

MINUTES OF THE LINN COUNTY COMPENSATION BOARD

Monday, January 30, 2023

PRESENT: Raymond Stefani II (Chair), Steve Jackson, Sr. (Vice-Chair), Kim Reem, Anthony Arrington, Mary Quass, Sara Riley

ABSENT: Karl Kolz

All board members voting “aye” unless otherwise noted.

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 pm by Chairperson Stefani. Chairperson Stefani introduced himself and asked other members to do the same, and state what elected official they were representing.

Motion by Jackson, seconded by Quass, to appoint Ray Stefani as Chair of the Linn County Compensation Board. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Reem, seconded by Quass, to approve the minutes of the January 26, 2022 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Quass, seconded by Reem, to appoint Steve Jackson, Sr. as Vice Chair of the Linn County Compensation Board. Motion carried unanimously.

Presentations to Board by Elected Officials

Supervisor Ben Rogers began with explaining that normally the Chair of the Board of Supervisors would be here to present, but Supervisor Louis Zumbach is in Des Moines assisting to learn more and hopefully advocate against a property tax valuation that if put in place, would impact \$1.7 million of the County budget. It was truly imperative for Louise to be there. Kirsten Running- Marquardt is here with me in support. The Board of Supervisors has not formally voted to recommend to you a specific percentage amount. Place holders we are set of 4.5% for managers and non-bargaining unit members. I am here tonight to listen and take this up at a later date when considering the County budget needs and impacts of the Senate Study Bill 1056. Thank you for your service and considering the compensations this year. We recognize this challenging economic environment is difficult to make true decisions at this time. Where compensation may have to be higher due to inflation, to assist in recruitment or maintaining talent and longevity within the county. Emailed to you all were comparable counties compensation requests. Examples included: Black Hawk County recommended 10% All officials, 3% Board- No action taken at this time. Johnson County recommended 16% County Attorney, 12% Sheriff, 10% All other elected officials- No action taken at this time. Scott County recommended 5% Sheriff, and 3.5% all other elected officials- No action taken at this time. Mary Quass questioned if there is a difficulty now gaining and retaining talent to the public sector? Rogers stated I.T. has had a few positions remain vacant this year. We are unsure if it is the actual dollar amount or the job requirements itself that is the true issue. Planning and Zoning is also struggling to fill a few positions. They are just not getting applicants. Our compensation is a little different compared to City of Cedar Rapids, or the private sector. Rogers said he was proud of our culture here at Linn County and that is what creates our low turnover compared to the private sector.

Attorney Maybanks thanked the members of the Compensation Board for their service and suggested a 11% salary adjustment in FY24 for his office. The basis for his recommendation is the Iowa State Association of Counties (ISAC) salary survey, which he believes is a fair and objective reference point. An 11% increase will help him retain and continue to attract qualified and dedicated staff. Explaining the most influential role in the justice system currently is the prosecutor. For that reason, being able to retain prosecutors with extensive experience is of the utmost importance. The Linn County Attorney's Office works as a team. Maybanks uses his leadership position as a coach would, and always references his staff as a team. He thanked the Board for its recommendation last year of an 8% increase in salary. And thanked the Board of Supervisors for the 4.8% increase. For the last two years, the County Attorney received raises of: 0% in FY22 and 4.8% in FY23 for a two-year average of 2.24%. During that same period, the average increase statewide for County Attorneys was 4.95% (2.78% in FY22 and 7.11% in FY23). We are still lagging about 2.7% behind the two-year average. The Social Security Administration has found that there needs to be an 8.7% COLA adjustment for retiree pay and survivor benefits. As you all know from the state of the economy, our dollars are not getting us as far as they did just a few years ago. As a result, the prosecutors of my office, whose salary is tied to mine directly in terms of my chief deputies and indirectly as a bargaining position for my assistants. They are working harder than ever before for less real-world money. We are falling behind other county attorneys and how our compensation now provides us less than it has in past years, we believe a reasonable request for a raise is 11%, the sum of these two numbers, rounded down as to acknowledge the current economic environment.

