

EVERETT SALARY REVIEW COMMISSION MEETING

April 8, 2015, 1:00 PM

8th Floor Planning Hearing Room

Those present:

Commission Members:

Chris Adams

John Dickson

Catherine Havener

Caroline Mason

Angie Sievers

Bobby Thompson

Excused:

Art Thomson

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 Bader, City Council President

Paul Roberts, City Councilmember

Judy Tuohy, City Councilmember

Laura Van Slyck, Municipal Court Judge

The meeting commenced 1:05 PM.

March 18, 2015 minutes

Commission Chair Angie Sievers asked for a motion to approve the March 18 Salary Review Commission minutes. Bobby Thompson so moved, seconded by Chris Adams. The motion carried.

Guest presentations

Angie Sievers asked if there were questions from the Commission about the information distributed by Councilmember Scott Murphy at the last meeting. She explained the Charter charges the Commission with evaluating compensation in relation to duties, so the Commission has asked what the Council's duties are. At first it appears to be a short list, so a lot of relevant and helpful information was provided through letters from Council President Bader and Councilmember Stonecipher. She then introduced today's guests and invited them to speak.

Paul Roberts

Councilmember Paul Roberts thanked the Commission members for their work. He prefaced his comments by saying he is not seeking greater compensation, he didn't sign up for this work for that purpose. His purpose is service to the public. He has made the commitment to building the area's infrastructure. He serves on boards and commissions, and chairs the Puget Sound Clean Energy Board. He is Vice President of Sound Transit, and is committed to expanding northward by building a link to Lynnwood, then linking Lynnwood to Everett. He spent most of the last two weeks in Olympia working on infrastructure projects. He is Vice President, will be President, of Association of Washington Cities. He also serves on National League of Cities. He met Congressman Larsen last week, a committee he co-chairs has asked for \$200 million, that's what he does with his spare time. Councilmember Roberts reiterated he is committed to public service and infrastructure.

Councilmember Roberts expressed concern previous Salary Commission discussion seemed to be diminishing what City Council does. He said the Council members don't get into this business to get well known. Without their commitments the City has challenges. He asked the Commission to be mindful this particular City is the home of the largest manufacturing assembly in the State of Washington and one of the biggest in the world. The City is also the area's water provider. He said all his colleagues are putting their time in, and he wants the Commission to understand that a great deal of time is being put into these issues, issues important for the region and important for the City. Councilmember Roberts gave the example he has to immediately leave this meeting to get over to the County Courthouse in order to attend the Snohomish County Cities meeting at 1:30.

Angie Sievers thanked Councilmember Roberts, and agreed Council business is important. She said the Commission appreciates what Councilmembers do. She explained what is written in the Charter does not give the Commission a lot of description. It is a hard task, like comparing

apples to oranges, so the Commission has asked questions about what Councilmembers do. She added the Commission members do know they work hard.

Councilmember Roberts said he was looking at the 10 largest cities and their Council structures. Some have committees and have additional time scheduled. He has asked to look at their procedures, as he would like to have bigger bandwidth as a group. He added he agrees with Councilmember Stonecipher's letter, in order to comply with the Open Public Meetings Act the seven Council members have to silo their work. He would like a discussion of the best way to represent the City's policy interests.

Judy Tuohy

Councilmember Tuohy described herself as the newest member on the Council, so she is trying to know everything about everything. She has had over 18 meetings over one hour each so she can get up to speed. She said she would prefer Council not get a raise, said it sends a message out there she doesn't want out there. They all have other jobs for a living, she would prefer to leave salary as it is.

Scott Bader

Council President Bader spoke of the importance of compensation for Councilmembers being sufficiently adequate so those from other walks of life can afford to be on the City Council. He agreed the current members have other jobs, and he himself buys vacation time from his regular employer to attend to City Council business. He advocates setting compensation at a rate that someone can consider running for Council and see it as doable. He figures 50% of Everett's citizens work outside the City, so he would like compensation set to make it viable for someone who works in Seattle or Mt. Vernon to come in for meetings. He added for him the compensation is appropriate, but asked the Commission to consider compensation that works financially so people don't consider against working on the Council.

Caroline Mason observed the President has different compensation than other members, and asked what President Bader's additional duties are. He responded supervising the Council Administrator Deb Williams, acting as liaison with Administration, and serving on more liaison assignments. He attends public events a little more often, for if people can't see the Mayor they want to see the Council President out there. He estimates he spends 50-100% more time preparing for meetings. The Council President also serves as Mayor pro tem.

