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Title: Additional Compensation for Successful Completion of IAAO (International Association of Assessing Officers) Regarding the Assessor's Office.

Presenters: Diana Stepan; Denise Cassel; Leo Barraza

Attachments: 1. [A. Page 18 of the Approved Los Alamos County Property Valuation Plan](#), 2. [B. Council Minutes from February 10, 2004 Regarding the Los Alamos County Assessor Valuation Agenda Documentation for the Los Alamos County Assessor Valuation Plan](#), 3. [C. Council Minutes from May 15, 2001](#), 4. [D. Property Valuation Fund 7-38-38.pdf](#)

Text

Title

Additional Compensation for Successful Completion of IAAO (International Association of Assessing Officers) Regarding the Assessor's Office.

Suggested Motion

I move that the Council approve the Assessor's request to implement a certification incentive program within the Assessor's Office for this year only.

Recommendation

The County Administrator recommends approval of the motion as presented.

Body

In January 2001, the Human Resources Division requested that Public Sector Personnel Consultants conduct an update to the Pay & Classification Study. In accordance with Rule 303, the Human Resources Division was required to conduct salary surveys at least on a bi-annual basis. Since they had implemented a new approach by going to a market study only one year earlier, they believed it would be prudent to conduct another Pay & Classification Study for FY2002 to substantiate past findings. As part of the update process, the consultant had recommended that the County dissolve an earlier program referred to as the "Administrative Guidelines for Incentive Pay". This program was designed to provide incentive pay for statutorily required certifications obtained by a small number of employees within the County. The program began in about 1988, and had not been updated since that time. The program identified only five departments and created a disparity with other departments who were not identified in the guidelines. In addition, when the County revised all the job descriptions in 2000, departments included the certification requirements into the minimum qualifications of the job descriptions. (This was to address cases where the County was financing the training/certification of the employee and then paying additional money for required credentials.) Because the County job descriptions were revised, they believed the program was redundant and no longer needed.

In May 15, 2001, Council Approved the FY 2002 Pay and Classification Study, Proposed Job Descriptions and Methodology for the FY 2002 Annual Salary Increases. The motion included the deletion of the "Administrative Guidelines for Incentive Pay." At that time, there was a personnel rule for incentive pay, which stated, "Regular employees who obtain statutorily required certifications as defined in the Administrative Guidelines on Incentive Pay are eligible to receive incentive pay for completion of certification(s) while employed by the County. Incentive pay dollar amounts and certifications required by federal and state statutes are defined in the Incentive Pay Administrative Guidelines. Payment will be made as a bonus amount in mid-December and is not included in base pay except as noted in the Incentive Pay Administrative Guidelines or for purposes of calculating overtime. Payment will be made to eligible employees who are on payroll at the time payment occurs." Due to Council approval of the deletion of the "Administrative Guidelines for Incentive Pay", staff brought forth to Council the deletion of Personnel Rule 318 - Incentive Pay on July 31, 2001, which was approved. Since that time, there has been no additional compensation granted for statutorily required certifications.

On February 10, 2004, the County Assessor's Office sought approval of the County Assessor Valuation Plan. Included in the plan was the hope of the Assessor's Office to allow additional compensation for successful completion of IAAO (International Association of Assessing Officers) courses appropriate for each level of expertise, Appraiser I through Appraiser IV. The Assessor's Office recommended the following:

Appraiser I	compensation for "appraiser I certification"	\$ 500
Appraiser II	compensation for "appraiser II certification"	\$1,500
Appraiser III	compensation for "appraiser III certification"	\$2,500
Appraiser IV	compensation for "appraiser IV certification"	\$3,500

The certification incentive is allowed for under 4-39-5 NMSA 1978. It was the intent of the Assessor's office to fund this program from the restricted Property Valuation Fund, which is allowed for under 7-38-38.1. The section states, "Expenditures from the county property valuation fund may be made pursuant to a property valuation program presented by the county assessor and approved by the majority of the county commissioners."

On February 10, 2004, Council approved the Los Alamos County Assessor Valuation Plan. The implementation of certification was clearly stated on page 18 of the Valuation Plan.

During discussions with Human Resources staff, concerns were brought forward regarding consistency of application of certification incentives within the County.