Treasurer Brent Oleson introduced his four deputies by name and shared a few details of each of their backgrounds and lifestyles. The reasoning for this was to help put a face to each name. He explained that whatever you the board decide today, effects them and their families as well. Every one of these deputies are real people, with families at home, mortgages, bills to pay, and vacations to plan for. He is asking for a 10% salary increase for FY24. The Treasurer's salary for FY23 is \$124,908. If the BOS approve a 10% increase, the Treasurer's salary will move to \$137,399 in FY24. The four deputies in our office are tied to 85% (3) and 75% (1) of the Treasurer salary. Given the inflation/cost of living information, the actions of other compensation boards, and the recent freeze of deputies' salaries, it is our belief that a 10% salary adjustment is a reasonable and fair request.

Recorder Carolyn Siebrecht thanked the Board for their time today. She is the new recorder and has many new staff. Carolyn respectfully requested a 10% salary increase for the Recorder and her deputies. The Recorder's Office consists of a staff of 14 persons, including herself, 3 Deputies, and 10 clerical specialists. The employees in this office work diligently as public servants for Linn County. We are a major hub in the economy. Our team has taken on additional duties over the years, handled growing document volumes, vessels, and recreational vehicles, and has helped to streamline many job duties, and most recently helped eliminate the unnecessary filing of groundwater hazard statements when there are no conditions during a property transfer.

As a comparable, the Johnson County Compensation Board is recommending a 10% increase for the Recorder, Treasurer, Auditor and their 5 Supervisors. If approved, these Johnson County elected officials' salaries would be increased from \$121,361 to \$133,497 for the Auditor, Recorder, and Treasurer.

Auditor Joel Miller began with staff numbers and vacancies. Miller stated it was difficult to recruit staff and retain employees in this line of work. They have advertised a vacant deputy job

opening for a CPA, multiple times, and have been unsuccessful in getting qualified applicants. He has one deputy position vacant now. They have advertised 3 times for this position and were unsuccessful in filling the position. Only 2 applicants applied in the last round and were unqualified. They are now revamping that position into an accounting management position, with hopes to draw more interests to the applicant pool. Workforce challenges are present and are being worked through at this moment. Miller reminded the board that he will not be seeking reelection, so the possible salary increases that will come from this board, will not truly be benefitting himself, but the future County Auditor. He discussed the Elections portion of the office, and how difficult that department can be in this date and time. There are numerous things that can go right, or wrong. The new and constantly evolving election laws are always changing and can be difficult to navigate and keep up with.

We need to look attractive in this market for whomever is running to replace him. He questioned if the salary at this time was enough compensation for the work and the learning curve coming into a position like his? Miller recommends a 10% increase is the minimum ask for office. This is to help cover and compete with the 8.7% cost of living increase.

Sheriff Gardner touched on highlights of his personnel, staffing numbers, overall responsibilities, operation of the county jail, and serving civil processes. He referenced how the Legislature enacted the Back the Blue law- was specific to Sheriff's across the state. He recommends his salary increase to 10.21% and agreed with Maybanks receiving 11% salary increase. All other elected officials would then be an even cut across the board. Gardner walked through the Back the Blue law, how it lands him at the 10.21% minimum increase, and how it would span out to everyone's requested salary increases.

Gardner wants to look out for salary compression from the bottom. And wants to maintain a salary spread throughout the different levels of deputies and command staff. This creates that drive to work towards the next level position and pushes staff to want to excel, move up within the company, and make it a career.

Gardner reiterated that his agency serves the 3rd largest population; however, his salary currently ranks 7th. Based on the requirements mandated by the Code of Iowa, your recommendation for my salary is required to minimally equal that of my closest comparable, that being Cedar Rapids Chief of Police Wayne Jerman. If he receives a nominal 3% salary increase for FY24, which would take his salary to \$194,038, He would need to receive a minimum of a \$17,976 salary increase recommendation to bring my salary up to his projected salary, which would equate to me receiving a minimum of a 10.21% salary increase.

As it relates to his salary recommendations, there are twelve command staff members, specifically Lieutenants, Captains, Majors, and Colonel, that are based on specific percentages of my salary. He graciously thanked the Board for all that they do. He knew they had seen how the process works and at other times how it should've worked- and there is a big difference.

