

**EVERETT SALARY REVIEW COMMISSION MEETING**

**March 18, 2015, 2:00 PM  
Mayor's Conference Room**

Those present:

Commission Members:

Chris Adams  
Catherine Havener  
Caroline Mason  
Angie Sievers  
Bobby Thompson  
Art Thomson

Excused:

John Dickson

City Staff:

Sharon DeHaan, Labor Relations/Human Resources Director  
Joni Siewert, Labor Relations/Human Resources Department, minutes  
Christina Wiersma, City Attorney's Office  
Deborah Wright, Executive Administrator

Guests:

Scott Murphy, City Council  
Deb Williams, City Council Office

The meeting commenced 2:13 PM.

**Minutes from March 4, 2015 meeting**

Commission Chair Angie Sievers explained the minutes from March 4 contain an inaccuracy. Under Commission Appointments on Page 2 it states the term is 2 years, when actually it is 4 years in length. She asked for a motion to correct. Caroline Mason so moved, Bobby Thompson seconded. The motion carried.

## **Information from Councilmember Scott Murphy**

In response to questions asked at the March 10 Commission meeting, Councilmember Scott Murphy distributed lists of liaison assignments going back 15 years. He also had requested a history of time commitments and committee assignments from his fellow Councilmembers, and distributed written responses from Council President Scott Bader and Councilmember Brenda Stonecipher.

Councilmember Murphy consulted other cities' websites to address the question from last week about comparison to peer groups. He found that most city councils are required to meet twice a month, with optional session meetings that can be scheduled in between. He gave specifics on those cities listed on the Council comparison sheet distributed last week:

- Bellevue 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays, also study sessions 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays; extended study sessions 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays
- Bellingham 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays
- Federal Way 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays for regular business
- Kent 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays
- Lynnwood 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays, also work sessions as necessary on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays and on 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays
- Marysville 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays, also scheduled work sessions; recess the entire month of August
- Renton 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays
- Shoreline weekly on Mondays 7 PM
- Vancouver 1<sup>st</sup> thru 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays except holidays, no less than 2 Mondays per month
- Yakima 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays
- Everett 52 weeks per year
- Spokane 1<sup>st</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Mondays of the month

Councilmember Murphy pointed out only Shoreline has a weekly meeting like Everett. He also reviewed for the Commission what the City Charter says about absences of the Mayor or City Council members.

## **Minutes from March 10, 2015 meeting**

Angie Sievers asked the Commission to approve the minutes from last week's meeting. Chris Adams moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Art Thomson. The motion carried.

### **Distribution of additional information**

Sharon DeHaan distributed updated salary charts including the 3 jurisdictions that didn't respond by last week, Shoreline, Seattle, and Vancouver. She also referenced attachments sent electronically with this week's agenda. One was a document assembled by Susy Haugen in response to last week's question on forecasting the budget for Council. There were also several pages of demographic material provided for comparative economic characteristics.

### **City Council discussion**

Angie Sievers opened the meeting to discussion. Chris Adams said he sees the Commission's job as documenting what City residents are going through, what's going on inside households inside Everett. He said it was hard to give raises when household incomes aren't being raised.

Bobby Thompson thought at the bare minimum Council needs to get a COLA increase this year. He said the City has withstood the economic downturn, and COLA started coming back to the City in 2013 for the Appointive employees. Art Thomson agreed aligning with City employees makes sense.

Chris Adams asked why there was a 5.8 % increase for both Council and Mayor in 2009. Sharon DeHaan replied that year COLA came in unexpectedly high, and added the City looks at the June to June index. Catherine Havener asked what the index is now, Sharon DeHaan said about 2%.

Bobby Thompson expressed the opinion he doesn't think the COLA increase is out of proportion to the rest of the City. He is sensitive to the population, doesn't want to do something disproportionate. But he is also sensitive to the fact that Council has received only one increase in the last five years.

Caroline Mason said that Council is difficult to examine, as its members are definitely paid on the higher end. But she considers what they are paid for the work they do. The work is more than meetings, there are hours and hours of reading documents. She finds their being paid on the higher end is not such a big factor for her.

Catherine Havener asked Scott Murphy if he has any insight into comparing Everett demographics to cities like Renton. Are there factors that justify a higher salary? Councilmember Murphy replied he doesn't have an answer for that.

Chris Adams said from a duty perspective Everett is unique. The City has a small economic development department, and has a huge base of employment. Council and Mayor are asked to go out and make connections, and you can see the results with attracting higher education facilities and the 777. He said you can't compare Everett to Seattle, our economic base is different. Everett relies on its elected officials to go out and do things, and people who meet twice a month don't fall into the same category.

