

Commissioner Pay Analysis

1. From FY1997 to FY2000, County Commissioners were paid \$630 per month and were reimbursed for all travel expenses when they submitted documentation for their travel. The chairperson was paid slightly more and still is. Each commissioner was responsible for paying his/her own social security and medicare premiums, as appropriate.
2. From FY2000 to FY2003, County Commissioners were paid \$630 per month plus \$300 per month for in-county travel expenses. Out-of-county travel expenses continued to be reimbursed as before when appropriate documentation was submitted. Commissioners decided to make this change because some were asking for and receiving reimbursement and others weren't because of the nuisance of keeping and submitting records. Thus, recordkeeping became necessary only if a commissioner wanted to deduct in-county travel expenses – primarily mileage – from taxable income reported to the IRS. Each commissioner still paid his/her own social security and medicare premiums as appropriate.
3. Beginning in FY 2003, when the IRS determined that County Commissioners must be considered county employees, we were all became part-time county employees. As far as I can determine, approximately \$3,000 of the salary we receive each year is for in-county travel expenses. The rest is considered pay and is raised each year by the same cost of living increase provided to other county employees. A salary spreadsheet for this year, obtained from Finance, also shows us receiving 401K contributions. I am not aware that we receive that benefit and it may be a mistake in the spreadsheet.
4. Over the past six years, county commissioner pay has increased by 14.1%; all of that increase has occurred during the past four years. Our in-county travel allowance appears to have decreased by \$800 per year since FY2002. I have estimated the amount of the travel allowance by figuring out what portion of our salaries actually received the COLA last year.
5. During the past six years (FY2000 - FY2006), salaries and benefits, excluding the cost of health insurance and longevity pay, of 349 employees who were employed for that whole period of time by Dare County, increased 60%. In addition, IRS mileage reimbursement rates went from 31 cents per mile at the beginning of FY2000 to 48.5 cents per mile at the beginning of FY2006 – a 56.5% increase that reflects the increasing cost of operating an automobile.
6. This analysis is part of the reason that I believe we need an upward adjustment in our salaries and travel allowances. I believe that we also need to take a hard look at our workload and recognize that commissioners who work for employers – other than themselves – have a very difficult time taking on responsibilities which would require them to take leave without pay during the normal work day. This has consistently tended to create a situation where these commissioners are faced with a substantial loss of income when they must take leave without pay or they simply miss meetings and events that might be important for them to attend. I believe an increase in pay would help us to level out the workload of the Board by making it possible for everyone to take on more of the obligations that occur during the normal workday.