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**Who Makes the Most? Database explores Tarrant County public salaries.** – *By Azia Branson*

The highest-paid public official in Tarrant County outside education makes \$701,708 a year — about right considering what he does, experts said.

The *Star-Telegram* requested the salaries of the top 20 highest-paid employees at seven public entities across the county: John Peter Smith Health Network, Dallas/Fort Worth Airport, the cities of Fort Worth and Arlington, Tarrant County, the Fort Worth Transportation Authority and the Tarrant Regional Water District.

1. Robert (Bill) Whitman, \$442,769 John Peter Smith Health Network Courtesy
2. Robert Earley, \$701,708. Joyce Marshall jlmarshall@star-telegram.com
3. Dr. James Johnson, \$550,000. John Peter Smith Health Network Courtesy
4. Sean Donohue, \$466,700 Brandon Wade Star-Telegram
5. Dr. Frank Rosinia, \$450,008 John Peter Smith Health Network Courtesy
6. Robert (Bill) Whitman, \$442,769 John Peter Smith Health Network Courtesy
7. Robert Earley, \$701,708. Joyce Marshall jlmarshall@star-telegram.com

The \$701,708 paid annually to Robert Earley, president and CEO of John Peter Smith Health Network, is at the top.

**“For a base salary of a CEO, that is not outrageous,” said John Bizjak, Lowdon chair of finance at TCU.**

Earley has been with JPS since 2005 and was officially hired as CEO in 2009.

For perspective, \$701,708 is more than 10 times the median income for a family of four in the area — \$69,400. The median income for the state of Texas is \$62,800 and nationally it’s \$53,300, according to the Housing and Urban Development Department.

The database includes more than 100 employees who have a few months of service to more than 40 years. Presidents, chief executives, city managers and other executive administrators are among the top 20.

The second-highest-paid employee, at \$550,000 a year, is James Johnson, chief medical officer and president of Acclaim Physician Group at JPS. He is among nine other JPS employees at the top, giving the hospital the most in the top 20. DFW Airport falls just below that with six, and the rest each have one.

“Ongoing investment in our human resources is necessary for JPS to continue producing favorable long-term outcomes for patients, team members and taxpayers,” JPS spokeswoman J.R. Labbe said in a statement.

DFW Airport CEO Sean Donohue, the third-highest-paid on the list, was hired in 2013 and has made headlines for consistent large bonuses and a 3 percent pay raise leading to his current salary of more than \$466,700.

“When you get into the real specialty occupations like hospitals and DFW [Airport], they are self-contained and they resemble what a private corporation would do,” said Rod Erakovich, associate professor of management at

Texas Wesleyan University in Fort Worth. “They are customer-based and their revenue is generated from the services they offer, more so than tax rolls.”

Only 4 of the top 20 wage earners are women: Sharon Clark of JPS, Herlinda Thompson of DFW Airport, Wanda Peebles of JPS and Josephine Fowler of JPS. Their combined salaries average over \$329,000; in comparison, the top four men average over \$542,000.

The highest-paid woman, Sharon Clark, executive vice president and chief financial officer for JPS, makes less than the average of the top four males but exceeds the average of the top 20 wage earners — \$367,558 — with a salary of \$425,006.

“In the public sector, the emphasis is on the professional development in that area and being able to meet citizens’ needs,” Erakovich said.

This is true mostly for service-oriented positions such as those in law enforcement, where in Dallas-Fort Worth suburbs officers tend to start out earning more than officers in the heart of the city.

For the top jobs, the breakdown is different. Fort Worth Police Chief Joel Fitzgerald makes almost \$205,000, and Arlington Police Chief Wilber Johnson makes \$186,000.

### **Lowest in top 20**

Two of the bottom five in the top 20 are women and are employed by JPS: Peebles, senior vice president and chief nursing officer; and Fowler, vice president of academic affairs.

Peebles, the third-highest-paid female, makes more than \$293,000 while Fowler, the last female in the top 20, makes almost \$287,000. Both salaries are under the list average of \$367,558 and the female average of over \$329,000.

Three men make up the bottom of the list: Paul Ballard, president of the Fort Worth Transportation Authority, who makes just over \$281,000; Tarrant County Administrator G.K. Maenius, who makes over \$278,500; and just below him, Arlington City Manager Fred Yelverton, who makes over \$278,300. Yelverton makes less than Fort Worth City Manager David Cooke, who is the eighth-highest-paid on the list at almost \$315,000.

“Compensation tends to be very fluid and heavily dependent on the local and regional market,” said Paul Battaglio, professor of public and nonprofit management at the University of Texas at Dallas.

Fort Worth, by population, is more than twice the size of Arlington, according to the North Central Texas Council of Governments, which estimates that the 2016 population of Fort Worth is 806,380 and Arlington is 380,740.

According to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, salaries for state and local government employees increased 1.7 percent from June 2015 to June 2016, down from the year before, when they increased by almost 2 percent. They are expected to increase again in 2017.