is a process which is defined in Oregon State Statute. Chair Currin asked Ms. Wolff to summarize Home Rule.

Ms. Wolff explained that going to Home Rule would be a charter. This is how we are going to run our county. Rather than strictly following statute, you can choose to change some things. Some things that can not be changed. As an example, Hood River county is Home Rule. They have basically eliminated all Elected positions except Commissioner and Sheriff. Umatilla County is Home Rule also. Ms. Wolff explained that Morrow County looked at Home Rule in 1997. From what Ms. Wolff has been told, it was decided NOT to go to Home Rule because they did not want to do away with the Juvenile Judge position. They liked everything else about Home Rule. Ms. Wolff went on to explain that recently at a Budget Meeting a citizen brought up the question of Home Rule. This is not something that will change overnight. Ms. Wolff said she is not advocating for Home Rule, just stating that it was brought forward by a citizen.

Chair Currin asked about the difference between a Board of Commissioners and a County Court. Ms. Wolff explained that Morrow County was a County Court and that when Judge Tallman chose to not run for reelection, but to rather retire, the County Court chose to transfer the Juvenile Judge duties to the Circuit Court. The decision to make this change occurred after the filing for the Judge position opened, so the election needed to continue as for a Juvenile Judge. Melissa Lindsay was elected as the incoming Judge with a six year term, and then they transitioned to a Board of Commissioners. We now have three Commissioners.

Chair Currin asked what happened to the salary for that position. Ms. Wolff explained that the Compensation Board recommended last year that the person who replaced Judge Tallman would receive the same compensation as the other Commissioners. The full-time Judge's wage was double the wage of the part-time Commissioners.

Ms. Wolff explained that we now have a Board of Commissioners, not a County Court.

Ms. Hendricks asked if there is room in the county budget for Commissioner raises. Ms. Wolff said the county is in the black. Ms. Wolff explained that the Commissioners may accept, reject or modify the Compensation Board recommendation. Then again at Budget Hearings, the recommendation may be accepted, rejected or modified.

Mr. Brown suggested the half of the Judge wage that is not being used now that we have a half time Commissioner could be split between the three Commissioners.

### **Clerk**

Chair Currin asked for clarification: Last year, were the Clerk, Treasurer and Justice of the Peace changed to the same salary? Ms. Wolff replied yes.

Chair Currin made reference to the comparisons in the notebooks to other counties. Chair Currin also referenced the comparisons to other positions within Morrow County. Ms. Wolff explained that in the past there have been comments comparing to Department Heads. Ms. Wolff explained that that comparison is somewhat like comparing apples and oranges. Some of the Elected Officials supervise employees. Underlying education and experience requirements are

different. Some of the Elected positions only require that to file for the position you must be a Morrow County resident for a year. Some do have underlying requirements. The matrix that is used for wage placement for Managers heavily weights education and experience requirements. Ms. Wolff said she is concerned that the Elected Officials would be insulted if she were to evaluate their wage based on that matrix system.

Chair Currin stated that she believes part of the 'rub' in the past has been that the Elected Officials do not receive Step Increases. Managers receive Step Increases every two years.

Chair Currin asked if there are any other counties that use a step system for Elected Officials. Ms. Wolff said there are a few that have a step system or longevity pay. None of the counties that were used in our comparisons have longevity pay.

Chair Currin asked for a little background on why the Board of Commissioners chose these counties as our comparison counties this year. Ms. Wolff explained that the thoughts were who do we compete with for employees and who do we compare ourselves to when discussing wages. Rather than the three counties larger and three counties smaller based on population, as we have for many years, the Commissioners wanted to use some geographically close counties also. Similar size counties, similar economic counties.

Chair Currin asked if there was anything that jumped out to Ms. Wolff when she was doing her comparisons. Ms. Wolff said nothing glaring. If there had been, Ms. Wolff would have made a recommendation in her memos.

Chair Currin asked Gayle Gutierrez, Treasurer, who just joined the meeting, if she had anything that she wanted to share with the Board. Ms. Gutierrez said no thank you.

The Board reviewed the comparison of wages for the Clerk. They also reviewed the additional materials submitted by Bobbi Childers, Morrow County Clerk.

### **Sheriff**

Chair Currin asked Ms. Wolff to provide some background on this position and wage. Ms. Wolff explained that Undersheriff Myren was in his position for 11 years. The Undersheriff is on the Management wage scale and receives Step Increases. It got to a point where the Undersheriff, through their Step Increases, had a wage that was more than the Sheriff's wage. By State Statute, the Sheriff's wage must be more than any subordinate. A Compensation Board had to increase the Sheriff's wage to meet this statute. This happened a couple of times. Now that Undersheriff Myren has retired and Undersheriff Bowles is in office, we do not have that wage conflict, for now. This may come up again in a few years.

