

## **Special Public Meeting for Elected Officials Salaries**

November 14, 2018

The Bedford County Board of Commissioners held a special meeting in Room 303 of the Bedford County Government Building, 200 South Juliana Street, Bedford, PA on Wednesday, November 14, 2018.

Commissioner Lang called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Commissioner Lang gave the prayer of invocation and led the pledge to the flag. Notice of the Special Meeting was advertised in the Bedford Gazette as pursuant to the county salary law 16 P.S. 11011-10.1. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss setting the salaries of elected officials for the years 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023.

Those present were: Commissioner Josh Lang, Commissioner Barry L. Dallara, Commissioner S. Paul Crooks and Melissa Cottle, Treasurer, Debra Brown, Chief Clerk, Shirley Deremer, Treasurer's office, Dwight Winck, Register of Wills/Records of Deeds, Cathy Fetter, Prothonotary and Clerk of Courts, Charwin Reichelderfer, Sheriff, Mary Rowzer, Auditor, Reagan Young, Auditor, Karen Williams, Auditor, Rusty Styer, Coroner, Lesley Childers-Potts, District Attorney, and the press.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

The minutes of November 18, 2014 Special Public Meeting were approved as presented.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

There was no old business to discuss.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Commissioner Lang opened the meeting by reciting the Pennsylvania laws that pertain to the salaries for elected officials and opening for public comment on the elected official's salaries.

Rusty Styer started the discussion by referring to the laws for elected officials. He gave the statistics for the past year for Bedford County, noting that he is on call 24/7, 365 days a year and that his responsibilities have increased each year. He noted the percentages and wages for other sixth class counties and where Bedford County falls in that percentile. It is well below most of the other elected officials. Commissioner Lang asked, "What recommendation does Mr. Styer have as an increase in regards as a percentage for the position". Mr. Styer responded that currently we are 79% below average now and 138% below the next elected official so I would like to be somewhere in between that." He remarked that this is not just for him but the next person that will fill the position. Mr. Styer commented that his recommendation would be in the 70% for him or the next elected official for this position. Mr. Styer had no further comment at this time.

Charwin Reichelderfer stated that this does not affect him, as he will be retiring from law enforcement after 46 years of service. He stating getting pay raises up over \$8.00 per hour in the building would keep people from leaving. He noted the freeze in salaries from 2008 – 2016. He also commented that different department heads exceed the salaries of elected officials and the across the board there should be a more fair pay scale. He stated that he and Melissa Cottle were at the low end of the pay scale compared to those making \$50 to \$60 a year. He said that all departments are professionals and should be paid the same as the elected officials although each department's responsibilities differ. The commissioners should be paid more money as well because technically they are in charge of the county. He stated that the coroner has more responsibilities that are technical and has only one part time employee; his salary should be brought up considerably to meet the demands of his position and to be at the going rate. Commissioner Lang asked what is his recommendation in terms of a percent to consider. Commissioner Crooks commented that you cannot give 10% to one official and 5% to another; all increases have to be the same percent except for the lowest paid county official and this cannot be done all in one year. Commissioner Lang reiterated the statement Commissioner Crooks made to the group. Mr. Reichelderfer stated he would like to move forward and give the coroner the highest increase.

Commissioner Lang read a report on the numbers for the county noting salaries from entry level to the median annual wage from the PA Labor report.

Mr. Styer wanted to know how the percentages got askewed from four years ago. Commissioner Crooks commented that when frozen all elected officials salaries were frozen. Commissioner Dallara noted that they are not the same, he was not sure why. Dwight Winck commented that he felt it was due to dual office roles, such as himself and Register of Wills and Recorder of Deeds, the same for Cathy Fetter's office. Cathy commented she thought the freeze was when Dick Hess was in office. Charwin Reichelderfer commented that he feels it is the same for his department, he has deputies around the building all day supporting the courts and ensuring safety and security.

Cathy Fetter commented that we all have important responsibilities and take the jobs serious and all are dedicated to jobs. She stated she felt Mr. Styer was underpaid and it is now a realization that the job is not what it used to be due to crimes and with what all he deals with and not having a secretary to help with the workload. Everyone deserves a raise, but that is hard to put on the taxpayers. She feels it is the responsibility of the commissioners to deal with the taxpayers and keep them abreast of what is going on. She also noted that her employees are not paid enough either. She stated Mr. Styer needs equipment and a little bit of everything in his department.

