



Date: September 1, 2026

Department: Administration

Presenter: Riley Hovorka, Town Administrator

Subject: Employee Compensation Schedule

Purpose:

Staff request that Council consider approving Resolution 2026-035, a resolution adopting a formal employee compensation schedule. The schedule establishes a consistent framework for employee classifications and compensation ranges and provides a foundation for equitable, transparent, and fiscally responsible compensation decisions.

Background:

The Town has historically operated without a formal, comprehensive compensation schedule establishing salary/wage ranges for all possible positions. As the Town continues to grow and municipal operations become more complex, establishing a structured compensation system will provide greater consistency in how positions are classified and compensated, and will assist with recruitment and retention of qualified employees.

The proposed compensation schedule features:

- A 20% spread between the minimum and mid-point of each range, which would serve as the 'hiring range' for each position. A hiring range of 20% provides more flexibility to negotiate with a broader range of candidates than if the hiring salary/wage was fixed.
- A 40% spread between the minimum and maximum of each range. Assuming annual merit-based increases of up to 2% or 2.5%, this spread would allow an employee beginning at the minimum end of their range to work toward the maximum over the course of 16-20 years, or an employee starting at the mid-point of their range to work their way toward the maximum over 8-10 years.
- A 10% spread between adjacent ranges. A 10% spread between ranges is a smaller spread than is typically observed in compensation schedules. The relatively high cost of living in the Alpine area necessitates a higher "floor" than average, yet revenue constraints limit the Town's ability to implement a commensurately high "ceiling." This results in a more compact spread between ranges, and a more compact schedule overall.

The compensation schedule has been shared with and discussed by all Town staff. While staff support for a compensation schedule is unanimous, some members of staff had additional comments they wished Council would consider. Comments from staff are summarized as follows:

- Employee placement within ranges should be re-evaluated.
 - See 'Fiscal Impact' section for Administrator's recommendation.
- Not all positions have promotional tiers.
- Employees filling multiple roles should have multiple titles.
- Exempt employees' inability to earn overtime could put them at a disadvantage to non-exempt employees.
- Given the high cost of living in the Alpine and greater Star Valley area, homeownership is still out of reach for many employees.
- Moving forward, annual increases should contain a merit-based and COLA-based adjustment rather than merit or COLA alone.

Alternatives:

Option A — Approve the resolution, adopting the compensation schedule as proposed.

- Benefits Include: Adopting the proposed schedule establishes a consistent, transparent, and equitable framework for employee compensation while allowing flexibility to account for differences in experience, qualifications, performance, and level of responsibility. It also provides the Town with a foundation for future hiring, promotions, reclassifications, and annual adjustments based on COLA, merit, or a COLA/merit combination.
- Challenges Include: The proposed schedule is competitive with similarly situated municipalities in Western Wyoming and Eastern Idaho, but lags Jackson/Teton County public and private employers. Continued support from Council is needed to maintain or enhance, when appropriate, employee benefits to ensure attractiveness and long-term satisfaction.

Option B — Propose changes to the compensation schedule, and direct staff to bring an updated resolution back to Council for consideration at the September 18 meeting.

- Benefits Include: Council could choose to adjust the width of each range, adjust the width between ranges, or re-classify positions that they feel were placed within the wrong range based on the duties performed and qualifications required. Additionally, Council could direct staff to expand market analysis to consider communities outside of the Western Wyoming/Eastern Idaho region.
- Challenges Include: The proposed compensation ranges are as reflective as they are prescriptive. Ten out of twelve employees are already compensated within their proposed range. Significantly altering the ranges may have a greater budget impact than the Town could reasonably support in FY27. Additionally, staff have already had an opportunity to see the proposed compensation schedule and provide input.

Option C — Do not approve the resolution, effectively not adopting the compensation schedule.

- **Benefits Include:** The Town can continue making ad hoc compensation decisions if/when there is a vacancy that needs to be filled. This allows for a lot of flexibility, but very little predictability.
- **Challenges Include:** The absence of a compensation schedule gives the appearance that compensation decisions are made arbitrarily, and leaves staff uneasy about their professional trajectory. The lack of a compensation schedule can also create issues with internal and external equity, i.e. like-kind duties or qualifications with another position (within the organization, or within a peer organization) but different compensation.

Fiscal Impact:

Adoption of the compensation schedule establishes the framework for employee compensation but does not, by itself, require that every employee be compensated deeply into their assigned range.

At this time, staff recommend bringing all employees currently compensated below their range to the minimum of their assigned range. The cost of doing so would be less than \$10,000. There are no employees compensated higher than the maximum end of their range. The Clerk/Treasurer rounds to the nearest thousand and includes a slight contingency when budgeting, so it is possible that a budget amendment will not be necessary to accommodate the increase. If a budget amendment is necessary, it will be negligible and staff will notify Council.

Council could consider re-evaluating the placement of each employee within their range as part of the FY28 budget process, or sooner, if desired. Staff recognize that all current employees were hired before a compensation schedule existed, and therefore initial placement may not have been intentional.

Strategic or Community Impact:

A formal compensation schedule supports the Town's long-term organizational stability by creating greater consistency, transparency, and internal equity in employee compensation. It also strengthens the Town's ability to recruit and retain qualified employees as Alpine continues to grow and compete with other public and private employers for a limited workforce.

Key Questions:

1. Are the proposed compensation ranges adequate to ensure that Town employees can live in, near, or within a short commute to Alpine in the event of an emergency?
2. Does the compensation schedule provide sufficient flexibility to address future changes in market conditions and Town's workforce needs?

3. Are positions properly placed within the schedule to ensure that compensation is commensurate with roles and responsibilities of each position?

Suggested Motion:

I move to approve Resolution No. 2026-035, adopting the Town of Alpine Employee Compensation Schedule as presented, and setting the Compensation Schedule to take effect for the payroll period beginning Sunday, September 13.