



COUNTY OF KENOSHA

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
Samantha Kerkman, County Executive

1010 – 56th Street, Third Floor
Kenosha, Wisconsin 53140
(262) 653-2600
Fax: (262) 653-2817

March 28, 2023

News release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Tami Rongstad
262-653-2831

Study outlines path to attracting, retaining high-quality county workforce

A study examining Kenosha County’s job classification and compensation schedule as it relates to the county’s ability to attract and retain employees was presented to the County Board tonight.

The report, assembled by Middleton-based Carlson Dettmann Consulting, was created over the last 13 months, as consultants analyzed the county’s competitiveness in the current labor market.

“The question at hand is what we need to do to remain competitive in the marketplace, ensuring that we will be able to continue providing the vital services that our residents count on, in a high-quality, fiscally responsible way,” said County Executive Samantha Kerkman. “This report, which will go before the board for further consideration in the coming weeks, provides a well-researched roadmap for how we should move forward.”

With the study’s findings anticipated to come early this year, the 2023 county budget that the County Board adopted in November 2022 included a \$500,000 allocation to fund wage increases recommended in the study.

The total cost of the adjustments outlined in the final report is an estimated \$750,000, which would require the County Board to approve a roughly \$250,000 budget modification. Those costs are based on implementation at mid-year.

The board’s Finance and Administration Committee is expected to review the study and issue its recommendation on the report’s findings on April 13, with full County Board action to follow.

“The committee will consider this, but we need to keep in mind that our salaries must be competitive with comparable salaries in private industry,” said Supervisor Terry Rose, Finance and Administration Committee chairman. “There’s tremendous competition today for workforce, and today’s era is different than it was a number of years ago.”

The study began in February 2022 under then-County Executive Jim Kreuser and the previous County Board and continued under County Executive Kerkman and the current board.

Human Resources Director Clara Tappa said the county remains in a labor environment where it is competing with all sectors for talent, at a time when there are simply not enough people in the workforce to keep open positions filled.

“We looked to this study to help us understand our position in the market — both where we’re at today and where we need to be tomorrow,” Tappa said. “We compete with both the private and public sectors, between two major metropolitan areas. That simply adds to the challenges that we face as a public-sector employer.”

Tappa said the study’s recommendations put forth a more competitive wage schedule, while also taking a comprehensive look at the classification of positions and their placement on the wage scale and taking steps to ease wage compression while making additional considerations based on employees’ tenure.

The study does not recommend across-the-board wage adjustments; rather, its effects vary widely among departments and divisions based on market considerations for individual positions, Tappa said. She added that no current county employee would receive a wage decrease as a result of the study.

Finance Director Patricia Merrill said the study’s findings confirm the need to take action for the county to remain competitive for labor.

“We took some initial steps with the 2023 budget to improve our market position,” Merrill said, “and this study shows us that we have further to go.”

###