Chair Currin asked if there are any other Elected Officials who have had a similar issue where the subordinate wage is more than the Elected Official's wage. Ms. Wolff explained that the Assessor's Office has had a 30 year employee whose wage was close to the wage for the

Assessor. That employee is retiring at the end of this month, so that conflict will not be an issue. This comes up with Department Heads as well. A Department Head may be fairly new in their position and be at the lower end of their wage scale and have a long term employee who is at the top of their wage scale. Ms. Martin stated that in her opinion, that is OK. Chair Currin asked if the Board has ever taken an action based on this. Ms. Wolff said that so far, the Commissioners have not taken an action with Department Heads based on this. Chair Currin said she thought it was important for the Compensation Board to consider how this is handled with Department Heads since they all work for the same outfit.

Mr. Brown said that he did not think that the increase for the Sheriff was a gross amount. It was more than other Elected Officials received. Ms. Hendricks commented that there is a huge difference when you are managing employees, such as does the Sheriff.

Undersheriff Bowles asked on behalf of the Sheriff if he is going to receive a Cost of Living Increase this year or not. The Board responded that they have yet to make that recommendation, which will then go to the Commissioners and Budget Committee.

Chair Currin welcomed Greg Sweek and asked if he had anything to say to the Board. He said he did not have anything to say right now.

### **Treasurer**

The Board reviewed the wage comparisons and the additional materials provided by Gayle Gutierrez, Treasurer.

Chair Currin commented that the comparisons for this position are not as clear as for some other Elected positions. Ms. Wolff agreed. Counties 'package' the Treasurer position differently. Ms. Martin asked if the Jefferson County wage is correct. Ms. Wolff said yes, that is the portion of the Finance Director wage that is attributed to the Treasure duties. Chair Currin recognized Ms. Gutierrez, who commented that the change in the Jefferson County Treasurer position is recent. She does not believe that the position is finalized yet.

Mr. Brown asked if the Treasurer wage was increased to be the same as the Clerk and Justice of the Peace. It was clarified that the Clerk and Justice of the Peace were increased to be the same as the Treasurer.

### **Surveyor**

Ms. Wolff provided background information on this position's wage. This position is not considered eligible for benefits. The Surveyor receives fees for the review of plats and subdivisions. Until recently, that was the compensation that the Surveyor received. There is also Monumentation money, which the Surveyor may bill Morrow County for their services of reestablishing Surveyor corners. Other professional surveyors may do this work as well. Recently it was decided that our current Surveyor was doing much more than recent Surveyors

and he has put a lot of work into cleaning up our records, and therefore, an additional amount was set for the Surveyor.

Ms. Wolff asked the Board for clarification of their intent from last year, and then will ask for similar clarification for this year. Is the \$36,000 stipend intended to be in addition to the fees and monumentation money, or are all of these monies added together to come to \$36,000?

Ms. Wolff explained that part of the reasoning behind the stipend is to compensate the Surveyor for their underlying education and the use of their personal office. The Surveyor does not have an office in Morrow County presently, they use their own private business office.

Discussion ensued regarding the Surveyor records. Steve Haddock, Surveyor provided information on records and fees that the Surveyor receives and monumentation funds.

Ms. Wolff asked the Compensation Board to clarify their intent for any compensation that is recommended. Is it in addition to the fees and monumentation monies? Does this compensation include the fees and monumentation monies? Mr. Brown asked how it is being handled presently. Ms. Wolff said the \$36,000 is in addition to the fees and monumentation monies.

#### **Assessor**

When asked, Ms. Wolff clarified that the Assessor is the Tax Collector.

#### **Justice of the Peace**

Chair Currin stated that earlier Judge Spicer provided another comparable, Gilliam County. When asked, Ms. Wolff explained that some counties have transferred Justice Court to Circuit Court and they no longer have a Justice of the Peace. She also explained that the legislature is looking at Justice Courts again and it is questionable whether we will have Justice Courts in the future. Chair Currin asked if Morrow County practice allows for any wage adjustments for someone who comes to a position with a lot of experience or education. Ms. Wolff explained that depending on the situation, a position could start at Step 2 or 3, or higher if warranted. Discussion ensued. Ms. Hendricks stated that she believes that expertise is so much more important than longevity.

#### **District Attorney**

Ms. Wolff explained that the District Attorney is a State of Oregon employee. They run for election through the state. Statutorily, we do not have to make a recommendation for the District Attorney, however, the Board of Commissioners said that they would like to have this Board consider the wage. This is a stipend, above the State wage. Mr. Brown asked how the other counties decided upon the amount that they pay the District Attorney. Ms. Wolff said she did not ask that question, so she does not have an answer. Morrow County presently provides a stipend of \$6,000 per year to the District Attorney for District Attorney duties. Ms. Wolff went on to explain that the District Attorney and Deputy District Attorney have a separate Professional

Services contract for Legal Counsel services. They do this as a team. They each receive an additional \$2,500 each month for these services.

Ms. Martin stated that she is related to the current District Attorney so she is recusing herself from any discussion/decision on this position. Chair Currin thanked her for making that statement.

Ms. Hendricks asked if the payment is based on the number of cases the District Attorney handles. Ms. Wolff did not know. Discussion ensued.

