

Commissioners Compensation Committee
109 Market Street, Room 106, Denton, Maryland

Minutes
October 23, 2025

Present: Board Chair, Rob Willoughby, Members, Dennis Farina, Sue Simmons, Cindy Towers, C. Tolbert Rowe, and David Kibler

At 3:00 p.m. the meeting was called to order. All members were present. Each member introduced themselves and shared a brief background. All are residents of Caroline County with a strong commitment to public service and community involvement. Rob Willoughby serves as the Director of Administrative Services for Caroline County Public Schools. C. Tolbert Rowe is a loan officer with Bay Capital Mortgage and a former member of the Caroline County Board of Education. Cindy Towers is a retired county employee with 36 years of service in Emergency Medical Services and Risk Management. David Kibler is a former law enforcement officer and town manager who is now retired. Dennis Farina is a local attorney with extensive experience in community and public service. Sue Simmons used to be the Director of Recreation and Parks for Caroline County and has been involved in youth and community programs for many years.

Chair Willoughby opened the discussion by reviewing the Commission's purpose, which is to evaluate the current compensation for the County Commissioners and develop a recommendation that is both fair and fiscally responsible. He noted that Caroline County often compares itself to similar rural counties such as Somerset and Garrett when reviewing pay levels.

Ms. Simmons suggested looking at the number of hours Commissioners work and what those hours would amount to if they were paid at standard hourly rates. She shared that if Commissioners average around 20 hours a week, a rate of \$20 an hour would equal about \$20,800 a year, \$25 an hour would equal about \$26,000, and \$30 an hour would come to roughly \$31,200. She said that current salaries are well below that range and that better pay could help attract a wider pool of candidates beyond retirees.

Mr. Rowe said the level of service the Commissioners provide certainly justifies reviewing compensation and benefits. He noted that family health coverage can cost around \$30,000 a year compared to about \$15,000 for individual coverage and that while health benefits can be politically sensitive, the group should still review them closely to understand the full picture.

Chair Willoughby said the current \$1,000 difference in pay between the President and the other Commissioners should stay in place for now since it has been the long-standing practice.

Mr. Kibler said Commissioners are often available to the public nearly full-time and are deeply involved in local events and concerns, which should be reflected in their pay.

Mr. Farina shared that Caroline County's salaries are about \$6,000 lower than nearby Eastern Shore counties and pointed out that with only three Commissioners, each one carries a heavier workload than counties with five-member boards. He said salaries around \$30,000 a year seem appropriate and suggested a gradual increase over the next term.

Mr. Rowe and Mr. Kibler agreed that a phased approach would be reasonable both from a financial and public standpoint. Mr. Rowe suggested starting around \$21,000 and working up to \$30,000 by the end of the term. Mr. Kibler said starting a little higher, around \$24,000 or \$25,000, with smaller annual increases would make sense as well.

Mr. Farina noted it has been about 16 years since the last increase and that the Commissioners' responsibilities have grown more demanding over time. Ms. Towers added that state mandates apply equally to all counties, big or small, which makes the workload especially challenging for smaller jurisdictions like Caroline.

After further discussion, the Commission reached a consensus on the following recommendation: The annual salary for members of the Caroline County Board of Commissioners should begin at \$24,000, with an annual increase of \$2,000 for the next three years. This would bring the salary to \$30,000 by the fourth year of the term.

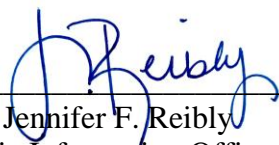
The Commission also agreed that the President of the Board should continue to receive an additional \$1,000 per year above the base salary. Members agreed to continue reviewing health care participation and costs before finalizing the written report.

Chair Willoughby asked Ms. Reibly to draft a written recommendation to be prepared to reflect the agreed salary structure and annual increase schedule, along with notes on benefits and any other related items for the final report. He thanked Ms. Reibly for putting together such a detailed packet, which allowed the board to have the resources to make their decision.

The next meetings were scheduled for:

- Thursday, November 13, 2025, at 3:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, November 18, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. (tentative for Commissioner review and approval of the draft report)

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.



Jennifer F. Reibly
Public Information Officer