



# Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

**7B**

Agenda Item #

**Requested Meeting Date:** December 16, 2025**Title of Item:** Set Elected Official Salaries for 2026

- ☒ REGULAR AGENDA  
☐ CONSENT AGENDA  
☐ INFORMATION ONLY

**Action Requested:**

- ☐ Approve/Deny Motion  
☒ Adopt Resolution (attach draft)

☐ Direction Requested☐ Discussion Item☐ Hold Public Hearing\**\*provide copy of hearing notice that was published***Submitted by:**

Bobbie Danielson, HR Director

**Department:**

HR Dept.

**Presenter (Name and Title):**

David Minke, County Administrator, or Bobbie Danielson, HR Director

**Estimated Time Needed:**

3-5 minutes

**Summary of Issue:**

Minnesota Statutes outlines the process to set the salary for the following elected officials. Please consider the incumbent's experience, skills, qualifications, staffing, budget, and performance when setting their 2026 salary.

The internal wage pattern settlement for 2026 is "6% within range movement".

External market comparisons are also included. It should be noted the external market numbers are "2025" data. For example, the Sheriff's 2025 salary is \$139,435 and the average of our comparison counties is \$147,810 in 2025, so his salary is 6% below the average in 2025. The Recorder's 2025 salary is \$88,200 and the average of our comparison counties is \$108,414, so her salary is 23% below the average in 2025. With a 6% increase on 1/1/2026, the Sheriff's salary will increase to \$147,801.10 and the Recorder's salary will increase to \$93,492. The County Attorney's and County Treasurer's information is also included in the attached materials.

Two items for awareness: (1) a 6% increase will place the County Attorney above the Grade 21 maximum on 1/1/2026. We believe this is appropriate given market conditions, 29+ years with Aitkin County, and because elected officials are excluded from the pay equity report and related calculations. (2) There are no external comparisons available for the County Treasurer in our comparison county group. Internally, the Treasurer's requested 2026 salary of \$117,077 is consistent with similarly situated employees in Grades 13–15 with comparable longevity. Proposed 2026 salaries are outlined in the attached resolution.

**Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:****Recommended Action/Motion:**

Motion to adopt the Resolution setting elected officials salaries, effective 1/1/2026, as presented.

**Financial Impact:**

Is there a cost associated with this request?

☒ Yes☐ No

What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$

Is this budgeted?

☐ Yes☐ No

Please Explain:

6% increase to the Recorder, Sheriff, and County Attorney. 9.34% increase to the Treasurer. (Refer to resolution for actual numbers.)

**Resolution #20251216-xxx 2026 Elected Officials Salaries**

**WHEREAS** Minnesota Statutes §385.373 outlines the process to set the salary for the county treasurer and assigns that responsibility to the county board;

**WHEREAS** Minnesota Statutes §386.015 outlines the process to set the salary for the county recorder and assigns that responsibility to the county board;

**WHEREAS** Minnesota Statutes §387.20 outlines the process to set the salary for the county sheriff and assigns that responsibility to the county board;

**WHEREAS** Minnesota Statutes §388.18 outlines the process to set the salary for the county attorney and assigns that responsibility to the county board;

**WHEREAS** the elected officers above have submitted information to the county board requesting increase in salary and provided supporting information; and

**WHEREAS** the county board has had the opportunity to consider the experience, qualifications, and performance of the elected officers.

**BE IT RESOLVED**, the Aitkin County Board of Commissioners set the 2026 annual salaries of the Aitkin County Elected Officials as shown below:

COUNTY TREASURER	LORI GRAMS	\$117,077.00
COUNTY RECORDER	TARA SNYDER	\$93,492.00
COUNTY SHERIFF	DANIEL GUIDA	\$147,801.10
COUNTY ATTORNEY	JAMES RATZ	\$172,517.12

Adopted this 16<sup>th</sup> Day of December, 2025 By The Aitkin County Board of Commissioners.

Attest:

---

J. Mark Wedel  
County Board Chair

---

David J. Minke, County Administrator  
Clerk to the County Board

**STATE OF MINNESOTA}  
COUNTY OF AITKIN}**



# SETTING ELECTED OFFICIAL (DEPT HEAD) SALARIES FOR 2026

December 16, 2025 Board  
Agenda



## 2025 ACTUAL SALARY VS. 2026 REQUESTED SALARY (INTERNAL PATTERN IS 6% WITHIN RANGE MOVEMENT)

### 2025 Actual Salary

Attorney	\$162,752
Treasurer	\$107,077
Recorder	\$88,200
Sheriff	\$139,435

### 2026 Requested Salary

Attorney	\$172,517.12 (6% increase)
Treasurer	\$117,077.00 (9.34% inc.)
Recorder	\$93,492.00 (6% increase)
Sheriff	\$147,801.10 (6% increase)



# OUR 7 COMPARISON COUNTIES



All contiguous  
counties, except  
St. Louis County.



