



To: Whatcom County Council
From: Whatcom County Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials
Subject: Elected Official Salary Schedule for 2024 and 2025
Date: April 26, 2023

The Whatcom County Salary Commission began meeting in January 2023 to make decisions regarding the 2024 and 2025 salaries for elected officials. The commission met six times between January and April 2023. The Commission was fortunate to have three previous commissioners return to serve. This was valuable to provide continuity to the process and align decisions with previous Salary Commission decisions.

The Commission reviewed the work of the previous salary commission, the current salaries of other county elected officials at comparable counties and state-level elected officials for applicable positions, and cost of living information. The Commission also received information about other Whatcom County employees including the salaries of the second-in-command for each elected official (if applicable). The Commission received written and live feedback from elected officials. All of this information informed the final decision.

The Commission would like to thank Melissa Keely, HR Manager, for providing complete and timely data per the requests of the Commission. The Commission would also like to thank Suzanne Mildner who provided exceptional administrative support. The Commission wants to express sincere appreciation to Stacey Carroll for her professional assistance and support in helping facilitate and coordinate the Commission's work over the past 5 months.

It has been an honor and a privilege to be selected and serve on the Whatcom County Salary Commission.

DocuSigned by:
Dewey Desler
650F36AED01A4E3...

Dewey Desler, Citizen at Large
Commission Chair

DocuSigned by:
Lance Callaway
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Lance Callaway, Business
Commission Vice-Chair

DocuSigned by:
Michael Anderson
0338D991D8EC4B8...

Michael Anderson, Citizen at Large

DocuSigned by:
Karen Leigh Funston
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Karen Leigh Funston, Legal Profession

DocuSigned by:
Jeremy Irwin
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Jeremy Irwin, Citizen at Large

DocuSigned by:
Piper Mertle
82CE5AC5F9846A...

Piper Mertle, Citizen at Large

DocuSigned by:
Lori Province
9640B9D29B6D406...

Lori Province, Organized Labor

DocuSigned by:
Rebecca Sadwick Shaddix
405284A5F1344D1...

Rebecca Sadwick Shaddix, Citizen at Large

DocuSigned by:
Linda Stone
4D1A91381AF5425...

Linda Stone, Citizen at Large

DocuSigned by:
Vanessa Bronsema
5957B2CE119547F...

Vanessa Bronsema, Personnel Management

Exhibit A: Whatcom County Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials

Future Salary Placements (monthly)

Position	2023 (current)	1/1/24-6/30/24	7/1/24-6/30/25	7/1/25-12/31/25e
Assessor	\$11,378	\$13,248	\$13,911	TBD – see below
Auditor	\$11,378	\$13,248	\$13,911	TBD – see below
Treasurer	\$11,378	\$13,248	\$13,911	TBD – see below
Sherriff	\$15,099	\$17,557	\$18,434	TBD – see below
Prosecuting Attorney	\$16,931	\$18,100	\$19,005	TBD – see below
County Executive	\$17,439	\$18,659	\$19,592	TBD – see below
County Council	\$4,854	\$6,064	\$6,368	TBD – see below

Salary Adjustments for July 1, 2025, will be based on the following formulas:

Assessor	Auditor	Treasurer	Executive	Prosecuting Attorney	Sheriff	County Council
71% of County Executive Pay			3% above WA State Superior Court Judge Salary as determined by WCCSEO*	3% below County Executive Salary	3% below Prosecuting Attorney	32.5% of County Executive

*Washington Citizens’ Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials (WCCSEO) Published information: <https://salaries.wa.gov/salary>

Exhibit B: Summary data reviewed by commission and salary placement decisions.

In determining the appropriate compensation for Elected Officials, the Salary Commission reviewed and considered the following data and information:

- 2021 Commission Conclusions Final Report
- Whatcom County Elected Officials & Seconds Pay Information (Actual & Top-Step)
- Historical Whatcom County Elected Official Compensation
- Whatcom County COLA History by Group
- Department FTE count within County budget document
- Elected Official written submissions and public comments (see minutes)
- Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPI for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U)
- OFM Wage Adjustment and Salary Increases
- Comparable County Pay Information (4-county; 5-county and 6-county comparison)
- Washington State Superior Court Judge Salaries
- Washington State Legislatures Salaries
- City of Bellingham Council Salaries
- City of Bellingham Police Chief Salary
- Snohomish County salary data for Elected Officials
- Information about FTEs for WC Sheriffs and Correction Deputies as well as City of Bellingham Police Officers
- Information about hiring difficulties for Whatcom County Sheriffs and Correction Deputies
- Whatcom County insurance benefits coverage and cost

Salary Placements

The Commission minutes over the various meetings reflect the review and discussions of the information requested and presented, including the written statements and documents submitted by the Elected Officials. The Commission decided to align all Whatcom County elected official salaries and subsequent changes to salaries for 2024 and 2025 to match the State of Washington fiscal years effecting changes in salary on July 1st. Whatcom County elected official salaries will therefore be adjusted on January 1st, 2024, July 1st, 2024, and again on July 1st of 2025. The July 1st, 2025, adjustment, while not known at this time, will be set by decisions of the WCCSEO and implemented consistent with the timing of those state commission decisions.

