



**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER**

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Agenda Number:

**Submitted on:
(COB Stamp)**

Department Name: Human Resources
Department No.: 064
Agenda Date: Set Hearing February 11, 2025
Placement: Hearing on February 25, 2025
Admin on March 4, 2025
Estimated Time: 30 minutes on February 25, 2025
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from: N/A
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department Director(s): Kristy Schmidt, Human Resources Director
Contact Info: Yvonne Torres, Assistant Human Resources Director, 805-568-3075

SUBJECT: Amendments to Compensation Ordinance and Resolution for Elected Officials

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Recommended Actions:

On February 11, 2025, that the Board of Supervisors set a hearing for February 25, 2025 to:

- a) Receive a report from the Human Resources Director analyzing elected officials' salaries in comparison to similar positions in the County's defined management labor market, compaction between salaries for elected department heads and their non-elected assistant department heads, and parity between salaries of the County's top attorneys; and
- b) Consider a recommendation to:
 - i. Adopt Attachment B effective May 12, 2025, which amends the Salary Resolution:
 1. To establish salary ranges of 6 steps for each elected department head position with criteria for movement within the range based on tenure; place incumbents within the salary range based on their tenure, resulting in the following increases effective (May 12, 2025): Auditor Controller 5.7% (Step 6) for an annual salary of approximately \$267,487; Clerk-Recorder-Assessor 6.9% (Step 6) for an annual salary of approximately \$267,487; District Attorney 9.1% (Step 4) for an annual salary of approximately \$301,022; Sheriff 14.9% (Step 6) for an annual salary of approximately \$307,459; and Treasurer-Tax Collector 6.9% (Step 6) for an annual salary of approximately \$267,487;
 2. Adjust the top of the salary ranges for the appointed County Counsel and Public Defender to the same top salary as District Attorney resulting in a 2.7% increase the

salary range for each of these positions and provide a corresponding salary adjustment to the incumbents in these positions for an annual salary of approximately \$298,763 for County Counsel and approximately \$300,548 for Public Defender.

- ii. Adopt Attachment C amending the Compensation and Benefits Resolution for Elected Department Heads, most recently amended by Resolution No. 24-250; and
- c) Consider a recommendation to:
 - i. Consider the introduction (first reading) of an Ordinance Setting Compensation and Benefits for Members of the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors to index salaries of Members of the Board of Supervisors to seventy percent (70%) of the base salary for a California Superior Court Judge, effective May 12, 2025 resulting in a 48.8% salary increase, for an annual salary of approximately \$171,309, with future salary adjustments to be effective annually in the pay period in which January 15th falls, and set the biweekly allowance for the Chair of the Board of Supervisors to 2% of salary.
 - ii. Read the title of the Ordinance and waive full reading of the Ordinance; and
 - iii. Continue the item to the Administrative Agenda of March 4, 2025 to consider the adoption (second reading) of an amendment to Ordinance 5176 which sets the compensation and benefits for Members of the Board of Supervisors; and
 - iv. Determine pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15378(b)(4) that the above actions are government fiscal activities which do not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment, and are therefore not a project subject to environmental review.

On March 4, 2025:

- a) Adopt an ordinance (Attachment E) to index salaries of Members of the Board of Supervisors to seventy percent (70%) of the base salary for a California Superior Court Judge, effective May 12, 2025, resulting in a 48.8% salary increase, for an annual salary of approximately \$171,309, with provide future salary adjustments to be effective annually in the pay period in which January 15th falls, and set the biweekly allowance for the Chair of the Board of Supervisors to 2% of salary; and
- b) Determine pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15378(b)(4) that the above actions are government fiscal activities which do not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment, and are therefore not a project subject to environmental review.

Summary Text:

Human Resources has been revising management and executive compensation over the last few years to secure pay equity, an objective and transparent system, and a market-based approach involving data of comparable counties. In April, June, and then December 2024, the Board approved adjustments to manager and appointed department head salaries resulting from market salary surveys and an analysis of compaction between management levels. The last group to be evaluated are elected officials.

This report provides a comparative market analysis of elected official salaries as has been done for all managers and executive positions, an analysis of any compaction between these positions and the managers that they supervise, and an analysis of parity between the organization's top attorneys. Finally, it recommends changes to address the identified issues.

