

WHATCOM COUNTY  
SHERIFF'S OFFICE

BILL ELFO  
SHERIFF



PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING  
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MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Satpal Sidhu, County Executive

**FROM:** Bill Elfo, Sheriff 

**RE:** Northwest Regional Council Contract Amendment Salary Increases

**DATE:** March 15, 2022

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Enclosed are two (2) originals of an Amendment to change the Agreement between Northwest Regional Council (NWRC) and Whatcom County for your review and signature.

▪ **Background and Purpose**

Whatcom County Jail currently has a contract with NWRC for the provision of Nursing services for the Jail and Work Center. We are seeking to increase the contracted amount for the balance of 2022.

Since January 1, 2022 our contractor, NWRC, has lost 30% of their nursing staff. Despite recruitment efforts, which have proven successful in past years, they have received no response to job postings. This is not an issue unique to the Jail Nursing positions.

Prior to the COVID outbreak, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics projected that more than 275,000 nurses would be needed between 2020 and 2030, and that employment opportunities for nurses were projected to be growing at a faster rate (9%), than all other occupations. The COVID epidemic has significantly worsened the shortage, with more nurses retiring early or leaving the profession due to burnout.

NWRC's Human Resource Department conducted a wage analysis to determine if there was a need for upward reclassification prompted by market conditions. The HR department determined:

- Nursing is currently listed as an "In-Demand" profession with an annual salary which exceeds NWRC's current starting salary by 27% and their top step salary by 5%.

- Comparables were reviewed including: (using “Indeed” a job search company) for the Bellingham area, Snohomish County Jail, King County Jail, Washington Department of Corrections and Federal Bureau of Prisons. The low market average estimate exceeded the existing beginning step by 4% and the high market average estimate exceeded the top step by 4%.

After reviewing this information, NWRC forwarded a request to increase their contract by \$153,350.00, with a new contract hourly rate of \$75.55. This will provide an increase in their beginning step from \$32.53 to \$38.50 with proportional increases through step 10, which will increase the current \$42.45 to \$50.23. It will also adjust the Nursing Supervisor wage to maintain a 10.9% compression between the RN and the Nursing Supervisor. The benefit costs will remain the same.

It is anticipated that this wage adjustment will make the Jail Nurse positions competitive with the local market, and help resolve the potential future loss of more existing nurses.

▪ **Funding Amount and Source**

A budget supplemental has been submitted and will be up for adoption at the April 26<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting. Funding will come from the Jail Sales Tax Fund. The amount for the balance of calendar year 2022 will be \$153,350.00

▪ **Differences from Previous Contract**

This will increase the original contract by \$153,350.00 for the balance of 2022.

Please contact Wendy Jones at extension 6505, if you have any questions or concerns regarding the terms of this agreement.

Encl. (2)