

**Erie County Salary Review Commission  
Meeting #4 Minutes  
September 16, 2014; 8:30am**

Meeting was held on September 16, 2014 at 8:30am in room 1404 (Department of Public Works Conference Room) of the Rath County Office Building at 95 Franklin Street.

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE**

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Robert Glaser, chairman, Owen Patrick Brady, Laurie Buonanno, James Wagner, William Ransom, Jr., Dennis Jewell, and Robert Graber.

**SUPPORT STAFF**

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Mark Cornell, Erie County Executive's Office, Timothy Callan, Erie County Division of Budget and Management, and Julie Becht, Freed Maxick CPAs.

**OTHER ATTENDEES**

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No members of the public were in attendance. However, reporter Rachel Elzufon from WKBW was in attendance.

**AGENDA**

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Old Business

- Approval of Minutes from previous meetings
- Feedback Reports

New Business

- Draft Report and Additional Salary Thoughts
- Other Matters

**OLD BUSINESS**

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Minutes from the meeting was approved by a unanimous vote.

**NEW BUSINESS**

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Bob Glaser began by indicating County Clerk Chris Jacobs had forwarded him what was believed to be a 3<sup>rd</sup> letter dated September 9<sup>th</sup> reiterating his opposition to elected official raises unless done by referendum.

Laurie Buonanno revised her statistical analysis to include 'treasurers' which actually lowered the salary values based on standard deviations from the previous analysis based only on the 6 official 'comptroller' titles across the state. This led to additional discussion on the similarities and differences of the positions and how best to make an accurate salary consideration. In a staff capacity, Tim Callan explained that in many cases a treasurer is not quite equivalent to a comptroller. Treasurers tend to perform only a percentage of the role of a comptroller because there also tend to be an appointed CFO of financial office for the county in question. Tim Callan also noted that our use of other counties as 'comparable' is a loose comparison at best. For one reason or another, either actual size, or economy, or dollar value, the 'comparable' counties are very different. Additionally, Monroe County doesn't have an elected comptroller or treasurer...but rather, an appointed chief financial officer

Discussion then shifted to questions on why the clerk position tends to be paid less than either a sheriff or comptroller in other comparable counties, but they all make about the same in Erie County. Tim Callan noted that in terms of department size and/or charter responsibility, the sheriff and comptroller can be viewed as greater than the clerk which serves more of a ministerial state recordkeeping function, which may account for that. Additionally, there seems to be less of a range of salary across counties in New York State for the clerk position which may be attributable to the fact that as a state mandated record-keeper, the position does not vary to much from county to county, where there could be significant fluctuations in amount of personnel/responsibility for a sheriff or comptroller depending on the size of the county.

Bob Graber indicated that he agreed with this assessment and advocated for the Sheriff to be granted a higher raise than either the Comptroller or Clerk.

Bill Ransom indicated that his position on raises has changed somewhat since reading the recent Buffalo News article regarding Amherst's unwillingness to raise elected official salaries. He reiterated that in his opinion there are non-monetary incentives to holding office and good candidates continue to run for them at the current salaries. He's particularly worried, not about granting raises, but the percentage increase of these raises. Other members agreed that even though there hasn't been a raise in 18 years, the optics of granting a 40% raise are not good. Bob Glaser indicated that this was the burden they must bear for the lack of salary review commission empaneling. Going forward as long as the committee meets, they won't, hopefully, be in situations where they even need to consider such large wage increases.

Bob Glaser lamented that the fact that deputies will still make more than elected officials in certain cases regardless of their final reporting, rectifying this issue is outside of their purview and they should not make recommendations to correct it. However, they could make a reference that this is an area of concern going forward.

Tim Callan noted that this exact issue was discussed in the 1996 and 2004 reports. Laurie Buonanno indicated it was also a topic of concern in many other county salary review reports she read.

Laurie Buonanno again voiced her hope that the group could agree on a single criteria by which to consider raises. Bob Glaser was doubtful that they could choose just one and that it was helpful to weigh various criteria in coming up with a fair assessment of what the wages should be.

Bob Glaser noted that the one area that seemed to have the most support was to not give the legislature raises. Several members indicated they thought \$42,000 salary for a part time job in 1996 was incredibly high and probably was about right for today.

Next the group discussed the draft report and began considering several line item edits.

Bob Glaser asked members to consider non-salary recommendations they might want to consider like requesting the committee actually meet every two years or salaries not be implemented until a change in term.

Dennis Jewell indicated that his issue with any official voting for their own raises was mitigated by the fact that the legislature, which must give approval, will in all likelihood not be given a raise and therefore it wasn't as important to start wage increases at the next term.

As part of the discussion, several members adjusted their individual wage recommendations.

### **ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN**

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Bob Glaser indicated that he would forward them the adjusted report and recommendations and asked if members would consider their own edits before next meeting.

### **NEXT MEETING**

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The next meetings of the Erie County Salary Review Commission will be September 23<sup>rd</sup> in room 1404 of the Department of Public Works.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

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The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 am.