

June 16, 2022

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners met for a special session on June 16, 2022, in the Lincoln County Conference Room, Libby, Montana. Present were Commissioner Letcher, Commissioner Bennett, Commissioner Teske, County Administrator Jim Hammons and Clerk and Recorder Robin Benson.

**11:30 AM 2022 Primary Election County Canvass:** Present were Election Administrator Paula Buff, Assistant Election Administrator Amanda Eckart, and Clerk of Court Tricia Brooks. The County Canvass Board for the 2022 Primary Election were Commissioner Bennett, Commissioner Letcher and Clerk of Court Tricia Brooks.

Election Administrator Paula Buff presented the Canvass Board with the Abstract of Votes from the 2022 General Primary Election. The Abstract of Votes were compared to the hand count results. There were zero discrepancies. Paula explained she would be including a statement for Write-In votes in the returned Canvass to the Secretary of State's Office. The Canvass Board signed and certified the results of the 2022 General Primary Election.

Paula commented there was 38% participation, based off of active and inactive electors. The average participation statewide was approximately 39%. Paula noted that if inactive voters were not included, the percent would be significantly higher. Absentee ballot return was 54%.

There was a brief conversation about county addressing. Paula commented that the address library would be a long, challenging and difficult process, but that will be the area of focus before the 2022 General Election.

The commissioners commended Paula and Amanda for their efforts and work during the hand count process.

**12:30 PM Break**

**1:30 AM Salary Review Committee:** Present were JoAn H. Cuffe, Bonnie Larson, Robin Swimley, Clerk of Court Tricia Brooks, Sheriff Darren Short, Undersheriff Brent Faulkner, and HR/Payroll Dallas Bowe.

County Administrator Jim Hammons provided spreadsheets showing statewide salaries and cost increases for COLA percentages for the salary discussion. The discussion focused on elected officials base salaries in Montana counties, COLA rates, inflation, insurance cost increase and tax revenues.

Jim explained the consumer price index is 4.7% and is expected to be higher next year. Lincoln County population is the 10<sup>th</sup> highest in the state. Jim provided a statewide salary survey, noting that Lincoln County is average in comparison. Jim recommended a 2.5 or 3% COLA for elected officials for FY 22/23.

Commissioner Bennett commented that the tax revenue current year was 12% increase and he is not concerned about this year, but 2 to 3 years down the road. Health insurance increase is 7.9%.

Commissioner Teske explained that tax revenue comes out in August and it's hard to make decisions prior to knowing revenues.

Robin Swimley said it is difficult to make decisions without knowing revenues and recommends a 1.5% increase. Bonnie Larson and JoAn Cuffe agreed to 1.5%. Robin Swimley asked if we could postpone until tax revenue is known. Commissioner Bennett suggested running at 1.5% as a base, commenting he would prefer seeing an increase for employees. Dallas clarified that she could start the base at 1.5%, and it cannot be lower, but can increase; retro would be done manually.

Robin Swimley said if the revenue comes in better, he would be willing to reconsider, but strongly encouraged the commissioners to consider looking at insurance cost share, if not this fiscal year, then at least next fiscal year.

The salary committee commended Jim Hammons for the spreadsheets of information provided.

**Motion** by Robin Swimley to pass a 1.5% COLA increase for Lincoln County Elected Officials. Second by Bonnie Larson, motion passed unanimously by the Salary Committee. Commissioners Letcher, Teske and Bennett accepted the motion.

**2:30 PM Clerk of Court Budget Discussion:** Present was Clerk of Court Tricia Brooks. Tricia gave an overview of the preliminary budget and discussed anticipated expenditures for FY 22/23. The jury portion of the budget is difficult to anticipate, stating that jury trials have tripled since she started her tenure as Clerk of Court. Tricia commented that she would like to purchase new office chairs for staff. Commissioner Bennett suggested to roll over unspent funds into a CIP for those types of purchases.

**3:00 PM Meeting Adjourned**  
**LINCOLN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

---

Jerry Bennett, Chairman

**ATTEST:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Robin A. Benson, Clerk of the Board