



Legislative Coordinating Commission

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COMPENSATION COUNCIL Meeting Minutes Wednesday, March 14, 2007 Room 500 North, State Office Building Convener: Tom Swain

Present: Tom Swain
Stan Durda
Ezell Jones
Paula Laidig Hemer
Kathleen Meyerle
Jon Staebler
John Stanoch
Craig Shaver
Rep. Ron Erhardt
Rep. Joe Atkins
Senator Ron Latz
Senator Mee Moua

Excused: Michael Christenson
Joseph Leek
Rep. Tom Rukavina
Senator Paul Koering

Convener Tom Swain called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. A quorum was present. Members and staff introduced themselves.

Mr. Swain opened up nominations for the position of council chair. John Stanoch nominated Craig Shaver. Seconded. There being no other nominations, nominations were closed and Mr. Shaver was elected.

Sandy Keene, Legislative Coordinating Commission, reviewed administrative matters regarding reimbursement forms for council members.

Tom Bottern, Senate Counsel & Research, presented the statutory duties of the council assigned by Minnesota Statutes 15A.082. He reviewed a memo outlining previous councils' frequently asked questions. Mr. Bottern also reviewed a memo summarizing the total compensation packages for constitutional officers, legislators, and judges.

Peter Wattson, Senate Counsel & Research, presented a memo on how the Legislature has responded to the past recommendations of the council. Mr. Wattson stood for questions.

Greg Hubinger, Legislative Coordinating Commission, reviewed a spreadsheet showing the salary history for elected officials from 1997 to present.

Mark Shepard, House Research, presented two memos regarding the process for establishing agency head salaries with an attached spreadsheet. He also explained how various public officials' salaries are affected by salaries within the jurisdiction of the compensation council.

The Compensation Council then heard public testimony.

Sandy Neren, from Messerli & Kramer represented the Minnesota District Judge's Association, which includes 304 judges. Ms. Neren provided handouts showing Minnesota Judge Salary History and state employee contract settlements from 1986 to present. She urged council members to consider the number of years of experience judges have and that they enter their positions as careers and not as elected officials for a few years. She pointed out that most judges have approximately 20 years of experience before being appointed as a judge and most have been on the bench for at least 10 years, so most possess 30 years of experience in their field. Ms. Neren directed the council members attention to another handout, "Big firms initiate SalaryWars," which states that entry-level lawyers are being paid \$105,000 to \$120,000 with zero years of experience. Ms. Neren asked the council to recommend a 5% increase in salaries for judges in July 2007 and again in July 2008, then provide similar increases in their salaries for 2009 and 2010 tied to negotiated state union contracts.

Patrick Kelly, President, Minnesota State Bar Association, testified representing approximately 16,500 attorneys. Mr. Kelly stated that he supported Ms. Neren's recommendations. He asked the council members to remember that the focus should be on attracting and retaining quality people for judiciary positions. He further commented on the important role judges play in the community, not only on the bench, but also in volunteering their time to important community programs.

Ms. Neren and Mr. Kelly stood for questions. Discussion ensued.

Pat Anderson, Commissioner of the Department of Employee Relations (DOER), stated that after speaking with the Governor, his message to the council is that he does not recommend an increase in the salary for his position and others linked to it. She stated that she did not discuss the salaries of judges with the Governor. Commissioner Anderson stood for questions. Discussion ensued.

Council members discussed information that would be helpful in making their recommendations such as total compensation packages, per diem, and the fiscal impact of the council's recommendations.

Mr. Shaver announced that the next meeting would be Tuesday, March 27, at 4:00pm. Sandy Keene, Compensation Council staff, indicated she would email members with the location and meeting information. Members were instructed to forward any suggestions for the next meeting to Greg Hubinger, Compensation Council staff. Discussion ensued.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:19 p.m.

Craig Shaver, Chair