

LINN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
CEDAR RAPIDS, LINN COUNTY, IOWA  
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2021 1:30 P.M.

The Board met in session at the Linn County Jean Oxley Public Service Center.  
Present: Chairperson Walker (via phone), Vice Chairperson Rogers and Supervisor Zumbach. Board members voting "AYE" unless otherwise noted.

Vice Chairperson Rogers called the meeting to order.

The Board met to review budget decisions for the proposed Fiscal Year 2022 budget. Also present: Dawn Jindrich, Finance Dir., Sara Bearrows, Budget Dir., and the following via phone - Sheriff Gardner, Auditor Miller, Treasurer Gonzalez and Lisa Powell, HR Director.

Sara Bearrows stated that the budget includes a placeholder of a 2% salary increase for Elected Officials and deputies.

Chairperson Walker stated that there was some discussion on Wednesday leaning towards a 0% increase for Elected Officials and their deputies. Between then and now, he has changed his thinking. While considering Linn County residents' challenges and the thought that it would not be appropriate for Elected Officials to receive a raise, he noted that there are several individuals pay that is connected to those Elected Official's salaries. They need to be considerate of them as they face the same challenges. He is prepared to decouple the Board's salaries from the other Elected Officials and proposes a 2% increase for the remaining Elected Officials.

Motion by Walker to decouple the FY22 salaries of the Board of Supervisors from the other Elected Officials and approve a 2% increase for those remaining Elected Officials. Supervisor Rogers seconded the motion for the purpose of discussion.

Discussion: Supervisor Rogers stated that he feels strongly about not decoupling the Board's salaries from the other Elected Officials. While Elected Officials and their deputies have had major accomplishments over the past year, so has the Board. He recommends a 0% increase for all Elected Officials knowing that their deputies are impacted.

Supervisor Zumbach stated that as far as decoupling the salaries go, it is the number of the Supervisors and their salaries that has been contentious since 2006. It is actually a reason why he ran for office and introduced a bill while in the legislature to reduce those salaries. To him, the number of Supervisors is more important than the salaries and if they ever hope to have more supervisors, he would not recommend decoupling the salaries.

Sheriff Gardner referred to an email that he sent to the Board that he understands will be made public record and referred to the following comments in that email: They have all worked incredibly hard for the county residents this past year helping to ensure that county government continues to successfully operate while continuing to ensure the security and safety of all employees during the pandemic, the civil unrest and the Derecho. He also noted that by zeroing out the raises of the Elected Officials, the Board is telling their employees that if you are a department head or manager who works under the direction of the Board, you will be taken care of and will receive a 2% raise. However, if you are or work for any other Elected Official, you are just out of luck this year. If the Board feels so strongly about the public scrutiny, then they should consider decoupling themselves as is allowed by law, zero out their own raises and provide the others with a modest 2% increase.

Chairperson Walker added that it occurred to him this morning that while the cost of living is increasing and the bulk of the county employees have union representation to negotiate wages for them, by the Board doing this, they are separating out a class of employees who have those same cost of living increases. Maybe they should be looking at the compensation of everyone.

Treasurer Gonzalez referred to an email that she sent to the Board and referred to the following comments in that email: One of the County's Core Values is to recognize valued contributions, so she is asking the Board not to exclude a handful of county employees from receiving the modest raise that all other county employees are presumed to be receiving.

Auditor Miller referred to an email that he sent to the Board also stating that his deputies deserve a raise. He stated that he presented to the Compensation Board two years ago the results of an RSM compensation study that revealed that the Auditor was under compensated and that this is not the right thing to do. They need to retain the best and brightest to run for office. A 2% increase is less than the Compensation Board's recommendation.

Supervisor Rogers stated that in recent years, Elected Officials and their deputies received a salary increase that others did not. He has received emails from deputies and he knows that they have enjoyed raises that others did not. These are challenging times and he personally knows people that are laid off, forced furloughs, reduced salaries and not receiving bonuses. He stated that this is a decision that will impact a small group of employees that have enjoyed other raises.

Supervisor Zumbach stated that he read everyone's emails and he also tried to talk to them. His biggest struggle was to try to find out how to separate the deputies from the elected official's salaries and it cannot be done. The pandemic has affected everyone and he took into consideration the following: economic impact, transparency, lead by example and perception of taking a raise when so many are suffering. His biggest heartache is the deputies.

Chairperson Walker stated that there is a way to address the deputies. That would be by decoupling the Supervisors from the other Elected Officials. Deputies are residents too.

VOTE: Rogers & Zumbach - Nay Walker - Aye

Motion by Rogers, seconded by Zumbach to approve a 0% salary increase for Elected Officials and deputies.

Discussion: Chairperson Walker stated that for those listening, he hopes to make it clear that compensation for county Elected Officials is not working. The work done in 2020 required of Elected Officials and their deputies went above and beyond the call of duty to help the most vulnerable residents. This 0% increase decision will impact the deputies who have expenses that continue to go up, that results in losing wages.

Auditor Miller stated that he proposes that the 2% increase be approved and he will write a check back to the county for his net wage increase. That is the only way for his deputies to get a raise and he feels strongly that his deputies receive a raise.

Supervisor Rogers stated that he appreciates that proposal from Auditor Miller, but that there is a motion on the floor. He noted that several years ago Auditor Miller himself proposed a 0% increase.

Dawn Jindrich stated that they might need to ask for legal advice on Auditor Miller's proposal.

VOTE: Rogers & Zumbach - Aye Walker - Nay

Lisa Powell responded to a question by the Board on Wednesday regarding her Diversity Program Offer and if she had funds in her budget to cover it. She stated that if she had the money in her budget she would not have submitted an Offer. There are carryover funds from unspent unemployment and she has that earmarked for diversity training.

Chairperson Walker stated that he would rather not have the Board direct departments on how to use their carryover funds. He asked that it remain as an Offer as the Board approved on Wednesday.

Discussion continued regarding which office the Diversity Program would be under.

Jindrich stated that there is a line item (consultant) in the Board's Other budget where the Offer money could be placed and the Board would be in control.

As a recap, there will be a savings in the amount of \$105,758 with a 0% salary increase for Elected Officials and the remainder of the Offer pot. The Board agreed that they are comfortable with where they are at with the levy rate with that savings.

The Board received and placed on file emails from Elected Officials requesting the Board to approve a July 1, 2021 salary increase.

Adjournment at 2:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

JOEL D. MILLER, Linn County Auditor  
BY: Rebecca Shoop, Deputy Auditor

Approved by:

BEN ROGERS, Vice Chairperson  
Board of Supervisors