Chris Adams continued there are different philosophies about elected officials. He said there are people in Olympia who think politicians should be higher paid and full-time so they're not just retired people. He wondered if it would be valuable to articulate a discussion on attracting quality officials for the long term.

Art Thomson referred to the City Council goals for 2015 as presented in the budget document that was shared as part of this week's agenda package. He said it was important Council identify those goals, and added Council's members can be counted upon to do that. Bobby Thompson described the document as a summary page of goals, objectives and accomplishments, and asked if there is backup information broken down to a more measurable level. Councilmember Murphy replied it is indeed a summary document, and suggested part of what the Commission members will want to look at is liaison assignments. He said there are some big profile groups Council is involved with such as AWC, Puget Sound Clean Air, and Sound Transit. He added Councilmember Moore is down in Olympia today testifying to a committee, otherwise he would be here.

Caroline Mason asked if Council approves the budget. Councilmember Murphy replied yes, by Charter. The City is required to have an annual balanced budget. This past year was harder than normal because of SDAT. A lot of different ideas came forward that had to get boiled down.

Chris Adams asked Councilmember Murphy about his role with the Snohomish County Health District. He replied he is a member of the Health District Board which has 15 members, including all five County Council members and representatives from ten cities throughout the County. He added the Health District has had to reduce staff 40% over the past few years. The Board meets monthly.

Art Thomson asked if medical is part of the discussion. Sharon DeHaan replied the subject could be discussed, but benefits are established by ordinance. Art Thomson reflected the benefits are substantial, over 50% of salary, and the Councilmembers are part-time. Sharon DeHaan clarified elected officials pay 10% of their medical premium.

Councilmember Murphy said what is different about Everett's structure is the issue of committee as a whole vs. subcommittees. Chris Adams asked if he estimated his hours as close to what is in

the letters from Council President Bader and Councilmember Stonecipher. Councilmember Murphy replied it depends on liaison assignments and varies during the week, and that sitting at the Council meeting is a small percentage of it. Angie Sievers observed the Council members receive a binder and they read what is in it before the meeting.

Chris Adams said 15-20 hours per week is high part-time, and he believes Council members should receive at least a COLA adjustment. Bobby Thompson asked for bullet points for their reasoning, because they're going to have to support their decision.

Caroline Mason said budget forecasting is difficult, how do the Commission members know what to budget. But the Commission sets salary based on work the elected officials are asked to do, budget is not the Commission's responsibility. If they were to recommend a COLA it would be in line with other contracts. For example, the Everett School District has signed contracts in the 2-3% range lately.

Chris Adams clarified with Sharon DeHaan, they are a Citizen Commission that actually makes the decision, not just make a recommendation. Bobby Thompson advocated measurables. Angie Sievers wondered if there will be changes in responsibilities due to changes in the community in the next couple of years.

Caroline Mason asked if others in City employment will get raises. Sharon DeHaan replied that is the presumption. Art Thomson cautioned there is a high level of low income people in the City of Everett.

Councilmember Murphy clarified the City has not been running at a deficit, it has been able to carry forward surpluses. Last year things came to a head, officials cannot continue to run the City unless drastic changes made, that's what a lot of the work was last year. There is more work to do, as the projections over the next 5 years show. Sharon DeHaan added the law is clear, the City has to have a balanced budget. Chris Adams clarified the forecasting is projecting deficits in the future, the City is not running deficits now. Councilmember Murphy agreed. He said the City is conservative, it never knows what revenues will be coming in, and there is a lot of work left to do.

Catherine Havener said she feels comfortable recommending COLA, as the Commission can say here's what regular folks are getting as well.

### **Municipal Court Judges discussion**

Caroline Mason recalled from the Commission's activities two years ago they looked at Judges' salaries, and decided to continue following the State schedule. She wondered if that would be the easiest decision for them to make if they do the same again. She asked if historically there has been any waiver from that practice, Sharon DeHaan replied no. Caroline Mason said to look at them getting 3%, if they go down that path there's a number for discussion. Christina Wiersma said Judge Laura Van Slyck plans to attend the April 8 meeting. Deb Williams added Council President Scott Bader and Councilmember Judy Tuohy will come to the April 8 meeting as well.

Chris Adams credited Judge Van Slyck for her work on the Streets Initiative, and other programs like Drug Court and expanded programs of the Municipal Court. Councilmember Murphy added the budget has been increased to make both Judges full-time.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting is April 8, 1:00 PM, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor Planning Conference Room. Chairperson Sievers asked the Commission members to think of pros and cons in the meantime.

The meeting adjourned 3:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Joni Siewert