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NEWS

Kitsap's top public officials receive raises

By [Tyler Shuey](#) • February 21, 2023 10:19 am



Editor's note: Some government agencies did not fully respond to Public Records requests as required by state law—even after as long as five weeks. We note that here with hopes that public pressure will encourage them to provide the information.

While most people in the private sector are getting raises in the 3 percent range some in government are getting annual increases of up to \$23,000.

In Poulsbo, the schools chief received an \$11,000 raise. Two others in the North Kitsap School District received increases of around \$10,000, as is the chief of the Poulsbo Fire Department.

On Bainbridge Island two school administrators led the way with hikes of \$23,000 and \$19,000, while the superintendent received an \$11,000 raise. In Kitsap County, three leaders at Olympic College are receiving raises in the area of \$14,000 a year.

The schools superintendent in South Kitsap received a \$12,000 raise this school year. The fire chief's raise also is \$12,000, while two deputy chiefs earned raises of \$10,000 each.

Exact figures weren't provided, but the Port Orchard police chief received at least an \$11,500 raise and at the most over \$13,000. Two others received raises of over \$10,000 a year, and the mayor about \$9,000.

Compare those to Gov. Jay Inslee, whose annual raise is about \$8,000 to \$198,257, effective July 21. State Attorney General Bob Ferguson did much better than that, with an increase of \$11,500 to \$186,667.

But the biggest increases in state government are for Supreme Court. Chief Justice Steven C. Gonzalez is getting almost a \$16,000 raise to \$243,329 while fellow justices are getting more than \$15,500 raises to \$239,868.

North Kitsap

In the North Kitsap School District, the top earner is superintendent Laurynn Evans, whose salary for the 2021-22 school year was \$202,000. All NKSD staff received a 5.5 percent raise for this school year as decided by the state legislature, which increased Evans' salary to \$213,000.

Jason Rhoads, executive director of finance, business and operations, made \$184,000 last school year. This school year, his salary was listed at \$194,120, but he resigned effective Feb. 3. Gwen Lyon, executive director of teaching and learning, along with Rachel Davenport, executive director of human resources and payroll, each made \$184,000 last school year and made \$194,120 this school year.

Chief Jim Gillard is the top earner at the Poulsbo Fire Department. In 2022, his salary was \$194,901. This year, he is set to make nearly \$10,000 more at \$204,646 due to cost of living adjustment increases. Next in line is deputy fire chief Jeff Russell, who made \$171,450 in 2022 and is set to make \$176,493 in 2023.

The city's top earner in 2022 was police chief Ron Harding at \$167,485 a year. At the start of this year, he received a 3 percent COLA increase to make it \$172,510. Assistant city administrator Deborah Booher's 2022 salary was \$157,870, and she will now make \$162,607.

Only regular city employees receive a step increase annually, not part-time employees, city Human Resources manager Deanna Kingery said. Additionally, per the city's collective bargaining agreements with the Teamsters and Police Guild, those employees get increases annually. The Police Guild consists of police officers and sergeants, while Teamsters consists of all other city employees except management, part-time or temporary employees.

North Kitsap Fire & Rescue's top earner in 2022 was chief William Smith at \$165,680. Smith retired at the beginning of February. Rich LaGrandeur, who was announced as the next fire chief, made \$162,367 in 2022 as assistant fire chief. His salary for 2023 has not yet been determined as his contract is being negotiated with NKF&R commissioners.

Kitsap County

The highest-paid public official in Kitsap County is Marty Cavalluzzi, president of Olympic College in Bremerton. The next raises at the college won't be done until July. But he received a \$14,400 raise last year and is now making \$254,000.

College presidents make from \$180,000 to \$590,000 a year, says salary.com

Two college vice presidents received similar raises. Ronald Ellison in administrative services is now making \$156,340, up from \$142,000; and Martin Cockroft in instruction is making \$152,533, up from \$139,000.

Dr. Gib Morrow, health officer, is the highest-paid official with the Kitsap Public Health District. He makes \$202,512 a year. KPHD administrator Keith Grellner is next at \$164,820. Both receive 2.5 percent raises in 2023.

Statewide, Morrow's salary compares at \$184,460 to \$289,628, according to salary.com

Regarding county salaries, it did not provide all of the information required by law for Public Records Requests. It did not provide names or raises. Overall, county employees are making \$3 million more in 2023 compared with 2022. And 71.5 percent of the county budget goes to personnel—or \$59.4 million.