Commissioner Dallara commented to Mr. Reichelderfer, that he felt position changes from part-time to full-time could have been because of the freeze in 2008 – 2016, which resulted in no raises. He stated that we can adjust the lowest paid elected official differently than we do everyone else. Everyone else has to be the same number in percentage starting in 2020. Commissioner Dallara encouraged everyone to speak up and provide their input at this meeting. Mr. Winck commented that if out of cycle it can be adjusted that the lowest paid elected official get one amount and the raises be the same.

Lesley Childers-Potts commented that Mr. Styer does things now that were not done 10 years ago and the responsibilities are greater as well. There are certain aspects of her job that cannot be completed or prosecution cannot do without the assistance of the coroner. She feels he is underpaid compared to counties of our size and she is in full support of Mr. Styer getting an increase.

Melissa Cottle stated the percentage of the increases, whether we start at 3% and do that for the next four years or just going from there, at least some of the elected officials will be getting closer to what they should be, she realizes that everything goes up in cost, and the elected officials would still be behind, but at least that would get some of the elected officials closer to what some of the department heads are making. Because, when the freeze happened the department heads continued to get raises and that put them higher than the elected officials. Another thing she noted is on the pay stubs she said they get paid for 60 hours, and most are here for 70 hours at least. She doesn't know if you can increase the amount of hours or not if acceptable. She is not sure, how some of the hours determined is unclear as some people work more hours than others and paid less. She commented and increase of 3% every year for the next four years would balance things out between department heads and elected officials. Commissioner Crooks commented that the commissioners are considered part-time, but if full-time, the salary would be different. Commissioner Lang thought this is to code at six hours per week, but he will verify and respond back at the next meeting. Melissa thought it was 70 hours every two weeks. So to confirm she stated to start at 3% every year, and she did the math for herself and that is like a \$1500.00 per year increase in pay.

Lesley Childers-Potts understands the meeting is to discuss elected officials salaries, but as a taxpayer, and someone that works in this building, and with no disrespect, but as an elected official, because I know how hard everyone works, but if we are going to give more money I don't think it should go to people making \$50 or \$60,000, a year, she feels it should be for Correctional Officers, deputies, and people that are working two jobs to support their families. She would like to see money go to the people responsible for our security on a daily basis and learning.

Charwin Reichelderfer agrees with Lesley's point that people are consistently leaving for higher paying jobs. Some of his staff have now qualified for state aid and that is not acceptable this day and age for the responsibilities' that we have as officers. The hourly rate for county government needs to be brought up to speed at some point and time and offer a decent wage. Tax dollars are part of the issue, but you cannot keep going and not raise taxes over a period of time, regardless of who gets in office, across the board in 2020 or even the next four years past that. Expenses continue to go up, but not wages.

Dwight Winck stated officers hold a \$48,000 median income for a family of four and he is thankful for that, but would like to see his staff get a raise instead of himself.

**COMMENTS/APPOINTMENTS:**

Randy Delozier asked the Coroner how many hours he works a month? Mr. Styer commented that he does not keep a log, but is available 24/7, 365 days a year. He does not break down his time, but does all paperwork, follow-up calls, works with attorneys and does the insurance paperwork as well.

Another question was asked about freezing the salaries; does it include the lowest paid elected official or is he exempt? Can you give him a raise and freeze the rest of the elected officials? Commissioner Lang responded that they could do that; they would bring him up to where everyone else is at or whatever the percentage request is decided. He then explained how it would be handled at the next salary board meeting. That there will be a motion to increase the salaries for the elected officials in 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 at whatever percentage that would be or freeze a certain amount of years or whatever was decided upon. Then a second motion to set the salary for the coroner. Commissioner Dallara commented we need to think about the responsibilities of the position not the personalities when making decisions.

Another question was asked when freezing the salaries does it have to be a majority vote or do all three have to agree? Commissioner Lang stated it would be the three commissioners and Melissa Cottle. The majority will rule on the vote. Another question was asked what if there is a tie (2-2) on the vote? Commissioner Lang stated that a 2-2 vote would not pass as a motion; then they would have to go back to the drawing board in terms of deliberation and discuss for further decision.

In addition, the question was asked when the last increase was and Commissioner Crooks commented in 2015 at 2% for the first and second year and 1 ½% for the third and fourth year.

Commissioner Lang stated the Commissioners will rule at their next meeting on November 27, 2018.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Commissioner Crooks made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Dallara seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 6:38 p. m.

The next meeting will be held November 27, 2018 in Room 101 unless called sooner by the Board of Commissioners.

**ATTEST:**

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Debra Brown, Chief Clerk/Director of Elections

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S. Paul Crooks, Secretary