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Date: October 6, 2025

To: Citizen's Budget Committee

From: Jennifer Ferrer-Santa Ines, Chief Financial Officer

RE: Elected Officials Compensation Review – 2025-2027 Biennium

This memorandum outlines the background, historical decisions, and current considerations for establishing the 2025-2026 compensation schedule for Benton County's elected officials: County Commissioners, Sheriff, and District Attorney.

Background

In accordance with ORS 204.112 (1), "Each county governing body shall appoint a county compensation board. A county compensation board shall consist of from three to five members, who are knowledgeable in personnel and compensation management." This board is then responsible as outlined in ORS 204.112 (2) to "annually recommend a compensation schedule for elective officers mentioned in ORS 204.005" This includes County Commissioners and the Sheriff.

While the District Attorney is an elected official, they are a state employee and are not a part of ORS 204.112. As a state employee, their salary is established based on population size <100,000 or >100,000. Through ORS 8.8830, the County has the option of "Whenever, in the judgment of any county court or board of county commissioners, the salaries paid by the state to the district attorney, or to any deputy district attorney, are not commensurate with the character of the service performed, the county court or board of county commissioners may pay out of the funds of the county such additional amounts as will properly compensate said officers for the service performed."

Benton County is a "Home Rule" county and as such, is not subject to the ORS provisions identified above and may adopt alternative processes. To establish the process of reviewing and selecting compensation schedules for County Commissioners and the Sheriff, and a stipend for the District Attorney, the Benton County Board of Commissioners has opted to delegate this authority to the citizen members of the Budget Committee. This delegation occurred through the amendment of Article 2 of the Benton County Budget Committee Bylaws on May 26, 2020.

History

Beginning with the 2021-23 biennium, the citizen members of the budget committee adopted a resolution in August 2021 to establish the following increases to each elected official base salary (stipend for the District Attorney).

Elected Office	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
County Commissioners	1.20%	4.24%	4.60%	3.00%	TBD
Sheriff	1.5% above Undersheriff	1.00%	1% above Undersheriff	1% above Undersheriff	TBD
District Attorney	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1% above highest paid employee	TBD

These decisions were informed by research conducted by the Human Resources Department to evaluate the current salaries and history of salary changes for all elected officials in other comparable counties. This process is consistent with how other County's inform their committees to help them make decisions on what changes to recommend.

2025-27 Considerations

In this biennium, the County is seeking guidance from the citizen members of the budget committee to determine what, if any, adjustments should be implemented for fiscal year 25-26, and 26-27 salaries and stipends for the County Commissioners, Sheriff, and District Attorney. Over the last four years, the Citizen Review Committee has chosen to set salaries for elected officials only for one fiscal year at a time, as opposed to biennial. It is the choice of the committee if they wish to continue this practice or revert to setting for the entire biennium.

Benton County surveyed six different counties that are comparable in population size. These included Umatilla, Josephine, Polk, Yamhill, Douglas, and Linn. The result of this data is attached to this memorandum and will be reviewed with the committee during the October 8, 2025, meeting. This data is intended to inform the citizens of the budget committee on what other comparable counties have established as existing salaries and stipends for their elected officials for 2025/26, as well as actions they have taken for Fiscal Year 2024/25 on increases or policy changes.

In addition to reviewing this data, below is some additional information to help inform the committee in making its decisions.

- For the 2025-2027 biennium, management and unrepresented employee salaries do not include any cost-of-living adjustment. This decision was part of balancing the biennium budget.
- The policy of the Sheriff's salary being no less than that of its highest paid employee was in place through June 30, 2025.
- The District Attorney including stipend shall be 1% more than the Chief Deputy District Attorney. This was put in place with the 2024-2025 compensation review and was in effect until June 30, 2025.

Request

The Citizen Budget Committee is asked to establish the 2025-2026 compensation schedule (and 2026-27 schedule if preferred) for County Commissioners, Sheriff, and District Attorney. Please review the attached comparative county data and be prepared to discuss recommendations at the October 8, 2025, meeting.