

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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COMMISSIONERS ANNOUNCE LIVING WAGE

The Franklin County Commissioners voted this morning to implement a series of wage adjustments that could result in pay raises for up to about 750 county employees, including ensuring that all current and future commissioner employees will be paid a living wage. The commissioners have long been committed to seeing that all residents of Franklin County are paid a living wage for the work that they do, and a year ago commissioned a study to determine what that hourly wage is in Franklin County, and how the Board can implement a living wage for all of its employees. The resolution passed today will increase the amount of the lowest salary paid to non-bargaining commissioner employees to \$13.69 per hour. It also allows the county to renegotiate union contracts so that the changes to apply to bargaining unit employees as well.

The study, conducted by Clemans Nelson & Associates, a nationally respected management and labor relations consulting firm, used resources developed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to determine that the living wage in Franklin County is \$13.69 per hour. "Living wage" is defined as a wage that allows a family of four, including two working adults, to maintain a normal standard of living within the community in which they work. The Clemans Nelson study also addressed the problem of "wage compression" within the commissioners' county agencies, which occurs when the minimum rate in one pay grade is too close to the minimum of the next higher grade. As a result, not only will the lowest-paid Board of Commissioners employees be seeing an increase, but the minimum rate in every pay grade will be increasing and employees who have been in their current positions for at least 3 years will also be seeing a raise.

"Franklin County is the main local provider of social services in Central Ohio," said Board of Commissioners President, John O'Grady. "The employees providing those services shouldn't also have to receive them in order to provide for their families. Everyone who puts in an honest day's work deserves an honest day's pay, and we're going to start with that right here in the commissioners' office."

Many of the affected employees are covered by labor agreements between their unions and the county, which will have to be amended for the new pay rates to take effect. A provision in the resolution passed by the commissioners today authorizes county Human Resources to renegotiate the labor agreements immediately so that bargaining unit employees can take advantage of the new pay scale even before the contracts would normally have been renegotiated next year.

"We have the best employees anywhere," said Commissioner Paula Brooks. "They work hard and, like every American, deserve to be paid fairly for their labor. I'm glad that we're able to do this for our own staff, and will continue to work to see that all hard-working residents of Franklin County are able to earn a living wage."

The plan also includes a new system of determining raises for non-bargaining employees based on merit and performance. All together, the new wage scale system is expected to cost the county about an additional \$1.6 million per year.

“I’m proud of all that we have been able to do to take care of our great staff here at the county commissioners’ office,” said Commissioner Marilyn Brown. “From our excellent benefits package to our early adoption of benefits for domestic partners, our healthy workforce initiatives, and now a living wage, we really are taking care of our people, but it’s also about attracting and retaining the best and brightest employees at every position.”

Franklin County employs about 6,500 people, and the county commissioners employ about 1,300. The new wage scales and merit raises will take effect on July 1st for non-bargaining employees, and as soon after that for bargaining unit staff as the employee unions are able to ratify new contracts.

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