Background:

At the December 17, 2024 meeting, the Board approved certain salary adjustments in accordance with the effort to reevaluate management and appointed executive classifications and compensation. The goals of

the countywide effort included establishing a transparent and objective management classification and compensation system, aligning pay at or above the labor market median for similar positions at comparable counties, ensuring pay equity for incumbents performing similar work, and addressing internal compaction by providing appropriate differentials for increasing responsibility and accountability. County staff reported the results of a follow-up market salary study and recommended increases for jobs considered to be below the labor market median for similar work and/or to have a compaction issue with lower level management salary ranges.

At that December meeting, the Human Resources Director recommended that the Board evaluate, at a subsequent meeting, similar data related to the County’s compensation of elected department heads (Auditor-Controller, Clerk-Recorder-Assessor, District Attorney, Sheriff, and Treasurer-Tax Collector) and other elected officials.

Market Comparison

For appointed department heads and other managers, the County looks at a comparable market for non-elected management positions: the counties of Marin, Monterey, Orange, San Luis Obispo, San Diego, Santa Cruz, Sonoma, and Ventura. Efforts are made to increase the top of the salary range to at least the market median top salary where the County’s salary falls below the median.

As part of the management compensation changes, new narrow band salary ranges were created with the top of the range at the market median. Incumbent appointed department directors were placed at a point in the new range 2.5% above their previous salary (regardless of years of service), but will have the opportunity to move toward the top of the new range based on continued years of service and an annual performance-based merit increases (0% to 7.5%) for satisfactory or better performance.

The results of a similar analysis for elected officials, using the same labor market (Marin, Monterey, Orange, San Luis Obispo, San Diego, Santa Cruz, Sonoma, and Ventura counties), are included in Attachment A and reflected in the Summary Chart below:

Elected Official	Current County Salary	Market Median Top of Range	Market Comparison
Auditor Controller	\$ 252,947	\$ 267,487	-5.4%
Clerk/Recorder/Assessor	\$ 250,338	\$ 251,189	-0.3%
District Attorney	\$ 275,910	\$ 331,876	-16.9%
Sheriff	\$ 267,650	\$ 307,459	-12.9%
Treasurer Tax Collector	\$ 250,338	\$ 253,884	-1.4%
Supervisor	\$ 115,151	\$ 171,309	-32.8%

Compaction Analysis

For appointed department heads, best practice is to maintain a differential at the top of the salary range above the top salary of the next level of management, their assistant department heads. The County establishes this as at least a 10% (attorneys, safety) to 15% (other professions) above the assistant director level to account for the higher levels of responsibility and accountability of their higher position. If the 10-15% differential erodes, Human Resources will recommend salary increases for the department head to keep the appropriate differential. This would be considered on the lower end of standard practice, and some agencies set their differentials higher.

The following chart shows a similar compaction analysis for each of the five elected department heads:

Elected Official/Director	Salary (Top)	Assistant Department Director	Asst Salary (Top)	Diff
Auditor-Controller	\$ 252,947	Assistant Auditor-Controller with CPA / Chief Deputy Controller with CPA	\$ 224,480	12.7%
Clerk-Recorder-Assessor	\$ 250,338	Chief Deputy Clerk-Recorder-Assessor / Chief Deputy Registrar of Voters	\$ 213,791	17.1%
District Attorney	\$ 275,909	Assistant District Attorney	\$ 275,556	0.1%
Sheriff	\$ 267,650	Undersheriff	\$ 265,757	0.7%
Treasurer-Tax Collector-Public Administrator	\$ 250,338	Assistant Treasurer-Tax Collector-Public Administrator*	\$ 213,791	17.1%

*The Assistant Treasurer-Tax Collector-Public Administrator may be eligible for 5% CPA special pay, not included here, which could affect compaction.

HR notes that what we see in the chart above related to compaction (lack of differential above subordinates) closely mirrors what we see in the market analysis (salaries below median).

Attorney Parity Analysis

The Board of Supervisors has previously expressed a goal of providing approximate salary parity between the County’s top attorneys: County Counsel, Public Defender, and District Attorney. The regular salary adjustment mechanisms for these positions are different, however, resulting in pay differences: the appointed County Counsel and Public Defender salaries are based on the general wage increase provided to all managers and annual performance-based merit increases determined by the Board of Supervisors and County Executive Officer, respectively. There is not an annual performance review for elected officials as they are accountable primarily to the voters. The District Attorney’s salary was set in March 2023 and increased by CPI, similar to all elected department heads. Therefore, it is necessary to occasionally revisit that goal of parity and consider adjustments.

