Welcome & Introductions:

Ashley Cameron – welcome – returning faces, introducing herself to those attending.
Gerry Gemmill – prior county CEO, Acting Community Member
Sara Erb – introductions
Josh Groat – introductions
Jenae Ball – served on the commission in 2021, her business segment is legal, and she served as chair last go around.
Nancy Williams – served in 2021, Chief HR at STA.
April Croft – served on the committee in 2021, works for Veterans affairs.
Dana Nash – She works in real estate, and has many properties, and experience in social sciences, and have the time to be here; she also served in 2021.
Debra Stewart – was on the committee in 2021, works as a parttime personal trainer, prior in the Air Force, had experience working with manufacturing companies.
Gerry Gemmill – past employee with the County, working with S3R3 and other community entitles. This is his first term as a commission member.

Ashley welcomed those who were present and recognized we are missing a few people in this first meeting of 2023. She is hopeful they will show up the next meeting. Welcome back to everyone from 2021.

Overview of Purpose:
The Commission is here to set the salaries, for the Board of County Commissioners and also for the elected officials: Assessor, Auditor, Clerk and Treasurer. Per Spokane County resolution, this commission is responsible for setting those salaries. As part of this commission, people to serve two terms and this is the second for many of you, with the exception of Gerry.

**Selection of Chairperson & Vice-Chairperson:**

A chair and vice chair needs to be elected through this group using Robert’s Rules. Ashley opened this up to the group for discussion as to who they would like in those positions.

Jenae asked how many people were missing from the meeting, and if a quorum is required for vote decision. Ashley reviewed the RCW and no quorum language was required to elect and vote for a chair and vice chair.

Gerry provided historical context from when he worked with this commission from an employee perspective. He stated the chair would typically serve as such for each of the consecutive years as the chair. This was helpful in creating consistency for the commission and was appreciated by prior County employees helping with this commission.

Jenae stated she did not mind serving as the chair again and would do so in the spirit of getting things moving.

Debbie Stewart said she supported Jenae chairing the commission, again this year.

Ashley asked the group if they had a motion to elect Janae Ball as the 2023 chairperson for the Spokane County Citizen's Commission on Salaries.

Gerry Gemmill – so moved.

Nancy Williams - seconded.

Ayes from the group – motion carried and approved. Ms. Ball is elected as the 2023 chair.

The group asked who was the vice last time? Jeff Martin was the co-chair, but there was not a vice chair.

Gerry moved to elect Stephanie Curran as Vice Chair for the 2023 Spokane County Citizens’ Commission on Salaries.

Janae Ball seconded.

All ayes in favor for Stephanie Curran to be co-chair – motion carried and approved.

**Adoption of proposed agenda, Robert’s Rules of Order:**
Jenae requested the agenda be brought back up on screen and to please scroll down through its entirety. The commission members reviewed the agenda and stated it looked acceptable.

Ms. Ball asked if everyone was comfortable continuing to use Roberts’ Rules of Order for meetings. The Commission members all agreed they were comfortable with that process.

Ms. Ball asked for a motion of approval for the January 17, 2023, Agenda. Mr. Gemmill so moved. Ms. Croft seconded.

All Ayes - motion carried and approved.

Legal Responsibilities of the Commission:

Ms. Cameron reminded the commission members, it is the responsibility of this commission to establish the salaries for 2023 and 2024 for the Commissioners and the Elected Officials: Assessor, Auditor, Clerk and Treasurer.

When the commission makes those final decisions and they are approved through carried motion(s), the finding(s) will be filed with the Auditors office. If necessary for the Assessor, Auditor, Clerk and Treasurer, an updated resolution would be created for approval by the BOCC.

Upon the conclusion of this session, all members on the call, with the exception of Mr. Gemmill will conclude their two terms as commission members.

Ms. Cameron asked if the group had any questions; there were none.

Discussion on Salary Determination Process(s):

As a reminder, this group has a multitude of options when making their salary determination(s). As a reminder from the last time this group met, and for Mr. Gemmill’s knowledge, there are a number of different compensation methods.

- No change to current
- Adjust by employee COLA amounts 2023%/2024%
  - The commission could do that at one time each year on a specific date, or could even use a phased approach, providing multiple COLAs throughout a calendar year.
- Adjust by using a market average as defined by this Commission
- Tie the compensation to another position at the county

As a refresher on decisions made by the Commission in past years, the commission had previously taken a COLA approach. When the commission met in 2021, they awarded 0% COLA for 2021 and a 2.5% COLA for 2022. In 2017, the commission passed a 19% increase, as the Commissioners had not had a base salary increase since 2006. It was also determined, the Assessor, Auditor, Clerk and Treasurer would receive 95% of commissioner’s salary in any given year.

