

**Minutes of Meeting  
Elected Officials  
October 16, 2019  
9:00 a.m.**

The Kootenai County Board of Commissioners: Chairman Chris Fillios and Commissioner Leslie Duncan and met to discuss the following agenda items. Also present were Assessor Rich Houser, Clerk Jim Brannon, Prosecutor Barry McHugh, KCSO Sheriff Ben Wolfinger, Treasurer Steve Matheson, Chief Deputy Assessor Joe Johns, Chief Deputy Clerk Jennifer Locke, Finance Director Dena Darrow, Chief Deputy Prosecutor Barry Black, Human Resources (HR) Director Sylvia Proud and Deputy Clerk Tina Ginorio. Commissioner Bill Brooks was excused.

- A. Call to Order:** Chairman Chris Fillios called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.
- B. Changes to the Agenda (Action):** There were no changes to the agenda.
- C. Business (Action Items):**

**IAC Update**

Prosecutor Barry McHugh reported that he had attended the last IAC meeting via teleconference call. He stated they were examining the dues structure for the group.

He stated that the IAC was considering the creation of a fund for counties faced with extraordinary costs from a court case. He said it might resemble the Capital Crimes Defense Fund but would be intended for the prosecution and would be offered on an opt-in basis.

Prosecutor McHugh predicted the upcoming legislative session would be a busy one. He said there were concerns being expressed that counties were not in control of their budgets and that restrictions might be imposed from above.

Commissioner Leslie Duncan remarked that she had heard the legislature was considering doing away with counties' abilities to take taxes on new growth. She expressed her concern that the legislators had continued to impose unfunded mandates but might handicap the counties' abilities to generate income.

Treasurer Steve Matheson commented that there was going to be a meeting on Monday, October 21, 2019 of a subcommittee of the legislature regarding property taxes taken by all taxing agencies. He also asked what dues were being paid to IAC at present.

Chairman Fillios stated he thought the bill for Kootenai County's dues had been about \$17,000.

Chief Deputy Clerk Jennifer Locke pointed out that there were additional fees charged besides the dues.

Treasurer Matheson inquired whether the other Elected Officials felt the County received good value for the membership. He said he felt it was worthwhile.

KCSO Sheriff Wolfinger said he felt the legislative lobbying services alone were worth the \$17,000.

Chairman Fillios said he had changed his mind on the question over the last year and a half and agreed the membership was valuable. He added that he had observed that there was a large difference in the issues faced by commissioners in the larger and smaller counties during the sponsored breakout sessions.

Clerk Jim Brannon said that if the IAC went to a quota system, he would like to see representation based on the size of the County.

Prosecutor McHugh noted that he had observed tension based on items that would benefit smaller counties more than bigger ones, and the reverse. He added that the same was probably seen in other organizations such as the Idaho Sheriffs', Assessors' and Clerks' groups.

Commissioner Bill Brooks entered the meeting at 9:15 a.m.

Assessor Rich Houser pointed out that the legislature apparently did not consider implementation expenses when laws are passed; that aspect was left to the counties alone.

Chief Deputy Assessor Joe Johns remarked that he doubted people were paying attention to the actual breakdown of the tax bills, such as the amounts that went to school districts, highway districts and so on. He said he thought the blame for increased taxes was being inappropriately blamed on just the County.

Commissioner Brooks voiced his agreement with Mr. Johns' point and added that many people do not analyze their tax bills, just look at the total.

Prosecutor McHugh stated he would keep the other Elected Officials informed about areas of interest discussed by IAC in future meetings.

**Comp Policy: Merit, Bonuses, COLA**

Commissioner Duncan stated she wanted to begin a general discussion on the compensation policy. She reminded those present that statute assigns responsibility for setting salaries to the Board of Commissioners. She asked if there was general agreement that the County would proceed as described by Human Resources Policy 120 and be merit-based. She added that she would also like to begin talking about including bonuses in the budget and about COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment). She said she wanted to begin these discussions now because the new budget discussions were going to start in December this year.

Commissioner Duncan cautioned that the County had begun a compensation process that might be difficult to afford in the future. She said she wanted to make sure the County did not end up behind on market rates in the future. She reported that she and Human Resources (HR) Director Sylvia Proud had been discussing a possible merit-based system that took into account the full spectrum of employee performance levels.

