



Board of County Commissioners

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of County Commissioners

From: Natalie Springett, Commissioners' Deputy
Nick Robles, Commissioners' Office Policy Team
Mark Ruzzin, Commissioners' Office Policy Team

Date: October 14, 2025

Subject: Consideration of Amendments to Local Minimum Wage Ordinance #2023-004

INTRODUCTION

In 2019, the Colorado General Assembly granted authority to local governments to adopt jurisdiction-specific local minimum wages, with the enabling legislation encouraging regional application of minimum wages that are higher than the state minimum wage. In response, in November 2023 the county commissioners adopted Ordinance #2023-004, which established a local minimum wage schedule for application in the unincorporated county beginning January 1, 2024.

This memorandum outlines ordinance amendment options for the county commissioners.

DIRECTION REQUESTED

Local Minimum Wage Schedule ordinance amendments to bring forward to a November 20, 2025 public hearing.

BACKGROUND

To respond to the needs of unincorporated Boulder County's lowest paid workers in the face of the rising cost of living, the County Commissioners adopted the county's local minimum wage ordinance in November 2023. Ordinance #2023-004 implemented a local minimum wage in unincorporated Boulder County beginning January 1, 2024. The county ordinance was informed through review and analysis of the two local minimum wage ordinances that had been adopted in Colorado at that time, in the cities of Denver and Edgewater, and incorporated feedback collected through a three-month community engagement effort. The community engagement campaign included an online survey available in English and Spanish; listening sessions conducted in partnership with the Small Business Development Center, Latino Chamber of Commerce, Boulder County Self-Sufficiency Wage Coalition, and Human Services Alliance of Boulder County; a town hall hosted by the County Commissioners; and a public hearing held on November 2, 2023.

Estimate of Total Labor Force for Unincorporated Boulder County

Utilizing municipal labor force data collected and included in the table below, county staff was able to estimate the Unincorporated Boulder County labor force as 22,216 people. The estimated population of the unincorporated county is 42,000 residents.

Jurisdiction	Year	Data Collection Period (if known)	Labor Force
Boulder County (total)	2025	Jan	194,187
Boulder	2025	Jan	62,932
Longmont	2025	Jan	58,622
Lafayette	2025	Jan	19,105
Erie	2025	Jan	8,096*
Louisville ¹	2025		13,980
Superior ²	2023		7,325
Nederland ³	2023		869
Lyons ⁴	2023		864
Ward	2020		64**
Jamestown	2023		123**
Boulder County (unincorporated)			22,216

Please see Appendix C for labor force data sources.

CURRENT LAW

The Boulder County Local Minimum Wage went into effect on January 1, 2024. Through a series of annual increases, the minimum wage for unincorporated Boulder County is set to increase to \$25 per hour in 2030, with adjustments thereafter tied to the Boulder/Denver Consumer Price Index (CPI):

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Boulder County Adopted Wage Schedule (<i>hourly rate</i>)	16.57	17.99 (+8.58%)	19.53 (+8.58%)	21.21 (+8.58%)	23.03 (+8.58%)	25.00 (+8.58%)

AMENDMENT OPTIONS

County staff has modeled five options as potential amendments to the current county wage ordinance. Please note that staff has utilized a 3% CPI for the purpose of forecasting future wage rates.

Pause the Wage Schedule

Options 1 – 3 pause the current wage schedule.

Option 1: This proposal pauses the wage schedule at the 2025 wage rate for 2026 and anticipates a process to engage with county municipalities in 2026 to explore adoption of a regional minimum wage to begin in 2027.

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Option 1 (<i>hourly rate</i>)	16.57	16.57 (+0.0%)	To be determined.			

Option 2: Offered by the Niwot Local Improvement District Advisory Committee, this proposal pauses the wage schedule at the 2025 wage rate until the wage aligns with the lowest municipal wage, which is currently the state minimum wage.

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Option 2 (<i>hourly rate</i>)	16.57	16.57 (+0.0%)	16.57 (+0.0%)	16.57 (+0.0%)	16.57 (+0.0%)	17.04 (2.84%)
Colorado Minimum Wage (<i>hourly rate</i>)	14.81	15.16 (+2.36%)	15.61 (+3.0%)	16.07 (+3.0%)	16.55 (+3.0%)	17.04 (+3.0%)

Option 3: This proposal attempts to address concerns expressed by the Niwot business community and the county farming community. In this option, wages for 2026 remain at the 2025 level, with wages increasing by CPI beginning in 2027. Beginning in 2027, this option provides minimum wage workers in Unincorporated Boulder County with the same annual wage increase as that received by state minimum wage earners.

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Option 3 (<i>hourly rate</i>)	16.57	16.57 (+0.0%)	17.06 (+3.0%)	17.57 (+3.0%)	18.09 (+3.0%)	18.63 (3.0%)
Colorado Minimum Wage (<i>hourly rate</i>)	14.81	15.16 (+2.36%)	15.61 (+3.0%)	16.07 (+3.0%)	16.55 (+3.0%)	17.04 (+3.0%)

Pathways to Regional Alignment

Option 4: This proposal aligns the Boulder County wage with the wage adopted by the City of Boulder by reducing the county's upcoming 2026 wage increase to 1.5%, increasing the wage by 8% for 2027, and then increasing the wage annually by CPI thereafter. This proposal would align two jurisdictions within Boulder County beginning in 2026, which may generate interest by other municipalities to consider a regional minimum wage.

