

**Minutes of the
Independent Salary Commission
Special Meeting
November 21, 2025
Santa Fe, New Mexico**

This meeting of the Independent Salary Commission was called to order at approximately 1:04 p.m. by Chair Clifford M. Rees on the above-cited date at the Santa Fe County Administration Building, Johnson St. conference room, 240 Grant Avenue, Santa Fe, NM.

This meeting was conducted as hybrid with people attending in person and on line.

A quorum was achieved with the following members present:

Members Present:

Anna Hamilton
Chris Graeser (virtually)
Cliff Rees
Laura Liswood
Gus Martinez

Staff Present:

Valerie Aghaei Park
Walker Boyd
Gabriel C. Bustos

1. Approval of Agenda.

The proposed agenda was adopted by unanimous vote following a motion by Commissioner Hamilton, seconded by Commissioner Liswood.

2. Approval of November 14, 2025, Commission Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve minutes by Commissioner Hamilton, second by Commissioner Liswood. Unanimously adopted.

3. Presentation By Valerie Park on Information Requested by the Commissioners at the November 14, 2025 Commission Meeting

Chair Rees requested that Sandoval County's population be corrected in a table prepared by Valerie Park to accompany the Commission's salary recommendations. (The table reflected a low population #; Chair Rees and Valerie agreed to estimate the 2025 population based on the 2020 decennial census).

There was discussion of the current salaries paid to County elected officials as compared with other Class A counties. Commissioner Liswood noted that Santa Fe County pays its sheriff the least of all Class A counties.

Members of the Commission agreed that the recommended salary for Sheriff (and other elected officials) should be based on the number of employees the official supervises but should also not be significantly higher than the salary grade for the official's highest-ranking deputy.

4. Final recommended salaries and process for presentation to the Board of County Commissioners (Action item)

As in previous meetings, the Commission separated members of the Board of County Commissioners from other elected county officials for purposes of discussing and recommending salaries.

Commissioner Hamilton argued that the Assessor should be paid the same as the Clerk and Treasurer. Commissioner Hamilton said that the Sheriff should be paid somewhat more than the other three elected officials.

Commissioner Martinez presented findings from research on elected officials in other Four Corners states (Utah, Colorado, Arizona). He noted that Class A counties in these states paid their elected sheriffs significantly more than New Mexico counties pay their sheriffs. Some Commissioners wondered whether other states could offer a meaningful comparison for elected official salaries.

The Commission further discussed the recommended salary for the County Sheriff. There was discussion about the salary paid to the Chief of the City of Santa Fe's police department (\$176,000).

Commissioner Hamilton noted that the mean average of all Class A County Sheriff's salaries is \$170,000.

The Commission moved on to discuss the remaining elected officials. Motion by Chair Rees that the Commission recommend the Clerk, Treasurer, and Assessor be paid a salary of \$142,500. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Graeser. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Martinez moved that the Commission recommend that the County Sheriff be paid \$170,000. Commissioner Hamilton seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

The Commission discussed salary for the probate judge. Noting that the Probate Judge is a part-time position, and that it is often sought by estate law attorneys as a resume enhancer, the Commission agreed that the only adjustment to this salary (which was last fixed in 2018) should be to account for inflation. Commissioner Hamilton moved that the Commission recommend the

position of Probate Judge be paid a salary of \$42,000. Chair Rees seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The Commission moved on to County Commissioner positions. Chair Rees noted the current pay for County Commissioners is currently \$46,907.55, according to Resolution No. 2024-174.

Commissioner Hamilton was formerly a member of the Board of County Commissioners, and she argued that in her experience the position was paid as if it were a half-time position, but in fact required her to commit much more than half of her time. Commissioner Graeser said that he supported a recommendation that significantly raised County Commissioners' salaries.

Commissioner Graeser moved that the Commission recommend that members of the Board of County Commissioners be paid an annual salary of \$71,250. Commissioner Martinez seconded the motion. There was discussion on the motion. Chair Rees signaled his intent to oppose the motion, saying that a \$71,250 salary was not politically feasible. Chair Rees made a motion to table, which was seconded by Commissioner Liswood. The motion failed, with Commissioners Graeser, Martinez, and Hamilton voting against. The discussion returned to the original motion. Commissioner Martinez discussed the importance of the decisions made by members of the County Commission as informing his support for recommending an increase in the salary. Staff noted that compensation for employees generally does not consider performance; it only considers qualifications and experience, with performance addressed by discipline, performance improvement plans, etc.

Commissioner Graeser amended his motion to recommend that members of the Board of County Commissioners be paid a salary of \$63,316. This number, he said, is one half of the salary paid to a department director. Commissioner Martinez consented to the amendment. The motion passed unanimously.

The Commission's discussion returned to the Assessor's salary. Staff noted that under statute, the Assessor may receive incentive pay for becoming a certified appraiser. *See* NMSA 1978, § 4-39-4 (2023). Commissioner Graeser moved that the Commission's recommendations state that the Commission's recommended salaries be "with no other incentives." The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hamilton. The motion passed unanimously.

There was discussion of the process for preparing and revising written recommendations. Chair Rees said that he would have Staff circulate his draft recommendations, and staff would circulate those recommendations to the other members of the Commission for comment and feedback. Chair Rees encouraged all members of the Commission to attend the Board of County Commissioners meeting on December 15, 2025, where the recommendations would be presented.

5. Public comment (Limited to 3 minutes)

No members of the public were present.

6. Confirm Date and Time of the Next Commission Meeting (November 21, 2025, 1 PM)

The Commission agreed that there would be no further meetings of the Commission in 2025.

Discussion of agenda items for the December 15, 2025, Board of County Commissioners meeting. Discussion of further information requests to Human Resources and format of written recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners.

8. Adjournment. (Action Item).

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Hamilton. Commissioner Martinez seconded. Motion carries 5-0 (Graeser absent).

Meeting adjourned at approximately 4:00 p.m.

Approved by:

Cliff Rees, Chair

Respectfully submitted by:

Walker Boyd, County Attorney