Sheriff Wolfinger commented that a problem with a merit-based system was that no two supervisors would measure an individual exactly the same way. He reminded those present that the County had moved away from formal evaluations toward a system of constant feedback instead. He said they had implemented this in KCSO and the employees and supervisors both seemed to be satisfied with it.

Ms. Proud asked that the Elected Officials give their recommendations on what direction they should take on this topic.

Finance Director Dena Darrow said her own focus would be on keeping the budget under control. She reported that she and Ms. Proud had discussed using COLA to keep people from falling behind, once their rates were adjusted appropriately. She commented that bonuses were one-time expenses, so they could be better planned for within the pay plan. She outlined some different ways bonuses could be assigned. She urged the Elected Officials to consider all the other factors that increase employee retention, in addition to wages.

Sheriff Wolfinger pointed out that COLA adjustments were calculated differently by different sources. He said food and fuel had recently been removed from the COLA calculation from one major source and suggested PERSI's figures be consulted.

Chairman Fillios suggested COLA figures from the Idaho Department of Labor might reflect local conditions more closely.

Prosecutor McHugh recommended that the Board also pay attention to issues of wage band compression.

Commissioner Duncan responded that this concern was being addressed. She added that they were also discussing ways prior experience could be taken into account.

Assessor Houser suggested the Board consider moving all the general pay plan employees to a matrix similar to the one used by KCSO. He said it would help efforts to predict budget increases, could be moved ahead by cost of living and could include adjustments for merit.

Commissioner Duncan encouraged participation from all of the Elected Officials who wanted to offer input and stressed that she needed the most complete information in order to make a good decisions. She stated that, since the County was a service organization, people needed to be their first priority and added that she hoped that all departments would work together to tighten up spending in other areas to support that focus. She stressed that there was no perfect system and the County would be limited by the funds it could collect.

Clerk Brannon noted that Code Section 31-816 assigned responsibility in this area to the Board. He said he had offered his input in the past and would accept the Board's decision when it was made.

Commissioner Brooks stated he wanted to see how the new compensation system worked this year before making decisions about the future. He encouraged other Elected Officials to contribute their ideas to the discussion. He also stated that he felt COLA was an important component that had to be included.

Clerk Brannon stated that he felt the updated job descriptions were where the work needed to be started. He pointed out that only about 50% of the jobs in the County had been evaluated in the last five years.

Ms. Proud responded that HR was developing a plan to work with Elected Officials and department heads to complete job description updates, starting with those that had not been updated in the last few years.

Chairman Fillios asked if the process would be completed in time for the FY2021 Budget.

Ms. Proud said she was not certain, but it should be close.

Sheriff Wolfinger said he had developed a draft for a matrix for all general pay plan employees, with help from Clerk Brannon and would send a copy to all the Elected Officials.

Clerk Brannon pointed out that certain jobs were only worth a certain maximum pay. He stated that this was why updating the job descriptions was so important; they needed to determine how much a given job was worth in the local marketplace before anything else.

Sheriff Wolfinger exited the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Ms. Darrow reminded the Board that, in the past, Elected Officials had apportioned bonuses at the end of the fiscal year from salary salvage that had been accrued. She suggested that the Board could consider allowing Elected Officials to retain that authority, since they were individually responsible for their budgets.

Commissioner Duncan pointed out that the bonuses would still need to be approved by the Board in the end.

Assessor Houser said that he had never been informed about that potential use of salary salvage and suggested that such information be included in the briefings for newly elected officials.

Clerk Brannon reminded those present that a prior Elected Official, Deb Wilkey, had overrun her budget and had been required to pay for it herself. He asked how the Board could demand that an Elected Official pay for a budget overrun if s/he were not personally responsible for that budget. He stated that he had asked Civil Deputy Prosecuting Attorney R. David Ferguson to review Idaho Code 31-1607 in relation to these questions.

In closing, Chairman Fillios reminded those present that the County would be receiving about four to four and a half million dollars from expiring URDs (Urban Renewal Districts). He said he did not plan to commit all of those funds toward a new building; he hoped to use some for other needs such as the ongoing budget operations of the County.

**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 public comment.

**E. Adjournment (Action):** Chairman Fillios adjourned the meeting at 10:11 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

JIM BRANNON, CLERK

CHRIS FILLIOS, CHAIRMAN

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
Tina Ginorio, Deputy Clerk

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