

State Officers Compensation Commission Meeting

December 11th, 2024, 10:00 a.m.

Meeting Minutes

Members:

Larry LeDoux (Senate Appointee, member of the public)

Lynn Gattis (Governor Appointee, member of the public; virtual attendance)

Jomo Stewart (House Appointee)

Others present:

Kate Sheehan, Department of Administration, (Secretary)

Brook Riley, Department of Administration (Staff)

CALL TO ORDER

Director Sheehan called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m. Chair Stewart stated an overview of the agenda. Director Sheehan performed a roll call of all members present and a quorum was established. Mr. Ledoux moved to adjust and approve the agenda, Ms. Gattis seconded, and the motion was so moved.

I. Review of Preliminary Findings and Recommendations

Chair Stewart reviewed the most significant items in the Preliminary Findings and Recommendations including the implementation of bi-annual CPI-based pay increases for the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Commissioners, and the Legislature. Discussion was held regarding whether the financial situation of the State of Alaska should be considered when granting pay raises and the Commission agreed that it is not within their purview to be concerned nor involved with the financial 'health' of the state and that the Committee's purview is only to recommend salary changes for State Officers. Chair Stewart moved to make the Preliminary Findings adopted and final, and Mr. LeDoux as well as Ms. Gattis voted in agreement. Mr. LeDoux added further explanation as to why the large increases that the Commission recommended last year were justified, stating that to get the best and brightest we need to pay legislators adequately because they often must leave their current jobs. Ms. Gattis agreed it is a full-time job and that they need to be paid adequately to compensate for that. Chair Stewart defended the previous increase as well, reminding the Commission that legislators must maintain two households etc.

Director Sheehan asked for clarification as to the contents of the Preliminary Findings and it was agreed that the Commission will not ask for any pay raises this upcoming legislative session for any State Officers, and that they will be increased using an objective measure such as CPI as a major component to determine increases in salaries every two years.

II. Discussion of House Bill 140

Chair Stewart opened discussion for future legislation to mimic the contents of the House Bill 140 from the 2024 legislative session. He mentioned

specific items within the bill such as sections one and two that codify the existing practice of the Legislative Counsel. Section three sets the requirement of a minimum five-day public notice of meetings on the online public meeting notice website. Section four stipulated that the Commission must meet twice per year. Section five states the Committee's actions would be voidable if a minimum five-day public notice was not adhered to, or if the meeting's requirements were not met. Section six was to establish and articulate the policy that the purpose of this Commission is to attract and retain talented and capable individuals to serve in the highest leadership roles in the State of Alaska. Section seven makes conforming amendments relative to the reports. Section eight recommended two critical changes, one was extending the process to give the Commission more time to complete its tasks, and the second, that the process would begin in odd-numbered years thus effectuating that any legislature would vote in principle, that they would not be able to vote or not vote in a way that directly gave themselves a pay raise. Section nine states the Commission shall issue two separate reports to the Legislature and the Executive Branch. Chair Stewart stated that he is very supportive of the stipulation that does not permit legislators to act or not act, when it affects their own salaries. Mr. LeDoux added that he is also supportive of this bill that clearly defines the process to which the Commission must adhere. Director Sheehan suggested that if the Commission would like, that they can include in their Final Recommendations the implementation of the Preliminary Findings as well as the measures outlined within House Bill 140 as all members are supportive of the that bill's contents.

Mr. LeDoux expressed concern that there are currently only three commission members currently, and Director Sheehan clarified that it is a five-member group and that the two vacant positions have yet to be appointed by the Governor.

III. Public Comment

Dermot Cole, Fairbanks

Mr. Cole stated his concern that the Commission should have five members and only has three members and that the Governor did not appoint the vacant two Commission seats is a serious problem as it would require the three members to agree unanimously, he stated that the proposed recommendation to the Legislature is that the future salaries of Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Department Heads and the Legislature be increased every two years per the Anchorage Consumer Price Index and that would become law unless the Legislature votes to overturn it. Mr. Cole also suggested that there were documents such as the Preliminary Report that should be published on the Personnel Board website that were not published, and that three people should not have the power to make this decision for the State of Alaska and in

essence it does become three because of the many ways there are to stop a bill from becoming law.

Steven Martin, Eagle River

Mr. Martin asked the Commission to clarify if they had plans to raise the salaries of state employees as they have made a plan to raise salaries for the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, etc. He stated it is irresponsible that they plan to do this, yet continue to make cuts to education and other areas. Chair Stewart reminded Mr. Martin that the purpose of this Commission is to look at State officers' salaries and not those of state employees or any other individuals. Mr. Martin asked if any of the Commission members would financially benefit from their findings and Chair Stewart stated that they are all members of the public and will not be affected by the decisions of the Commission, and they are working to keep the process transparent. Mr. Martin stated that he believed that public sector people should not be motivated to do that work for the money, and should be more in it for the public service aspect.

Director Sheehan reminded the Commission that any final discussions should take place at another meeting that is open for public comment.

The Commission set the next meeting for January 2025 at the Atwood Building in Anchorage in time to meet the statutory deadline. Chair Stewart stated that the documents associated with that meeting will be posted online prior to the meeting. Chair Stewart made a motion for the meeting to be adjourned, all members voted in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 10:54 a.m.