Setting salaries for elected officials requires a balancing of many factors. There are laws imposing requirements on what public employers *must do* or *cannot do* in the process of setting salaries for the elected officials.

Elected officials are unique from general county employees in that they are, at a minimum, exempt or excluded from coverage under the Minnesota Public Employees Labor Relations Act, the Minnesota Pay Equity Act, the Fair Labor Standards Act, and the County's personnel policies in large part.

By statute, County Boards are given the general power to control the finances of the County (§[375.18](#), Subd. 2) and the Board is responsible for setting the salary for each of the County's elected officials, but there are special considerations that have to be taken into account when dealing with the salaries (and budgets) for elected officials. **Their salaries are to be determined based upon the duties and responsibilities of the office, and skills, qualifications and performance of the official in question.**

## THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Duties
- Responsibilities of the Office
- Skills and Qualifications
- Performance



A court may set aside the County Board's salary decision if it finds the Board acted in an arbitrary, capricious, oppressive, or unreasonable manner or disregarded the responsibilities of the office or the officer's experience, qualifications, and performance.

### **How does a salary appeal work?**

Minnesota statutes provide elected officials the right to seek judicial review of the County Board's salary resolution. An official may appeal to District Court, claiming the Board's decision meets the above legal standards for being improper.

The court may require written submissions and may decide the appeal on those filings. If the court determines the Board acted improperly, it will issue an Order—such as setting an appropriate salary—and remand the matter to the County Board to take action consistent with that Order. The Board must comply with the court's directive. (The process for Sheriff is slightly different in that the court can impose a new salary rather than simply remanding the matter back to the Board for reconsideration.)

## **ELECTED OFFICIALS' SALARY APPEAL RIGHTS**

Judicial Review of County Board  
Salary Decisions



# YEARS OF SERVICE SKILLS, QUALIFICATIONS, AND PERFORMANCE

## Years of Service with Aitkin County

Attorney	29+ years
Treasurer	25+ years
Recorder	8+ years
Sheriff	31+ years

## Years of Service in Current Position

Attorney	18 years, 11 months
Treasurer	18 years, 11 months
Recorder	2 years, 11 months
Sheriff	6 years, 11 months

All elected officials have the skills and qualifications required to perform the essential functions of the position. Commissioners can make an individual assessment of each official's performance.



# BUDGET AND STAFFING

## 2026 Budget (preliminary)

Attorney	\$1,561,473
Treasurer	\$ 378,436
Recorder	\$ 458,651
Sheriff	\$7,992,327

## 2025 Staff #, excluding elected official ( Snapshot 'count' as of 12/3/25.)

Attorney	10
Treasurer	2
Recorder	3
Sheriff	70



# EXTERNAL MARKET COMPARISONS, 2025 DATA

2025 Data	Aitkin	Cass	Crow Wing	Kanabec	Mille Lacs	Pine	Carlton	Itasca	AVG 2025 Excluding Aitkin Co.	Aitkin County 2025 +/- the AVG
Attorney	\$162,752.00	\$171,059.20	\$186,842.00	\$148,740.80	\$154,000.00	\$163,807.00	\$163,800.00	\$ 145,600.00	\$ 161,978.43	\$ 773.57
Treasurer	\$107,077.00	Combined	Combined	Combined	Combined	Combined	Combined	Combined	N/A	See below.
Aud/Treas	Not applicable; no combined job class exists for this position.									
Recorder	\$ 88,200.00	N/A	N/A	\$ 97,531.00	N/A	N/A	\$118,830.40	\$ 108,883.20	\$ 108,414.87	\$ (20,214.87)
Sheriff	\$139,435.00	\$148,304.00	\$158,209.00	\$137,716.80	\$145,600.00	\$148,894.00	\$161,387.20	\$ 134,561.70	\$ 147,810.39	\$ (8,375.39)

Our County Auditor position is now appointed.

