

MEMORANDUM

TO: Citizens' Salary Commission (CSC), Ryan Drum, Chair

CC: County Council and Human Resources Department

FROM: Charter Review Commission (CRC), Gordy Petersen, Chair

SUBJECT: SJC County Council Member Position and Salary Recommendations

DATE: May 10, 2012

In our deliberations on Charter revisions over the last four months, we have discussed the position and salary of County Council Members at length and have the following recommendations to share with you in the hope that these might be helpful in any discussions you may have on this subject prior to the November 6, 2012 election. These recommendations specifically apply to new, full-time Council Member positions included in our proposed Charter amendments.

The Citizens' Salary Commission should consider a salary range for San Juan County Council Members of between 80% and 150% of either median family income for San Juan County as determined by the US Census Bureau, or median household income as determined by the Washington State Office of Financial Management. Comparator counties appropriate to assisting with salary determinations should be Skagit, Island, Grays Harbor, Clallam, Jefferson, and Pacific Counties where county populations range from 117,000 to 21,000 and where the salary range for County Commissioners is between \$85,400 and \$56,800 per year. A two-three year salary freeze should be considered given the nature of current County finances.

The Charter Review Commission requests that the Citizens' Salary Commission set a salary for full-time Council Member positions in anticipation of a December 14, 2012 filing deadline for County Council candidates, assuming passage of the proposed Charter amendments. Please note that we have included a Section 11.51 in the proposed Charter amendments regarding "Interim Council Member Salary" that would define the salary of full-time Council Members as twice the current salary as of April 1, 2012 unless and until such time as the Citizens' Salary Commission sets a full-time salary.

The Charter Review Commission believes the following description of County Council Members may be of help to you in your further deliberations and decisions.

San Juan County Council Members

Summary

Members of the San Juan County Council are the senior executives and policymakers of San Juan County government. The decisions made by the County Council define our local laws, levy our local taxes, and shape the nature of county governance. The County Council is expected to provide leadership to the county, melding the vision and action necessary to advance the common good. No position in county government has greater influence on the future of San Juan County. Members of the County Council serve as de facto ombudsmen, helping to solve local problems and build positive community relations. The County Council engages with government leaders at the regional, state, tribal, national, and international levels to pursue the best interests of San Juan County. Members of the County Council serve all county residents to ensure that citizens have personal access to their elected leaders and to be responsive to the needs and concerns of our community in the San Juan Islands. A successful Council Member will have demonstrated leadership skills including meeting facilitation, problem solving, conflict resolution, public speaking, and teamwork ability. They should anticipate extensive weekly reading and research; extensive weekly meetings schedule; being available to the public; regular inter-island travel to attend Council meetings on three islands; and travel to Olympia for State Legislative sessions and committee meetings.

The Opportunity

These are complex and challenging political positions. First and foremost, the successful Council Member must balance the dual responsibilities of acting as an agent of the state while simultaneously representing voter constituencies, where the two are not necessarily in alignment. Secondly, Council Members must adopt, manage and customize state law designed for large and populous counties to work within a county that is small, remote, primarily rural, and with a multi-island structure. Thirdly, Council Members must be successful working with a population of intelligent, intense, and demographically mature individuals with rich and poor clustered at the ends of the socio-economic spectrum. Finally, our county population of 16,000 is unusually involved in their community with active citizen representation on over two dozen advisory boards and commissions and on over two hundred not-for-profit and other community organizations. Typically, our voter turnout is 20% above state norms for elections. A relevant and appropriate involvement model might be the faculty community in a large university.

Cultural and Personal Characteristics

County Council Members require well-developed leadership skills. A Council Member will be unable to keep all constituencies happy or satisfied, so the alternative is to build and hold respect throughout the decision-making process. The perception of hidden agendas or motivations will damage creditability and future electoral success. Although Council Members must forward the counties' due process, efficiency and speed are secondary to clarity and openness. Active and public debate covered extensively by our

web-based press and county communications systems are critical to this process. Although analytical and financial skills are useful, the message should be primarily about goals and objectives. Any movement toward complex organizational structures that render execution and implementation more opaque to the public will come under suspicion. Any arguments that San Juan County should model itself structurally or financially after King, Pierce or Snohomish County will be challenged on both size and uniqueness issues.

Time management is essential, but the practical reality is a dislocated governance process. Although the county is building multi-island video communications, Council Members' duties will always require ferry travel and interaction with the separate island communities. A large percentage of the voters feel that they are personally involved in the direction and management of their community, island and county. Consequently, the Council Members will receive emails and inquiries during the workday, in the evenings and on weekends. The inability to manage this volume will result in a sense of alienation among those attempting to complain or provide advice. Coordination, compromise, conciliation, and communication are essential job skills.

Duties and Responsibilities

The County Council represents the voters of San Juan County in all matters related to county government, both legislative and executive.

The legislative power of the County, as granted by the State Constitution and law and not reserved to the people, is vested in the County Council. The County Council exercises its legislative power by adoption and enactment of ordinances or resolutions. It has the power to:

- (a) Levy taxes, appropriate revenue and adopt budgets for the County.
- (b) Establish the compensation (and benefits, if any) to be paid to all non-elected County officers and employees and to provide for the reimbursement of expenses.
- (c) Establish, abolish, combine and divide by ordinance, non-elective administrative offices and executive departments and to establish their powers and responsibilities unless otherwise limited by law or other provisions of this Charter.
- (d) Adopt by ordinance comprehensive plans and development regulations including plans for present and future development and improvement of the county.
- (e) Approve contracts or establish by ordinance methods by which any type of contract shall be approved.

The executive power of the County, as granted by the State Constitution and law and not

reserved to the people, is vested in the County Council except those powers assigned to other elected officials and other elected boards and commissions by law. The County Council, and any subordinate officers appointed for that purpose and to whom have been delegated such administrative duties will:

- (a) Manage all administrative offices and functions.
- (b) Ensure that all actions of the County are compliant with all Federal, Washington State, San Juan County laws, codes and procedures, and this Charter, seeking advice from the County Prosecutor or other sources as necessary.
- (c) Ensure that all systems, procedures and use of technology under the County Council be periodically reviewed with actions taken to ensure that optimum Practices are being employed.
- (d) Review and approve operating and capital budgets, accompanied by a budget message setting forth proposals for the county during the next fiscal year.
- (e) Assign duties to administrative offices, where not specifically assigned by this Charter or by ordinance.
- (f) Act as the signing authority, on behalf of the County, on all claims, deeds, contracts, and other instruments initiated within the fiscal and budgetary procedures.
- (g) Appoint and remove members of local advisory boards, commissions, and committees. It is important to note the County Council may delegate duties, functions, and responsibilities, but the County Council remains accountable and responsible for all legislative and executive actions.
- (h) Conduct public hearings on matters of public concern.

Thank you for considering our recommendations.

Sincerely,

Charter Review Commission