There is one person who makes \$196,635; three who make \$180,619; five who make \$169,942; one who makes \$164,603; four who make \$169,234; and one who makes \$159,234.

"Names and compensation are not exempt from disclosure, and is posted by the state and many, many other local governments," Rowland Thompson of Allied Daily Newspapers, which provides legal advice, says in an email.

Rob Gelder, the Kitsap County commissioner who represents North Kitsap, made \$152,083 in 2022 and is set to make \$154,364 this year.

County commissioners adopted a compensation schedule for Commissioner Districts 1 and 2 for 2021-24 that established a salary in 2021 that is 7.5 percent more than that of the county assessor, auditor, clerk and treasurer's 2020 salary. That will increase 1.5 percent per year for 2022, 2023 and 2024. Commissioners can donate parts of their salary back to the county if they like.

To compare, county commissioners in Thurston County, which is just a little bigger than Kitsap, make \$146,685, which is 98 percent above the national average, statistics show.

Bainbridge Island

It's tough to tell who the highest-paid public official is since the Bainbridge Island Metro Parks and Recreation District did not respond to a Public Records Request.

For those who did respond, retiring BI Fire Department chief Hank Teran was the highest paid at \$214,368 a year. In that same department, deputy fire chief Jared Moravec made \$188,644.

According to salary.com, fire chiefs in this state usually make from \$72,000 to \$160,000 a year.

Ranking second in BI is city manager Blair King, who made \$202,279 last year.

Compared to other city managers serving communities with about 25,000 people in 2021: Mercer Island, \$219,517; Oak Harbor, \$171,780; and Moses Lake, \$167,168, according to Governmentsalaries.cc

The city did not provide what his next raise will be so he could be overtaken by school district superintendent Peter Bang-Knudsen, who made \$199,207 last school year, but was paid \$210,163 this school year. According to salary.com, high school superintendents make from \$150,222 to \$221,895 in the state.

Deputy superintendent Erin Murphy earns \$196,405, and Amii Thompson, executive director of Teaching and Learning for Elementary schools, made \$176,329. Thompson's raise this school year was \$23,046 and Murphy's 19,029.

Along with King, top-paid city employees include deputy city manager Ellen Schroer at \$153,437, Public Works director Chris Wierzbicki and Planning director Patricia Charnas, both at \$139,488, and police chief Joe Clark, who also made \$139,488.

Police chiefs in Washington state make from \$110,000 to \$140,000 a year, according to salary.com, which also says park directors in the state make up to \$83,763.

Port Orchard

Though the South Kitsap School District failed to provide the requested salary data, further research showed superintendent Tim Winter as the highest-paid member of the district at \$228,693. That amount reflected a nearly \$12,000 increase from the previous school year at \$216,771, which was also motivated by the state legislature's increase in school district wages.

South Kitsap Fire and Rescue's top earner is chief Jeff Faucett at \$212,196.84. Faucett's increase also was just over the \$12,000 mark, with his 2022 salary amounting to \$199,152. Next up for SKFR are the two deputy chiefs, Josh Hurguy and Doug Richards, who each earn \$190,963. Their salaries increased by over \$10,000 from 2022-23.

When it comes to the top earners in the city of Port Orchard, documents contained the ranges of hourly pay for employees rather than actual amounts. Furthermore, the city had previously provided annual and monthly amounts in budgets since 2017-18, but not for more-recent documents. The ranges take into account minimum and maximum hourly rates, totaling 52 weeks of 40-hour work.

With that in mind, the highest-paid city employee is police chief Matt Brown, whose pay ranges from \$151,278 to \$175,406. Looking just at minimum pay, that is an \$11,419 increase from the 2021-22 biennial budget, which shows Brown's pay ranged from \$139,859 to \$162,177. At the high end, the raise would have been in the neighborhood of \$13,000.

Receiving similar raises were the city's community development director, Nicholas Bond, and finance director, Noah Crocker, who are in the same pay range of \$141,003 to \$163,508. The previous budget had them at \$130,353 to \$151,174.

The only annual salary to be listed on the 2023-24 budget is Mayor Rob Putaansuu, who will be paid \$119,145 annually. The mayor's salary in previous budgets has been listed as monthly or even hourly. In the last budget, his salary was listed as hourly and came out to \$110,156.

Editor Steve Powell and reporters Elisha Meyer and Nancy Treder contributed to this report.