Our usual comparison group does not include any County Treasurer positions. The counties listed below do have Treasurers, and their salary information is included for your review. If there are other counties you think we should look at, please feel free to share. I paged through the full AMC Minnesota County Directory to identify the counties below.

2025 Data	Grant Co.	Meeker Co.	Red Lake Co.	AVG 2025 Excluding Aitkin Co.	Aitkin County 2025 +/- the AVG
Treasurer	\$111,488.00	\$118,996.80	\$ 87,048.00	\$105,844.27	\$ 1,232.73



# INTERNAL MARKET COMPARISONS, 2025 DATA

The County Attorney, Recorder, and Sheriff are requesting a 6% salary increase.

This is consistent with internal pattern settlements across the organization.

The County Treasurer is requesting a 9.34% salary increase. Letter attached. Note, for 2010, 2011, and 2013, the incumbent's salary increase was 0% due to budget constraints.



## AITKIN COUNTY TREASURER

Aitkin County Government Center  
307 2<sup>nd</sup> Street NW, Room 119  
Aitkin, MN 56431

treas@co.aitkin.mn.us  
Phone: 218-927-7325

December 1, 2025

Aitkin County Board of Commissioners

Based on responsibilities of the County Treasurer Office, duties, skills, qualifications, experience and performance, I am requesting a salary of \$117,077.00 as of 1/1/2026.

With the years of experience I have with Aitkin County, and the wage scale, I feel this is an appropriate salary figure. I began in the Auditors office July 2000 and became the County Treasurer in January 2007.

In addition, for the years 2010, 2011 and 2013, the salary increase of the elected officials at that time was zero, due to budget constraints, while other staff received increases.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lori Grams  
Aitkin County Treasurer

**2026 Additional budget impact.  
\$4,117.05 (includes increased salary,  
PERA, Soc. Sec., Medicare)**



# INTERNAL COMPARISON, COUNTY TREASURER

## “A CLOSER LOOK”

### Closest Internal Comparisons

We reviewed all Grade 13–15 employees (14 incumbents) and compared their county longevity and position tenure to the Treasurer. Employees with the closest position tenure average **\$113,527 in 2025** and will be paid between \$111k and \$127k in 2026, so the Treasurer’s request of **\$117,077** is deemed reasonable when compared internally.

### County Treasurer is highlighted

TIME SERVED IN CURRENT POSITION	Months	2025 ANNUAL AMOUNT
11 YEARS, 8 MONTHS	140.00	\$ 105,527.44
15 YEARS, 7 MONTHS	187.00	\$ 110,771.44
17 YEARS, 10 MONTHS	214.00	\$ 114,791.50
18 YEARS, 11 MONTHS	227.00	\$ 107,077.00
24 YEARS, 8 MONTHS	296.00	\$ 123,020.43

Avg (excluding incumbent)  
**\$113,527 (2025 data)**



# RESOLUTION COMING TO THE COUNTY BOARD

To be presented on  
December 16, 2025

## Resolution #20251216-xxx 2026 Elected Officials Salaries

**WHEREAS** Minnesota Statutes §385.373 outlines the process to set the salary for the county treasurer and assigns that responsibility to the county board;

**WHEREAS** Minnesota Statutes §386.015 outlines the process to set the salary for the county recorder and assigns that responsibility to the county board;

**WHEREAS** Minnesota Statutes §387.20 outlines the process to set the salary for the county sheriff and assigns that responsibility to the county board;

**WHEREAS** Minnesota Statutes §388.18 outlines the process to set the salary for the county attorney and assigns that responsibility to the county board;

**WHEREAS** the elected officers above have submitted information to the county board requesting increase in salary and provided supporting information; and

**WHEREAS** the county board has had the opportunity to consider the experience, qualifications, and performance of the elected officers.

**BE IT RESOLVED**, the Aitkin County Board of Commissioners set the 2026 annual salaries of the Aitkin County Elected Officials as shown below:

COUNTY TREASURER	LORI GRAMS	\$117,077.00
COUNTY RECORDER	TARA SNYDER	\$93,492.00
COUNTY SHERIFF	DANIEL GUIDA	\$147,801.10
COUNTY ATTORNEY	JAMES RATZ	\$172,517.12

Adopted this 16<sup>th</sup> Day of December, 2025 By The Aitkin County Board of Commissioners.

Attest:

Please contact David Minke, Bobbie Danielson, or the elected officials if you have any questions or need additional information before the December 16, 2025 Board meeting. Thank you.