

**Minutes of Meeting
Sheriff's Office
September 30, 2019
8:30 a.m.**

The Kootenai County Board of Commissioners: Chairman Chris Fillios and Commissioner Bill Brooks met to discuss the following agenda items. Also present were KCSO Sheriff Ben Wolfinger, Undersheriff Dan Mattos, Captain Andrew Deak, Captain John Holecek, Lieutenant Kyle Hutchison, Lieutenant Nancy Ellis, Sergeant Rikki Hinchee, Sergeant Thomas Stangeland, Sergeant Christopher Wagar, Detention Deputies Daniel Valk, Nicholas Kerfoot, Michelle Hatley Millay, Shawn Somershoe, Kevin Muzzy, Matthew Cox, Brendon Schenk, Benjamin Whipple, Wade Kiedrowski, and Sarah Knight, Finance Director Dena Darrow, Human Resources (HR) Director Sylvia Proud, HR Generalist – Benefits & Compensation Dorothy Cross, BOCC Senior Business Analyst Nanci Plouffe, and Deputy Clerk Tina Ginorio. Also present were Kootenai County Residents Laura Valk, Mike Bauer, Rick Whitehead and Coeur d'Alene Press Reporter Keith Erickson. Commissioner Leslie Duncan was excused.

- A. Call to Order:** Chairman Chris Fillios called the meeting to order at 8:36 a.m.
- B. Changes to the Agenda (Action):** There were no changes to the agenda.
- C. Business (Discussion Items):**

Discussion with Kootenai County Jail/Detention Staff Regarding Wage Study

Chairman Fillios stated that this meeting was a continuation of the previous discussion about detention deputy compensation as affected by the wage study performed by Human Resources. He reminded those present that the study had started in April 2019, with parameters and results designated by the Elected Officials.

Human Resources (HR) Director Sylvia Proud confirmed that the Elected Officials had agreed upon the list of markets to which Kootenai County wages would be compared. She stated that BDPA had collected its data from those markets and found that General and Attorney pay plans, on average, were approximately 8% below market, while the Sworn Officer Matrix was about 6% below market. Ms. Proud added the Sworn Officer Matrix was broken down further, which showed law enforcement officers were 16% below market, emergency communications officers were about 7% below market and detention deputies were about 4.45% above market.

Ms. Proud explained the process by which BDPA had analyzed the data. She noted that the detention deputy matrix had been left the same, although the data showed it was above market rate. She stated that the information had then been presented to the Elected Officials and they had determined how the County would adjust wages. She said that the result was for General and Attorney employees, as well as Sworn Officers, to receive a minimum of a 2% pay raise, distributed as wages or its equivalent in bonuses. She added that the increases would go into effect on December 22, 2019.

KCSO Sheriff Ben Wolfinger expressed his concern regarding the evaluation done by BDPA for detention deputies. He pointed out that there was a significant difference between the training and duties of corrections officers and detention deputies. He said that the State of Washington and the State of Idaho only have corrections officers, while Bonner County and Spokane County have detention deputies. He stressed that the comparisons used by BDPA should have only come from other locations that employed detention deputies for the data to be valid.

Ms. Proud explained that BDPA searched for an 85% match between job descriptions, without regard to specific job titles, before creating benchmarks that were used to draw parallels between different employers. She assured those present that the wage adjustments being made now were not the end of the process. She said there would be more analysis done in the future, that could lead to further adjustments.

KCSO Sergeant Christopher Wagar asked if BDPA considered hiring standards. He pointed out that there was a 98.6% failure rate in applicant background checks, which made filling positions much more difficult. He pointed out that the requirements demanded of applicants by IDOC (Idaho Department of Corrections) were not as strict as those imposed by KCSO, yet their market rate was still being used in the wage study.

Ms. Proud responded that salary comparisons were made based on general qualifications for a given position, such as education and overall duties. She stated that difficulty in passing a background check was not included as a factor.

KCSO Detention Deputy Michelle Hatley Millay listed the different physical training requirements demanded of corrections officers and detention deputies. She called attention to the higher standard for detention deputies. She added that detention deputies and patrol deputies had the same requirements.

Commissioner Bill Brooks stated that he and Chairman Fillios had decided to move ahead and complete this phase of the wage adjustments in a single year, but he reminded everyone that the process was not yet complete. He said he had spoken to the detention deputies before and acknowledged that they told him they felt underpaid. He assured those present that he intended to pursue the issue.

Commissioner Brooks also pointed out that the County's future compensation plan must take COLA (Cost of Living Adjustments) into account each year, or the wages will dip below the appropriate market rates again.

KCSO Undersheriff Dan Mattos noted that the County loses most of its detention deputies to patrol positions. He expressed his belief that until detention deputies receive a better wage, this attrition will continue.