The group asked what COLAs non-represented employees received in past years.
The group asked about the makeup of the BOCC since there were changes this year (2023). Ashley explained Spokane County went from 3 commissioners to 5 commissioners. The group asked if this lessoned the work and responsibility of County Commissioners. Ashley explained, based on the public BOCC meetings she attends each week, (which are recorded and available for the commission members to review if they so determined would be helpful) it seemed while there are two new County Commissioners, the work has not slowed down, nor do they have less responsibility in providing service to our public and employees. There is still a lot of work to keep each commissioner more than busy. They serve on many boards as a collective group, while also sitting on individual boards and being actively involved in their individual districts. The Assessor, Auditor, Clerk & Treasurer continue to be very busy in their respective offices and we continue to see the Spokane County population increase which means their services continue to be utilized.

In reviewing other counties in Washington state of somewhat similar makeup, the salary data and county sizes were compiled into an easy-to-read summary for this commission. The updated spreadsheet reflects counties requested for review from past Spokane County Citizens’ Commission on Salaries.

If the committee determines this is still helpful, they could be used as launch pad figures for the commission to work with. Ms. Cameron told the Committee she was looking for their guidance as to what they wanted to review to help them make their decisions. Ms. Cameron let the Commission know if they wanted any information specific to what different Spokane County employees had negotiated with their bargaining groups through the recent ratifications of CBAs, what WA state judges would be receiving mid-July in 2023, if other county data was wanted than what the commission had already been provided in this meeting, to let her know and she would gather that data for them. Ms. Cameron stated, in 2021, the commission members had the commissioners and electeds come to a meeting and provide presentations regarding their role at the County and work their office completes. She told the group if they would like for that to occur again in 2023, to please let her know and she would get those presentations scheduled for a future meeting.

Ms. Williams asked Ms. Cameron to again state what the Spokane County non-represented employees had received for COLAs in 2023. Ms. Cameron stated the non-represented employees received a 4% COLA. Ms. Williams asked Ms. Cameron what percentage of COLA the bargaining represented employees receive this year. Ms. Cameron responded the most recently negotiated Master Coalition Contract received a 3% COLA for 2023. Ms. Cameron recommended using Spokane County law enforcement/detention contracts would likely not be relevant as related to COLA adjustments as the contracts included significant change to bring compensation in line with market. Other negotiated contracts received between 2-2.5% COLAs for 2023. She also explained, some of the recently negotiated contracts included ratification bonus, for example, the Master Coalition received a $1250 ratification bonus. All these things were taken into consideration by leadership when reviewing the appropriate 2023 COLA for non-represented employees.
Ms. Williams asked what the compensation philosophy of Spokane County is. She asked if it was in the middle of market value. Ms. Cameron explained, from a base salary perspective, we are in market, and for most base salaries sit around 85% of midpoint on an annual salary. Ms. Cameron explained it’s not apples to apples through as most Spokane County employees are on a 37.5 hour compressed work week. When looking at the base hourly rate we are closer to 90% of market base pay. Ms. Cameron also explained Spokane County takes a total compensation approach, and when we look at the total cost of compensation, especially with the very robust benefit package provided by the County, our total compensation falls in the middle of the market as compared to like entities.

Ms. Cameron also showed the Commission the organizational chart for Spokane County, as it had been updated since the last time the commission met.

Mr. Gemmill gave context as to qualifications for elected officials. He explained when looking at the commissioners for the last hundred years, they have been county elected in the elections, for 2023, this process changed and each commissioner was voted for by their district only. He explained, when reviewing the County Org Chart, fundamentally, the commissioner is only responsible and accountable to their district, while the other four elected officials are voted for and accountable to the entirety of Spokane County voters.

As an example, Mr. Gemmill stated Commissioner Kerns is his commissioner and he could get out-voted every time for the next four years. And, the person who is voted in could have zero qualifications relevant to being a County Commissioner. On the other side of the coin, the Clerk must appease to all county citizens in order to get voted into the role. Mr. Gemmill stated he is not proposing to lower anyone’s salaries, he just thought it was a just interesting change that took effect in 2023.

Ms. Williams stated, it was her understanding in the past, Commissioners would serve on multiple boards. She asked how this may have changed when the County moved from 3 to 5 commissioners. Ms. Cameron explained the BOCC and leadership are actively working on finalizing board and committee assignments. The commissioners have been determining who will be on which boards, which boards will have multiple seats/sharing, which require all 5 to be present, etc. In the past, and board with 2 or more commissioners attending required a public meeting. In 2023 and moving forward, a majority of board members present creates a public meeting. This could also have impact on which boards are assigned to whom. Mr. Gemmill stated a few years back it was put forth to create 5 commissioners. The difference being elections would continue to occur county. This was voted down at that time.

Ms. Ball asked if Ms. Cameron through it would be helpful to have information for judiciary 2023 WA salary increases and for inflation in general for WA in the last year. She also stated, the other concern has is specific to any other compensation compression, and issues when salaries are getting compressed between elected officials and County employees.