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Option 4 (<i>hourly rate</i>)	16.57	16.82 (+1.5%)	18.17 (+8.0%)	18.72 (+3.0%)	19.28 (+3.0%)	19.86 (3.0%)
City of Boulder Adopted Wage Schedule (<i>hourly rate</i>)	15.57	16.82 (+8.0%)	18.17 (+8.0%)	18.72 (+3%)	19.28 (+3%)	19.86 (+3%)

Option 5: This proposal reduces the county’s upcoming 2026 wage increase to 1.5% to align with the 2026 wage of the City of Boulder, with wages increasing by CPI beginning in 2027. This proposal would align two jurisdictions within Boulder County beginning in 2026, which may generate interest by other municipalities to consider a regional minimum wage.

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Option 5 (<i>hourly rate</i>)	16.57	16.82 (+1.5%)	17.32 (+3.0%)	17.84 (+3.0%)	18.38 (+3.0%)	18.93 (3.0%)
City of Boulder Adopted Wage Schedule (<i>hourly rate</i>)	15.57	16.82 (+8.0%)	18.17 (+8.0%)	18.72 (+3%)	19.28 (+3%)	19.86 (+3%)

CONCLUSION

If directed by the county commission, staff will prepare amendment/s to the current Local Minimum Wage Schedule, to be brought forward to a November 20, 2025 public hearing.

As with Ordinance #2023-004, any proposed amendments to the ordinance will include the following components:

- The County Local Minimum Wage will apply to all adults or minors performing, or expected to perform, four or more hours of work per week for any employer within the unincorporated county.
- The ordinance will allow employers to partially offset the payment of the minimum wage for food and beverage workers, as defined in the ordinance, through a “tip credit” of \$3.02 per hour.
- Employers will be required to post notice of the Local Minimum Wage and maintain records to demonstrate compliance with the wage requirement.
- The county will continue to rely on the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment for enforcement of the Local Minimum Wage.

ATTACHMENTS

1. APPENDIX A: Master Table of Options 1 – 5
2. APPENDIX B: Table of Current Wage Schedules
3. APPENDIX C: Data Sources for Estimate of Unincorporated Boulder County Labor Force

APPENDIX A

Master Table of Options 1 – 5

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Option 1 (<i>hourly rate</i>)	16.57	16.57 (+0.0%)	To be determined.			
Option 2 (<i>hourly rate</i>)	16.57	16.57 (+0.0%)	16.57 (+0.0%)	16.57 (+0.0%)	16.57 (+0.0%)	17.04 (2.84%)
Option 3 (<i>hourly rate</i>)	16.57	16.57 (+0.0%)	17.06 (+3.0%)	17.57 (+3.0%)	18.09 (+3.0%)	18.63 (3.0%)
Option 4 (<i>hourly rate</i>)	16.57	16.82 (+1.5%)	18.17 (+8.0%)	18.72 (+3.0%)	19.28 (+3.0%)	19.86 (3.0%)
Option 5 (<i>hourly rate</i>)	16.57	16.82 (+1.5%)	17.32 (+3.0%)	17.84 (+3.0%)	18.38 (+3.0%)	18.93 (3.0%)

APPENDIX B

Table of Current Wage Schedules

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Boulder County (<i>hourly rate</i>)	16.57	17.99 (+8.58%)	19.53 (+8.58%)	21.21 (+8.58%)	23.03 (+8.58%)	25.00 (+8.58%)
City of Boulder (<i>hourly rate</i>)	15.57	16.82 (+8.0%)	18.17 (+8.0%)	18.72 (+3%)	19.28 (+3%)	19.86 (+3%)
City of Denver (<i>hourly rate</i>)	18.81	19.37 (+3%)	19.95 (+3%)	20.55 (+3%)	21.17 (+3%)	21.81 (+3%)
City of Edgewater (<i>hourly rate</i>)	16.50	18.17 (+10.12%)	19.99 (+10.01%)	21.99 (+10%)	22.64 (+3%)	23.31 (+3%)
State of Colorado (<i>hourly rate</i>)	14.81	15.16 (+2.36%)	15.61 (+3%)	16.07 (+3%)	16.55 (+3%)	17.04 (+3%)

APPENDIX C

Data Sources for estimate of Unincorporated Boulder County Labor Force

- Data Source for Boulder County, Boulder, Longmont, Lafayette, Erie: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Databases, Tables & Calculators by Subject, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Area Type: Cities and Towns above 25,000 population. <https://data.bls.gov/PDQWeb/la>.
- *Erie's total labor force was 19,275. According to the 2020 Census, 42% of Erie residents live in Boulder County. Applying that share to the total labor force gives an estimated 8,096 workers residing in Boulder County.
- **The total population of the town was divided by 50% to estimate labor force.
- ¹ City of Louisville, Colorado. (n.d.). *Community profile*. Retrieved July 25, 2025, from <https://www.louisvilleco.gov/doing-business/economic-development/community-profile>
- ² Data USA. (n.d.). *Superior, CO profile* [Data profile]. Data USA. Retrieved July 25, 2025, from <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/superior-co/>
- ³ Data USA. (n.d.). *Nederland, CO profile* [Data profile]. Data USA. Retrieved July 25, 2025, from <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/nederland-co/>
- ⁴ Data USA. (n.d.). *Lyons, CO profile* [Data profile]. Data USA. Retrieved July 25, 2025, from <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/lyons-co/>