The Assessor's Office and the Human Resources Division are now proposing implementation of the Assessor's certification incentive for this year only based on the following: 1) incentives were identified in the Los Alamos County Assessor Evaluation Plan adopted by Council on February 10, 2004; 2) the Assessors' Office had approval of the property valuation fund and budget from Council, and to exclude them after budgets have been approved would deny the Assessors' Office the appeal process provided by law; and 3) the Assessor's positions in the past have not been benchmarked and it is the Human Resources Divisions's intention to insure that there is a benchmark within that job family in the next salary survey.

Fiscal/Staff Impact - Planned Item

Funding for the implementation will come from the Property Evaluation Fund and therefore will not impact the general fund.

Implementation of the certification incentive request for the Assessor's Office will require staff time to revise the payroll software system tables.

Attachments

- A. Page 18 of the Approved Los Alamos County Property Valuation Plan
- B. Council Minutes from February 10, 2004 Regarding the Los Alamos County Assessor Valuation Agenda Documentation for the Los Alamos County Assessor Valuation Plan
- C. Council Minutes from May 15, 2001
- D. Property Valuation Fund 7-38-38.1

The Los Alamos County Assessor is committed to the employment and retention of competent personnel to carry out the Revaluation Plan. Persons will be recruited and employed who demonstrate ability to deal with people, understand the concepts involved in the reappraisal program, communicate effectively, make accurate judgments, and work effectively with minimal supervision.

Property assessment is a field for which there are only minimal opportunities of specialized academic preparation prior to entry. Yet the State of New Mexico and governing bodies have an interest in ensuring that the property tax is competently administered. Certification / re-certification programs not only ensure that assessment personnel, not just appraisers, are able to obtain the qualifications necessary to perform their duties early in their careers, but also continue education and to keep abreast of new developments in the assessment field.

Besides the usual administrative, computer and customer service training, the Senior Appraiser will provide actual training to new employees and on a continuing basis to existing employees in regard to this program. The Los Alamos County Assessor visualizes training as an ongoing program.

The State of New Mexico, Taxation and Revenue Department, Property Tax Division grants certification and 4-39-5 NMSA 1978 allows for additional compensation for successful completion of IAAO (International Association of Assessing Officers) courses appropriate for each level of expertise, Appraiser I through Appraiser IV, as follow:

Appraiser I	compensation for "appraiser I certification"	\$ 500
Appraiser II	compensation for "appraiser II certification"	\$1,500
Appraiser III	compensation for "appraiser III certification"	\$2,500
Appraiser IV	compensation for "appraiser IV certification"	\$3,500

The Los Alamos County Assessor will implement this program for the purpose of obtaining and retaining certified professional assessment personnel. The resultant benefits include improved appraisal efficiencies, increased revenue and successful defending of the property values set by the County Assessor

Once obtaining the certification of appraiser IV, employees are required to attend re-certification appraisal courses. Maximum recurring amount, as annual bonuses from the revaluation fund based on the four current employees who have been certified appraisers IV would be 4 positions x \$3,500 = \$14,000.

Page 18 of the approved
*"Los Alamos County
 Property Valuation Plan"*
 Date February 10, 2004

Councilor Wismer was concerned that the friendly amendment includes the board to develop performance measures and that should be staffs responsibility and may not be appropriate for the board to create measures. Ms. Pamela S. Bacon, County Attorney, responded that it is generally a staff function, however, the board may make recommendations.

Councilor Albert called the question on whether to substitute the motion, the motion was seconded by Councilor Wheeler. The question passed 5 – 2; Councilors Albert and Wismer opposed.

Councilor Albert felt the friendly amendment was not necessary. The duties of the board are to initiate and make recommendations to the Council on visitor related programs and other activities. In the Code, their duty is they shall advise the administrator and Council on the expenditure of funds authorized by the New Mexico statute for advertising, publicizing and promoting tourist attractions.

Councilor Albert asked Ms. Dreska if there are other options available if the contract is not approved. Ms. Dreska stated the KanDu Center could be shut down in the Municipal Building and placed at the visitor's center, or the County could ask the Chamber of Commerce to take on that responsibility. Either of those options would adversely impact other operations.

Councilor Albert asked how long would it take to issue an RFP? Ms. Dreska responded at least 90 days, presuming a matrix was developed within that timeframe.

Councilor West stated that Council has set high goals and this issue is taking too much time. An RFP will be issued at a later time, which is a standard operation procedure and at that time these issues would be addressed.

Councilor West called the question, seconded by Councilor Berting. The question passed 5 – 2; Councilors Albert and Wismer opposed.