Sara Riley questioned his choice for a comparable and would have preferred a different comparable to him such as Des Moines chief and Polk County who might be closer comparisons to him, over the CRPD police chief. She would next time like to see a Sheriff, not City police. Gardner replied that he has jurisdiction in Cedar Rapids. He wanted to clarify that they enforce the same laws within the city limits, that they do in the County. His deputies do all things the same as CRPD, no matter where the crime takes place. They do not go in and override a system, but they have jurisdiction and will pursue. Sheriff deputies and CRPD will go in together to a crime, but most of the paperwork and follow up will happen which ever city that crime fell in. Currently, he is short staffed at least one dozen deputies. This is forcing long

overtime and staff to search for jobs elsewhere. Linn County does advertise more to that the "hidden paycheck" benefits of IPERS, health, dental, vision, life insurance benefits, leave time, etc. but currently, he feels we are looking at a whole new generation of workers with other interests than those benefits.

The Board can recommend, the BOS does not have to follow.
Salaries and raises equals only 2-3% of total overall county budget.

Motions and Board Action

No further presentations. Ray Stefani asked Comp board to start discussion on possible actions.

Ben Rogers reviewed the options of the BOS once the Comp board makes a decision: 1. Accept recommendation. 2. If the board chooses to reduce, it has to be an equal percentage across all the elected officials. 3. Equal percentage across the elected officials, and the BOS can uncouple off to a different percentage.

Whatever Comp Board suggests, the BOS will go back and discuss different ways to balance their budget.

The BOS has approved a preliminary budget at this time with an 11cent tax increase, to cover budget. Due to lost revenue, increased contracts, year-end expenses that had to be paid, and overall inflation. At this point a break-even budget would raise taxes 11cents. Also, there is the Senate study bill pending right now that could have an immense impact on the budget County wide. Once we publish a budget, we can always lower the levy rate. But what we cannot do after it is published is increase the levy rate. Which forces us to find cuts during this budget season.

If the senate bill passes, this will have a whole other outcome. This is a very challenging budget year outside of a natural disaster year. Rogers said it is an outlier year for the board due to, inflation costs, budget needs, things that had to be paid now vs pushing to next year. It always impacts future years when we do not keep up with comparable compensations. We eventually are playing catch up from then on.

Stefani circled back to Steve Jackson original motion that the Attorney and Sheriff receive the 12% increase in salary compensation. This was Seconded by Quass.

Stephani opened for discussion. He appreciated Jackson's 12% number request but went on to state that he was hardened by the politics of this. Watching the BOS year after year, cut the compensation board's recommendations by either zeroing it out, or just cutting it dramatically. He does understand the Sheriff's comment to ask for 22%, and said he was in favor of the 22% request by the Sheriff. Sara Riley stated she will not vote for 22% and found that number to be an insanely high number. She accepted as to why you would place it higher, inflating it a little, knowing the BOS will cut it. And that she understands the risk that is involved being a Sheriff or someone in law enforcement and agreed they should be paid appropriately. But disagrees with the Back the Blue law that ties the comp boards hands when figuring out salaries. Quass suggested giving 10-12% across the board. And asked if it would give everyone what they need? Riley stated that the BOS can still decrease it and asked for verification from Rogers. Rogers stated that any increase for elected officials that is granted and is above what is approved 4.5% each department will have to make up for in their own budget. This is an extremely challenging year. Each department will be forced to absorb anything above that 4.5% place holder at this time.

Dawn Jindrich confirmed that departments needing to absorb any increase in their budget has been doing this since 2009. Every year since has been dealt with as- It won't pass the tax asking. Every 1% is equal to \$40,000 of increase. She suggested that once the board makes a recommendation, make the recommendation for the Sheriff and Attorney separate, because those two can be split out from the rest of elected officials that are grouped together.

Stefani returned to the Motion and asked if there was a need for any further discussion on this? Motion to set a 12% increase in salary for the Sheriff and County Attorney.
Riley, Arrington, Quass, Jackson, and Reem voted- Aye.
Stefani voted- Nay.

Arrington suggested all other elected officials receive a 10 % increase.
Motion by Arrington, seconded by Riley, to recommend all other elected officials receive a 10% increase. There was no further discussion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Adjournment

Upon motion by Stefani, and no objection presented, the meeting of the Linn County Compensation Board was adjourned at 6:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Raymond R. Stefani II, Chairperson

Emily Schutz, Acting Secretary