### **Comparison with Department Heads**

Chair Currin asked Ms. Wolff if there is anything that she would like to add. Ms. Wolff said she has tried to provide some comparison with Department Heads and Managers. She thought it would be good to have some discussion. Mr. Fletcher said that since the Compensation Board has nothing to do with the Managers wages, the only thing they can look at is the Elected Officials. The Commissioners have directed the Board to use the selected counties. Ms. Wolff stated that the intent was not to have the Board make a recommendation on Managers, but there have been comments from Elected Officials regarding their comparison to Department Heads and that is why that is being included in the book.

### **Decisions**

Chair Currin reminded the Board that Ms. Wolff has asked for direction on the Surveyor wage. Ms. Wolff said she is asking for clarification of the intent of the Board, whether they compensation they are recommending is in addition to fees and monumentation or if it includes those monies. Mr. Fletcher said that last year his intent was for it to be in addition to the other monies. Ms. Currin said they are aware of the extra funds. Ms. Hendricks stated that she believes there is more work associated with a plat review than the fees that are associated with it. *By consensus the Board agreed that the Surveyor compensation is in addition to any fees or monumentation money.*

*Discussion ensued regarding the Surveyor compensation. By consensus, the Board agreed to leave the Surveyor compensation at \$36,000.*

The Board commented that without knowing the wage of the District Attorney, it is hard to evaluate the county contribution. Discussion ensued. Mr. Fletcher said he would be comfortable with splitting the difference between Morrow County (\$6,000) and Union County (\$10,000). *Mr. Fletcher moved to increase the District Attorney stipend by \$2,000 to a total of \$8,000. Ms. Hendricks seconded. Ms. Martin abstains from this discussion. Unanimous approval.*

Mr. Fletcher said that he likes Mr. Brown's thoughts on the compensation for the Commissioners. Mr. Fletcher said that the decision about whether the Commissioners are full time or not is not a decision for this Board. Several Board members stated that they are hesitant to recognize the Commissioners as full time without a vote from the citizens.

Mr. Fletcher said he thinks this recommendation recognizes the additional hours and is budget neutral.

**Recess 11:02 a.m.**

**Reconvene 11:13 a.m.**

*Mr. Fletcher moved to take the half of the wage for the Judge that is no longer being paid for that position and split it equally among the three Commissioners. Mr. Brown seconded. Chair Currin encouraged the Commissioners to do more due process on the move from part time to full time Commissioners, which is a separate issue. Ms. Wolff restated using rough wage numbers. The current Commissioner wage is \$38,407. Divided equally is \$12,802.33.  $\$38,407.00 + \$12,802.33 = \$51,209.33$ . The Board agreed that is their intent.*

Chair Currin asked to have the process discussion regarding the Commissioners being full time. Mr. Brown said he does not think that is part of the Board's decision. Chair Currin believes it is part of the Board's decision because it is directly related to compensation. You can not expect a person to work full time and receive part time wages. Mr. Brown agreed, however, changing the description of the Commissioner position and taking that to the voters is not for this Board. Chair Currin agreed. Chair Currin wants to go on record that she hopes the Commissioners will go through the due process to change the positions. Mr. Fletcher said that down the road it is not his intent that the Commissioners are full time and that the \$51,000 is considered full time wage, nor is it to be considered half time wage. Mr. Brown said that the Commissioners have to address the public on changing the position from half time to full time, that is their decision. Ms. Martin said she agrees with that, however, it is difficult to make a decision on wage when the Board is unclear as to whether it really is full time.

*Ms. Hendricks amended the motion to recognize that the Commissioners are working something more than half time and the additional compensation is in recognition of that time commitment. Seconded by Mr. Fletcher.*

*Vote on the amendment: Unanimous.*

*Vote on the original motion as amended: Unanimous*

Chair Currin asked for any discussion on the Justice of the Peace wage request. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Brown stated that he has no further discussion on individual positions. He is ready for COLA discussion.



Chair Currin said that other than the Justice of the Peace, who does not have a lot of comparables, the remaining positions are in the average.

No further discussion.

Mr. Brown asked Ms. Wolff what the county is considering for other COLAs. (Cost of Living Allowance). Ms. Wolff said that the two AFSCME contracts have 3%. The Teamsters contract is open for bargaining now, so we don't know what they will receive. Managers has not been determined. Mr. Fletcher said he would recommend a 3% COLA, but no less than the Managers COLA. Ms. Martin said that 3% is an average increase in private industry this year. Ms. Hendricks added that the annual CPI-Portland is 2.6%.

*Mr. Brown moved to recommend a 3% COLA for all Elected Officials, but no less than the Managers COLA, with no COLA for the Commissioners and District Attorney since their compensation has already been adjusted. Mr. Fletcher seconded. Unanimous approval.*

Ms. Wolff thanked the Board for their time and efforts.

Commissioner Doherty thanked the Board as well. The other two Commissioners asked him to convey their thanks as well.

**Open Comment:**

Mr. Haddock said he understands how difficult it is to determine compensation when you have never done that job.

Ms. Wolff said she will prepare a memo with the Compensation Board recommendation and present it to the Commissioners, hopefully next Wednesday. She will email it to each of the Board members before presenting it to the Commissioners and ask the Board members to respond and let her know if the recommendation is correct.

**Adjourned:** 11:34 a.m.