Councilor Bowman called for public comments. There was none.

Councilor Rodgers moved a substitute motion, seconded by Councilor Berting, that Council approve Amendment No. 3 to Incorporated County of Los Alamos Services Agreement No. AGR2214-03 with the Los Alamos Commerce and Development Corporation in the amount of in the amount of \$203,340 and further move to direct the Lodger's Tax Advisory Board and staff will address developing criteria for evaluating measurable's during the life of the contract. The motion passed 5 – 2; Councilors Albert and Wismer opposed.

A. Additional Compensation for Successful Completion of IAAO (International Association of Assessing Officers) Regarding the Assessor's Office.

Mr. Leo Barraza, Deputy County Assessor, stated Council previously approved this item at the regular budget hearing and through the approval of the County Assessor Valuation Plan. There are provisions in state statute that provide for Assessor's to receive certification incentive pay. The incentive pay would come from the Property Valuation Fund, which is a restricted fund and does not have any impact on the general fund. Since the incentive pay was not included in the Assessors' job descriptions, the compromise for this year only, was that the Assessor's staff would handle this as a "bonus" this year and next year a market survey on the positions would be done.

Ms. Denise Cassel, Interim Human Resources Manager, stated when the "Administrative Guidelines for Incentive Pay" was terminated, Human Resources (HR) did not incorporate the incentives that were identified for the positions as part of the job description for the Assessor's Office. If the certifications are needed to do the job, they need to be included in the minimum qualifications in the job description.

Councilor Wismer moved, seconded by Councilor West, that Council approve the Assessor's request to implement a certification incentive program within the Assessor's Office for this year only.

Councilor Berting asked since the administrative guidelines were terminated but the approval of the incentive pay was in the Assessor Valuation Plan, when the certifications are completed would the incentive pay be on going? Ms. Cassel responded it is set-up as a one-time lump sum payment for this year. All employees have obtained certifications and all employees would qualify for the incentive pay. What HR would propose for the next salary survey, is to make sure that the positions in the Assessor's office would be benchmarked and incorporated with the certifications in the position.

Councilor Berting asked when do the certifications expire? Mr. Barraza explained the certifications are on going.

Councilor Berting asked if this would affect bonuses in other departments. Ms. Cassel stated the incentive pay would only be for the Assessor's office and is not being recognized throughout the County. However, the Assessor's Office does have a state statute that allows for the incentive pay since it is coming from the valuation fund and not the general fund. There may be departments that may inquire on this incentive pay.

Ms. Dreska explained other positions that had incentive pay those positions have been benchmarked and they have been incorporated into their job descriptions as a requirement. The Assessor's office was not benchmarked and therefore was not included in their base salary range.

Councilor Bowman called for public comments. There was none.

The motion passed 6 – 0; Councilor Wismer was not present at time of roll call.

B. Consolidated Emergency Communications Center

Mr. Max Baker, Deputy County Administrator, explained on March 18, 2003 Council authorized the submittal of a letter to the State stating the County's commitment for a centralized 911 communications center. Since that time, the purchase of new equipment for a Centralized 911 Communications Point has received State funding and we are at the point where we must now advise the State where the equipment should be located or if we wish to relinquish the funding to another entity or apply for possible funding in the next round. The purpose of this item is for Council to provide guidance on two points: First, should the County continue to work on creating a Consolidated Communications Center (center) where Police, Fire and Emergency Medical Services calls could be received and appropriate responders dispatched? And secondly, where should the Emergency Communications Center be located? The answer to these questions has some urgency because the State has requested an answer from us on whether we want to install new equipment that would allow for the locating of wireless calls from within the County. The issue of consolidating the dispatch function for all emergency services has existed for many years and rises partly out of the fact that there are currently two Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP) within the boundaries of the County--one at Police Dispatch and one within LANL operated by a laboratory subcontractor. If a call originates from within the County (outside of LANL) then the call is routed to the Police Dispatch answering point. Since that 2003 date, the Laboratory has completed and occupied the new Emergency Operations Center on West Jemez Road. This facility was designed to include a Consolidated Communications Center. The Laboratory, with some County assistance in terms of selection, has purchased new software for Computer Aided Dispatching (CAD) and Records Management. Because this purchase was funded from Cerro Grande Fire money to the Department of Energy, the implementation of the initial phases of this software is to be completed before September 30th. The County is providing some staff time