As a result of these different processes, there is not currently approximate parity between the salaries for these positions. The top of the existing range for appointed attorneys is \$323,220, which is the median top of the range for County Counsel in our labor market. While neither the County Counsel nor Public Defender is currently paid at the top of their salary range, both incumbents will have the opportunity to move toward the top of the range based on continued service and annual performance evaluation.

Attorney	Existing Salary Range
Public Defender	\$248,630 - \$323,220
County Counsel	\$248,630 - \$323,220
District Attorney	No Range

Benchmarking Elected Officials to State Judge Salary

Human Resources has also noted a growing trend to index the salaries of county boards of supervisors to a percentage of the base salary for a California Superior Court Judge, which is set pursuant to Government Code

Section 68203, and most recently published at \$244,727. For example, amongst our comparison agencies, the County of Orange’s board salaries are set at 80%, the County of Ventura and County of Monterey board salaries are set at 70%, San Luis Obispo County just recently indexed at 50% (which includes planned increases to get to that point), and Marin County indexes to 60% plus a local CPI adjustment. Staff are also anecdotally aware of other agencies that use this measure including: County of Los Angeles (100%), County Riverside (80%), the County of Santa Clara (80%), and the County of Alameda (80%). A number of cities are also following this methodology for salaries for city councilmembers (see Los Angeles, San Diego, Santa Ana, Palo Alto, etc.).

Agency	Percent
County of Orange	80%
County of Ventura	70%
County of Monterey	70%
County of SLO (phased increases)	50%
County of Marin	60% + CPI
County of LA	80%
County of Riverside	80%
County of Santa Clara	80%
County of Alameda	80%
County of San Mateo (for next elections)	80%
County of Contra Costa	65%

Staff note that 70% of the salary of a judge is equal to \$171,309 which is equivalent to the market median salary as explained above. This provides another indicator the Board of Supervisors may wish to consider in setting Board salaries.

Finally, staff note that the top of the salary range for the Chief of Staff for a Member of the Board of Supervisors is currently 27.8% greater than the salary of the Board Member that the Chief of Staff reports to.

Human Resources Recommendations

Human Resources recommends the following path forward.

Elected Department Head Salaries

Staff recommends that the County create elected department head salary ranges, similar to other management classes, with 6 steps at 5% apart and set the top of the range at market median except for Clerk-Recorder-Assessor and Treasurer-Tax Collector which will be set at the same salary range as Auditor-Controller to maintain historic equivalence. Staff further recommend setting objective criteria for range placement as follows: placement of newly elected department heads will be at Step 1 upon initial assumption of office, except that a newly elected department head who comes directly from County employment will be placed at that step within the range that provides at least a 5% increase, up to the range maximum. This is consistent with various rules about promotional salary placement countywide. Movement within the salary range will

occur thereafter at one salary step for each additional consecutive year in office. For current incumbents, placement will be based on current tenure in office.

Position	Range Min	Range Max	Incumbent Placement (May 2025)	Resulting Increase
Auditor Controller	\$ 209,583	\$ 267,487	Step 6 (Max)	5.7%
Clerk/Recorder/Assessor	\$ 209,583	\$ 267,487	Step 6 (Max)	6.9%
District Attorney	\$ 260,034	\$ 331,876	Step 4	9.1%
Sheriff	\$ 240,902	\$ 307,459	Step 6 (Max)	14.9%
Treasurer Tax Collector	\$ 209,583	\$ 267,487	Step 6 (Max)	6.9%

These increases will not only align these positions with the labor market, but will also ensure appropriate differentials above their subordinates.

To meet the goal of parity, staff recommends that the Public Defender and County Counsel salaries be set with the top of the range at the same rate as the District Attorney: \$255,289 - \$331,876. This will increase the top of the range for the appointed attorneys, resulting in a 2.7% salary increase for them.