Sheriff Wolfinger remarked that another problem with the BDPA study was that it was started in April; state employees got their raises in July and other entities gave raises beginning in October. He stated that the data BDPA used was, in effect, already a year behind.

KCSO Captain John Holecek announced that the Jail was currently down seven detention deputies and another was undergoing the test to transfer to patrol. He said a better inducement needed to be offered if deputies were going to remain in their positions after they finished their initial two-year commitment. He stressed that employee retention was of critical concern.

KCSO Detention Deputy Nicholas Kerfoot remarked that he had been at the Jail for four and a half years. He said he has not received a real raise in three years. He noted that he had gotten a raise three years ago but insurance rates had been increased at the same time so it did not result in a real improvement.

KCSO Lieutenant Kyle Hutchison commented that he had worked at the Jail for fourteen years and had seen the difference in compensation from patrol to detention deputy go up and down. He said that the gap was larger now than ever before.

Deputy Kerfoot added that, after only four and a half years, in a shift of twelve people, he was second in seniority. He said that should illustrate how quick the turnover had gotten. He pointed out that new deputies did not have the depth of experience to handle difficult situations or difficult people the way seasoned staff could.

Undersheriff Mattos asked Captain Holecek how much money KCSO would be returning to the County's Fund Balance Account this year. Captain Holecek stated the amount would be around \$700,000. Undersheriff Mattos suggested that a possible solution might be for the County to allow part of that \$700,000 to stay with KCSO and further adjust wages where appropriate.

Chairman Fillios indicated he felt he could not comply with that request and stated that if he followed that suggestion with one department he would have to allow it to all of them.

Ms. Proud agreed and said that the Commissioners and HR had to maintain the integrity of the pay structure for all of the County's employees. She repeated that COLA would have to be built into the Budget for FY2021 and following years to maintain the correct market rates. She assured everyone that the process was not finished; only the first adjustment had been completed.

Finance Director Dena Darrow supported Ms. Proud's position and stated that they had all worked to be fair to all departments. She reminded the KCSO staff that they were covered by a matrix that allowed for regular progress. She added that many employees not in the matrix could go for years with no change at all. Ms. Darrow suggested that the Sheriff's Office could also look to improve the intangible aspects of their employee's positions because those could increase job satisfaction.

Lieutenant Hutchison reported that he has had to require detention deputies to work substantial amounts of overtime and that was very damaging to morale.

KCSO Detention Deputy Wade Kiedrowski said that he had been at the Jail for fourteen years, but most of the people on his shift were hired in 2017 or more recently. He asked what the financial impact to the County was if a fully trained deputy left. Undersheriff

Mattos replied that it cost about \$100,000 to train a deputy and that investment was lost if the deputy left.

Kootenai County Resident Rick Whitehead commented that he had seen similar situations in his years of experience in the field. He said, "The Coeur d'Alene Police Department laugh at us because they steal trained people from us." He said he would support Undersheriff Mattos suggestion that the \$700,000 be used to benefit KCSO, rather than being returned to the Fund Balance Account. He pointed out that only KCSO employees endured danger in their positions and they should receive additional consideration for that reason. He added that the matrix should be increased from nine years because a law enforcement career generally lasted about twenty years.

Kootenai County Resident Mike Bauer voiced his agreement with the points presented by Mr. Whitehead. He also pointed out that there was a greater chance that the County would incur liability through occurrences at the Jail than in most other departments. He said that retaining the best and most experienced staff reduced the chance of a costly lawsuit. Mr. Bauer added that he felt the pay structure in KCSO was top heavy and suggested that a change in the wage structure should be contemplated to correct this.

Mr. Whitehead also noted that he had a great deal of experience in creating pay matrices and offered his assistance if the County decided to review theirs.

Chairman Fillios assured those present that he took their concerns very seriously and appreciated the additional information they provided. He said he would suggest that wage adjustments in the future be made in October, rather than January. He stated that the Board would continue to look into these issues and work toward solutions, but he would not commit to reopening the FY2020 Budget. He added that Commissioner Leslie Duncan had stated she would not be in favor of reopening the FY2020 Budget and would vote against it.

Commissioner Brooks said he would be willing to reopen the Budget. He said he felt the study was fundamentally flawed in regard to the detention deputies and that the County should get a new study, focused on that area only. Based on the result, he said he would urge additional changes be made as appropriate.

- D. Public Comment (Discussion):** This section is reserved for citizens wishing to address the Board regarding a County-related issue. Idaho Law prohibits Board action on items brought under this section except in an emergency circumstance. Comments related to future public hearings should be held for that public hearing. There was no additional public comment.

E. **Adjournment (Action):** Chairman Fillios adjourned the meeting at 9:28 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

JIM BRANNON, CLERK

CHRIS FILLIOS, CHAIRMAN

BY: _____
Tina Ginorio, Deputy Clerk