Ms. Cameron explained as part of the employee compensation process, while inflation is a consideration, it does directly tie to COLA increases as the County only have some much money to support a majority of positions. If the County used inflation as the metric to match, they would not be able to support current budget needs and headcount. Ms. Cameron explained in the past years, those positions that needed updated to market relevant salary scales received those increases. The updated compensation started with non-reps and as each bargaining unit had a contract expire, those market rates were negotiated into the contract as part of the CBA negotiation process. When the County completed this work, they worked with a third party who reviewed class specs, base wages and total
compensation. That data was compared to market comparable, and the average base wages and total compensation of comparable counties. They reviewed positions at low, midpoint and high to determine averages. The County is very thoughtful specific to total compensation and from a base hourly wage plus benefit cost, we are competitive. While we will never be on the leading edge of base compensation, if a person looks at our total compensation, we are extremely competitive. Ms. Cameron explained in regard to compression, each position has compensation set based on the class spec (job description) and has specific tasks, skills, experience, education, certifications, qualifications, etc. She explained many of those class specs of senior leaders or judges have higher minimum requirements than what you would find for an elected official, as there are no MRs for the Commissioners. Anyone can run for commissioner regardless of education or experience. Ms. Ball stated this conversation prompted her to remember this discussion from the last commission meetings, and did not feel it would be relevant to view the salaries of other County employees who are not elected into a position.

Mr. Gemmill explained the County also was consistent in their approve in not utilizing private sector employers for salary and compensation review or consideration as the County does not have the same funding mechanisms to support that type of compensation model. Ms. Cameron explained the compensation team actively reviews compensation data from relevant counties. In the event we have trouble with recruitment or retention, there may be some consideration for local Spokane City data, but it is reviewed not just at base salary. A total compensation approach is taken, which often ends up showing the County is competitive in what they are offering. The base salary may be a little lower, but the benefits package is substantial.

The group again reviewed the comparable spreadsheet.

Spokane’s county size and budget most closely aligns with Clark County. This is true with budget, and FTE’s. In looking at other County elected makeup, each is a bit different based on whether they are charter or code county. Also based on the function of commissioners and electeds. Ms. Cameron explained, in the spreadsheet, the numbers are as is, with no geographic modifier. When the County reviews other positions, all those counties, except for Yakima have a geo-modifier component. We typically use a 10% geo-modifier, meaning a comparable salary 10% less than what you see in the compiled spreadsheet.

After group discussion, Ms. Ball asked if anyone had any questions on what was presented. There were no questions.

Selection of Next Meeting Date(s), time:

The group agreed for future meetings to occur on Tuesday evenings from 5:30-7:00pm. Ms. Ball stated if in the next meeting, those members who were not on the commission in 2021 would like to have the Commissioners/elected do presentations, it could be discussed with the group for a decision to be made.

Miscellaneous:

Ms. Cameron told the groups she retained her notes from last time presentations occurred in 2021 and would send them to the members if they would like them. Ms. Ball stated she would like the notes but did not feel it was necessary to invite them for presentation since they occurred the last time the group met, and Mr. Gemmill had a very thorough understanding of the County activities and responsibilities.
Mr. Gemmill told the group, one of the things he was trying to be aware of is that we are supposed to be more focused on compensating the job and not the specific elected, as they can put in a lot of work or not much work at all. He said he thought it would be interesting to see how things changed as there are no more committees than there were before, but there is a question of how the commissioners will spread the work out amongst them all.

Ms. Cameron stated, to Mr. Gemmel’s points, our elected’s have different views of their jobs. She told the group she would send the notes and asked the commission members to review them. In the event any commission members had follow-up questions after reviewing the notes, she could either provide data points or schedule the presentations based on the commission member asks. Ms. Croft believed all the information they needed would likely be provided by Ms. Cameron. She noted it would have been great if they can talk about what is required work in the role, but in the last presentation set most of them were just selling themselves to us as to why they needed to be paid more. Ms. Croft stated she was particularly interested in the compensation data itself, specifically as related to inflation and COLA increases, if that differs for the roll that they are in.

Ms. Ball reminded the group County pay is not like the Feds and individual roles are not awarded different COLAs. Ms. Cameron explained Spokane County has 17 separate collective bargaining agreements, many being unique to the type of work that is being. CBAs at the County have as many as 600 employees in a bargaining group, down to 4 in a group. Wages will often depend on what the group is wanting; maybe it’s cost of living, maybe specialty pays, maybe lesser premiums for benefits; what is important to them is negotiated and is not always uniform contract to contract. In addition to these CBA’s there are non-represented employees and management positions throughout the County. This is the group that you have the ability to make changes easier, may be a good year, but then also could be a bad year.

Ms. Croft asked about any perks that the commissioners get and who negotiates those. Ms. Cameron responded it would be up to this commission in the event they would like to recommend those extra perks for the commissioners or electeds. Ms. Cameron also reminded the commission, they have the authority to keep the current 95% structure, or amend it to be a different percentage, dollar amount for each, etc. The commission can set it at or higher than the current salary.

Ms. Ball asked the group when they would like to have their next meeting, giving Ms. Cameron time to email all the materials covered in this first meeting as well as the notes from past 2021 presentations.

Close:

The group decided to meet again on Tuesday, January 31st, 2023.

Mr. Gemmill then made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Ms. Williams seconded.

Motion carried and approved. Meeting ended at 7:01PM.