

**June 20, 2023**

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners met for a County Compensation Board Meeting June 20, 2023, in the Lincoln County Courthouse, Libby, Montana. Present were Commissioner Teske, Commissioner Letcher, Commissioner Hammons, Lincoln County Administrative Assistant Jennifer Brown and Clerk and Recorder Corrina Brown.

10:00 AM **County Compensation Board:** Committee members present were JoAn Cuffe and Bonnie Larson. Also present were County Attorney Marcia Boris, Sheriff Darren Short, and Undersheriff Brent Faulkner. Clerk of Court Tricia Brooks was excused.

Commissioner Letcher called the meeting to order. Jennifer Brown provided spreadsheets, documents and MCA 7-4-2503. Commissioner Hammons reviewed the spreadsheet depicting elected officials' base salaries by budget increase. Brent reviewed Sheriff's Office Employee Salary Percentages: 1 Undersheriff @ 98%, 2 Captains @ 92%, 4 Detectives @ 88%, 3 Sargent's @ 89%. New Deputies 80-86% with steps and incentives for promotions and advised longevity is based on MCA. Commissioner Hammons advised insurance is up yet expects mill levy to cover this and 8% is the average COLA increase. Bonnie commented on the US Department of Labor 8% COLA reported and 7% County Health Insurance increase, suggesting the committee consider covering insurance for employees but not dependents therefore allowing more funding for staff wages rather than an insurance company. Commissioner Teske agreed the progressive levy may not keep up with insurance increases requiring employee contribution. Brent commented that these benefits help attract employees at a time when this is not easy. Marcia concurred that she has concerns about cutting this benefit as it is helpful in hiring. Commissioner Teske advised the mill levy is still able to cover this insurance increase. Commissioner Letcher commented that often dual income families opt-out of coverage receiving 1/3 cost in lieu-of. Darren commented that last year elected and non-elected had different %'s and feels that is not a fair reflection on personnel who are calculated based on his salary. Commissioner Teske commented that staff gets 1% longevity on 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Darren commented that the legislature must have felt it was important to put 1% longevity in MCA. Marcia feels the County has not kept up with market pay. Bonnie asked Darren to expand on absorbing approximately 2,500 calls per year via MOA with City of Libby with additional pay for deputies who are juggling increased case files. Commissioner Letcher advised increased pay is needed for employee retention yet increases in taxes are prohibitive. Bonnie stated as a business owner she feels inflation is about 50% and sees people buying a lot less and stretching their dollars. Commissioner Teske commented that the historical chart shows periods of thriftiness by elected officials and then huge correction and suggests incremental increases. Commissioner Letcher advised he has seen where officials strongly suggest staying caught up to not to let inflation get ahead of employees. JoAn would like to stay even yet has concerns with a county living barely above poverty level. Bonnie motioned for a 4.7% COLA increase which JoAn seconded. Commissioner Letcher called for discussion. Bonnie stressed employees' option to opt out of additional insurance coverage. Commissioner Teske clarified board membership includes: The County Commissioners, Sheriff Darren Short, Clerk of Court Tricia Brooks, Clerk and Recorder Corrina Brown, County Attorney Marcia Boris and 2-4 resident taxpayers. Commissioner Teske advised taxpayer members need staggered terms; Bonnie Larson will be up in 2024. JoAn Cuffe in 2025 and District 1 in 2026. JoAn questioned the Boards comfort with this increase. Commissioner Teske advised it is uncomfortable, but we are slipping with inflation. Darren stated he too is uncomfortable voting for this increase for himself, yet his sworn employees won't get it if he doesn't. Marcia advised she is not looking for this for herself but sees a need to increase Sheriff deputies' pay. Commissioner Letcher called for a vote: 4.7% COLA carried unanimously.

11:00 AM **Adjourn**

**LINCOLN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

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Josh Letcher, Chairman

**ATTEST:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Corrina Brown, Clerk of the Board