Elected Board of Supervisors Salaries

As noted above, salaries for the Elected Board of Supervisors lag significantly behind the comparative market. Their current salary is equal to what an entry or journey-level professional might earn in the County organization, yet Supervisors have significantly greater scope, scale, and responsibility in enacting their duties, and their decisions have multi-million dollar impacts countywide. Salaries of Members of the Board are currently set by ordinance of the Board themselves; currently they receive a salary established in May 2023 which has been increased each October based on the urban consumer price index for the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim area. As noted, the County’s compensation for Board of Supervisors Members falls significantly below the median of our comparison counties. In fact, the County’s salary is significantly lower than the comparable salaries in all our comparison counties except for San Luis Obispo.

While elected service is different from County management positions in many ways, elected service on the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors is typically a full-time job. Like other forms of employment, the salary makes a difference in candidates’ ability to run for and hold office while supporting their families. It may be in the best interest of the community to better align these salaries with reference to objective data points.

The median Supervisor salary in our market comparison is \$171,309. This is 70% of the salary of a Superior Court Judge, a common index. The County of Santa Barbara’s current salary of \$115,151 is 32.8% below median and about 47% below the salary of a judge. In addition, the Board Member’s Chief of Staff makes 27.8% more than the Board Member at top step.

Human Resources recommends that the Board consider an ordinance to set salaries of Members of the Board of Supervisors to seventy percent (70%) of the base salary for a California Superior Court Judge which is also the median compensation for a Member of the Board of Supervisors in our management survey agencies. This would require adjustment of 48.8% to the current rate.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Budgeted: No.

In FY 2024-25, funding was set aside to cover the General Fund share of proposed management classification and compensation adjustments and the balance of those funds are sufficient to cover the fiscal impact of these recommended actions through the remainder of the current fiscal year. In FY 2025-26, the proposed salary adjustments will be included in each department's requested budget, and subject to Board approval through the budget development process.

Fiscal Analysis:

Narrative: If approved, salary increases would be effective May 12, 2025, resulting in an approximate cost of \$105,000 in FY 2024-25. The annualized cost of these salary increases for Elected Department Heads and officials would be \$629,200.

The cost increase of 2.7% to the County Counsel and Public Defender is \$3,900 for the current fiscal year, with an annualized increase of \$23,450.

Pension Impact: The approval of salary and benefit increases should include an explanation of the financial impact that the proposed change will have on the long-term "funding status" of the county employees' retirement system. Santa Barbara County Employees' Retirement System (SBCERS) makes certain actuarial assumptions regarding salaries in determining the funding status of the retirement plan. SBCERS estimates a general wage inflation component of 3.00% per year, plus a longevity and promotion component of between 0.38% and 4.75% for General employees and between 0.75% and 6% for safety members, depending on years of service. It is not expected that increases will exactly meet these assumptions in any one year. Rather, these assumptions represent the net effect over long stretches of time (20-30 years). Variation from one year to another can have an impact to the overall plan funding.

Provided actual salary growth does not exceed SBCERS assumptions over the long term and the County makes regular pension contributions on the actual salaries granted, absent other negative factors, the County should continue to see progress towards fully funding the plan. SBCERS conducts a review of its salary assumptions every three years as part of an actuarial experience study. The study and resulting assumption changes adopted by SBCERS serve as a control that ensures the wage growth assumptions used to value the plan does not materially differ from actual wage growth over time.

Increases proposed herein will, in the aggregate, exceed this actuarial assumed increase of 3% per year (compounded annually) resulting in actuarial losses to the funding status of the plan that will be netted against possible future year gains, losses and a variety of other factors including investment results, general inflation, and changes in member population demographics like mortality and gender.

Special Instructions:

Return one copy of the approved Salary Resolution Amendment, Amendment to the Compensation and Benefit Resolution for Elected Department Heads, and approved Ordinance to Human Resources attention: Kristy Schmidt, Human Resources Director and HRBLCoordinator@countyofsb.org

Attachments:

Attachment A – Survey of Salaries for Elected Officials

Attachment B – Amendment to the Salary Resolution

Attachment C – Compensation and Benefits Resolution for Elected Department Heads (clean copy)

Attachment D – Compensation and Benefits Resolution for Elected Department Heads (track changes)

Attachment E – Ordinance Setting Compensation and Benefits for Members of the Board of Supervisors (clean copy)

Attachment F – Ordinance Setting Compensation and Benefits for Members of the Board of Supervisors (track changes)

Authored by:

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cc:

Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer

Rachel Van Mullem, County Counsel

Tracy Macuga, Public Defender

Members of the Board of Supervisors

Elected Department Heads