

State Officers Compensation Commission Meeting

January 18th, 2022, 10 a.m.

550 W. 7th Ave., Suite 1236

Meeting Minutes

Members:

Kurt Olson

Johnny Ellis (via telephone)

Carrigan Grigsby

Lee Cruise

Others present:

Kate Sheehan, Department of Administration, Secretary

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Johnny Ellis called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m., and a quorum was established.

II. Review of Agenda

Mr. Ellis asked Director Sheehan to call role, Members Olson, Grigsby, and Cruise were present. He then asked Director Sheehan to state the purpose of this meeting; that it was to meet for the final time to review preliminary findings that must then be adopted or changed before the Commission submits their findings to the legislature. The Commission has 10 days; until January 28th to submit their final recommendations. She reviewed the public comments that were received since the last meeting including that of Jim Weber who does not want a salary increase and encouraged a \$150 per diem. Representative Snyder's public comments were regarding the per diem decrease being detrimental to her and her family. Kim Collins submitted testimony addressing the fact that state employees do not receive the same benefits as legislators in several areas including moving expenses.

III. Overview of Available Material/Information; Preliminary Findings and Recommendations

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Ellis moved that the Commission adopt their draft preliminary findings/proposal as their final recommendations/proposal to the interested parties. He reminded the Commission that he was a reluctant yes vote, he would like the salaries to be higher as these figures will be used as a base salary for a long time to come. Mr. Cruise moved and Mr. Grigsby seconded that they should receive more brief public testimony before they finalize their proposal to the legislature.

The Commission heard public testimony from Paul Schnyder, he spoke about how other states have citizen legislatures and that Alaska should also have that system. He addressed the inaction of the legislature, that their approval rating was 25%, and that their salaries should reflect that same percentage as a performance-based pay system. Michael Tavoliero then testified that we have a dilemma between performance and entitlement and that they should be addressing the question of whether behavioral correction is needed. He then mentioned specific numbers to assert that the legislature is paid too much and that they should cap session to 120 days. They then heard from Malan Paquette, she agreed with no increase in salary but that increased oversight as well as having their salaries spread over 12 months would be her recommendation.

Mr. Ellis returned the discussion to the details and amounts and asked the members if their opinions had changed. Mr. Cruise suggested that they lower the salary amount to \$61,000 as that is closer to the average Alaskan's income. Mr. Grigsby asserted that the Commission listen to the feedback that they have received from the folks working in these positions and that they should not further lower the salary amount as Mr. Cruise would like. Director Sheehan reviewed that the requirements from Legislative Affairs for a receipt-based reimbursement system for per diem payments would be one full-time session-only position with a total salary of \$44,816.71. Further discussion was held on that as well as other potential changes regarding per diem and lodging expenses. Mr. Ellis asked Mr. Carrigan to state for the record what they are proposing; he stated that receipts for per diem actuals will be submitted once per month, with totals not to exceed \$100 per day or \$12,000 per session and a \$64,000 base salary. For any special session that is convened by the Governor, the per diem payments to the legislature would be reduced to those of state employees which is \$45 for travel days and \$60 for full days in travel status. Mr. Cruise again suggested that their recommendations be enacted within 60 days of their final proposal rather than waiting for the next election cycle. Mr. Ellis then proposed that they finalize the vote on the base salary and the new approach to per diem for special session and Mr. Cruise could then propose a motion for it to have an immediate implementation of the Commission's recommendation. Members Ellis, Grigsby and Olson ultimately agreed to recommend implementation after the next election rather than immediately. Mr. Ellis again reviewed their final recommendation to the legislature as mentioned above including Lieutenant Governor and Governor salaries at \$129,000 and \$163,000 respectively.

Director Sheehan took votes on a motion to push forth the Commission's recommendations as stated with members Ellis, Olson, and Grigsby voting 'yes' and Mr. Cruise voting 'no'. The motion passed 3 to 1.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

The meeting adjourned at 11:01 a.m.