The final salary placements focused on the following information:

Prosecuting Attorney: The Commission reviewed and discussed various compensation data for the Prosecuting Attorney and the significance of the recommended policy direction in statute from the Washington State Legislature for establishing the Prosecuting Attorney's salary. Most Commissioners felt that continuing the general alignment with the Washington Superior Court Judge pay that was established by the previous commission was important. The budget year for the State begins on July 1st but the County's budget year is January 1st. As a result, the new wages set for the WA State Superior Court Judge takes effect on July 1st. Whatcom County has always had the Prosecutors pay adjust on January 1st, therefore causing misalignment for 6 months of the year. This commission, by a majority

vote, decided to enact the pay increase in alignment with the timing at the State level and to match the increases provided to Superior Court Judges. Additionally, it was decided that the Prosecutor pay should be a percentage of the County Executive pay, therefore, **the salary set for the Prosecuting attorney is set at 3% below the County Executive.**

County Executive: The Commission noted that there was little comparable County data for Whatcom County's Executive position due to the difference in governance structures and responsibilities along with the size of comparable Charter Counties in Washington. The Commission reviewed and discussed the County Executive's responsibilities and considered Executive Sidhu's comments. The Commission recognized that the County Executive has the highest level of responsibility and accountability for overall County government operations and, therefore, set the final compensation to be **3% above the WA State Superior Court Judge pay as set by the Washington State Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials (WCCSEO).**

Sheriff: The Commission reviewed and discussed the varied responsibilities of the Sherriff. The commission also reviewed a variety of salary data points for the Sherriff position, including workload of the Sherriff compared to the City of Bellingham Police Chief, the Deputy Sherriff pay (including longevity) and the salary of the County Executive and Prosecuting Attorney. The Commission recognized the leadership role of the Sherriff and the challenges of running the only jail and correctional facility in Whatcom County. Based on this data, and the written and verbal statements provided by the Sheriff, the Commission decided to set the pay for Sherriff **equal to 3% below the Prosecuting Attorney.**

Assessor/Auditor/Treasurer: There was discussion regarding the responsibilities of these positions in comparison to other County management positions. The Commission received written and verbal statements from all three incumbents. It was noted from these statements that in most instances the second in command's salary was either very close or exceeded the elected official's salary. The Commission also evaluated comparable county salary data (with an emphasis on Snohomish County), the salary of their respective second-in-command positions and their current salaries relative to the County Executive. After deliberation, the Commission decided that when considering all the relevant data the simplest and fairest way to set a wage closely aligned with all relevant data was a **calculation based on 71% of the County Executive pay.**

County Council: The Commission was appreciative of having two current councilmembers, Councilmember Galloway and Councilmember Kershner, share their experience serving as a councilmember. This included information about the time commitment, the duties and responsibilities and some of the challenges. The Commissioners reviewed data of the City of Bellingham Council which was recently reviewed by an independent salary commission as well as the WA State Legislator pay assigned by the WCCSEO. Commissioners felt that the County Council salaries should be more than the City of Bellingham Council salaries. After deliberation, the Commission decided that when considering all data and factors the County Council salary will be set **based on 32.5% of the County Executive pay.**

Summary of Data

	Assessor	Auditor	Treasurer	Executive	Prosecuting Attorney	Sheriff	County Council
Current Pay (2023):	\$ 11,378	\$ 11,378	\$ 11,378	\$ 17,439	\$ 16,931	\$ 15,099	\$ 4,854
% of County Executive (current)	65%	65%	65%		97%	87%	28%
2022 Whatcom County:	\$ 11,111	\$ 11,111	\$ 11,111		\$ 16,640	\$ 14,730	
2022 Average (8 county average**):	\$ 9,899	\$ 9,899	\$ 9,899	N/A	\$ 16,487	\$ 11,991	N/A
2022 Average (6 county comparable):	\$ 9,947	\$ 9,947	\$ 9,947		\$ 16,248	\$ 12,034	
2022 Average (NonRep 5 County Comparisons):	\$ 10,403	\$ 10,403	\$ 10,403		\$ 16,502	\$ 12,426	
Snohomish County 2023	\$12,637	\$12,637	\$12,637	\$17,130	\$18,054	\$14,977	
WA State Treasurer 2023			\$13,546				
WA State Treasurer 2024			\$13,953				
WA State Auditor 2023		\$12,143					
WA State Auditor 2024		\$12,507					
WA State Superior Judge Pay eff 7/1/2023					\$ 18,116		
WA State Superior Judge Pay eff 7/1/2024					\$ 19,022		
City of Bellingham Police Chief						\$ 17,555	
WA State Legislators 2023							\$ 5,016
WA State Legislators 2024							\$ 5,166
City of Bellingham Council 2023							\$ 5,583
City of Bellingham Council 2024							\$ 5,750
Second-in-Command Actual	\$ 10,676	\$ 9,197	\$ 10,676	\$ 15,794	\$ 13,764	\$ 15,176	N/A
Second-in-Command Top Step	\$ 10,676	\$ 10,676	\$ 10,676	\$ 17,017	\$ 14,288	\$ 14,605	N/A
Range 14 (Finance Manager)			\$ 12,716				
Step 20 of 2023 Salary Matrix (Unrepresented EE's)	\$ 18,038	\$ 18,038	\$ 18,038	\$ 18,038	\$ 18,038	\$ 18,038	
Step 19 of 2023 Salary Matrix (Unrepresented EE's)	\$ 17,017	\$ 17,017	\$ 17,017	\$ 17,017	\$ 17,017	\$ 17,017	
Unrep COLA (2022)	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Unrep COLA (2023)*	6%*	6%*	6%*	6%*	6%*	6%*	6%*
CPI-U West Region 5-year Average						2.41%	
*Avg based on 4% COLA + salary study implementation (0-9%)							
** previously used by commission							
***State salaries are updated on 7/1 vs. Whatcom County adjustments which are effective 1/1							