Bobby Thompson asked about salary being a barrier, is that feedback from citizens? President Bader responded he has heard it occasionally from people contemplating running for Council, but he could count the number on one hand. Councilmember Roberts added has heard occasionally that people are astonished at how little they make. He said Everett is the home of the top four employers in the County. He reported \$48,000 is the median income in Everett, \$68,000 in Snohomish County. He related one thought about Council organization is having Council Districts.

There being no more questions, the Councilmembers left the meeting.

Laura Van Slyck

Judge Van Slyck introduced herself as one of two elected Municipal Court Judges. She has worked for the City of Everett since 1988, when she got out of college. She described issues facing Municipal Court Judges, including people addicted to drugs and alcohol, traffic violators, and the mentally ill. In her law career she has seen phenomenally more challenges. She described Municipal Court as an enhanced community resource, and her vision beside the need to continue its core function is to engage in new programs, including the Community Justice Alternatives program.

Addressing compensation, Judge Van Slyck said typically this Commission follows the salary of District Court Judges. She said there is not that much difference between duties and could argue they are easily equivalent in the interaction with the community and caseloads.

Chris Adams asked if pay for Judges is adequate to get qualified candidates. Judge Van Slyck replied she was one of those who thought a Judge was as prosecutor in a black robe until she became one. She said a Judge must be a qualified individual, and cited the speed with which she has to make split second decisions. Where in Superior Court there is sentencing investigation, in Municipal Court there is a quick succession of plead sentence, plead sentence. She does have electronic tools at the bench providing case information to assist.

There being no more questions, Judge Van Slyck left the meeting.

Salary Discussion ***City Council***

Commission Chair Angie Sievers called for discussion on Council salary. Bobby Thompson found Councilmember Tuohy's comment interesting that she was not speaking for everyone, but

she would not like to see compensation adjusted. Angie Sievers said at the same time the City wants to attract fresh blood. Chris Adams asked what flexibility the Commission has. In the City's negotiations with staff members do they get retroactive pay increases? Sharon DeHaan replied yes, under State law for those labor groups who are subject to arbitration the arbitrator will generally give them retroactive pay increases. Chris Adams asked if a pay increase for Council could be put off until the labor contracts are settled. Sharon DeHaan said that would be difficult, as most of the contracts are still in negotiation and there is not an end date in sight. There was additional discussion about labor union negotiations encompassing a total compensation package, including insurance premium contributions. John Dickson commented it seems like the Commission's hands are tied as they can just talk about salary.

Angie Sievers directed the Commission to a copy of an e-mail from Art Thomson that was distributed with today's information package. He was not able to attend today's meeting, but he recommends a 2% increase for City Council members.

Chris Adams observed the Commission could take into account Council members' contributions to medical premiums. Caroline Mason asked how much medical premiums are going up. Sharon DeHaan replied the City won't find out until July. She added medical went up 0% last year, two years were negative, then there was a year of 16.5% increase due to some major illnesses. She added Group Health is the fully insured plan the City offers, and its increase ranges at about 8% per year.

John Dickson said that a 2% increase for City Council, based on their not receiving a pay adjustment the past two years, seems reasonable. Bobby Thompson agreed it is appropriate, but wonders how they justify 2% when they go to public comments. Angie Sievers cited overall cost of living which has not been provided but one year in the past five years, and the relative increase in medical premiums.

Chris Adams went back to the Charter, which charges the Commission with comparing duties to salary. He said Council members have done a good job describing their duties. Angie Sievers added their workload compared to other Councils is significant due to the way it is currently structured.

Caroline Mason added higher compensation for the Council President is justifiable.

Caroline Mason made a motion to keep Municipal Court Judges' salary set with District Court Judges, and increase the City Council and Council President salaries by 2% for 2016 and 2017. Catherine Havener seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Mayor

Chris Adams asked if anyone knew why Art Thomson's e-mail didn't recommend a pay increase for the Mayor. No one had an answer. Catherine Havener wondered if it was because the Mayor received an increase the last cycle and not Council. She said she would like to go along with Art Thomson, and recommended no increase.

John Dickson referred to the comparison survey of full-time Mayors of cities of comparable size. He recalled an article about pensions during the time local politicians were encouraging Boeing workers to accept reductions in their pensions so their work would remain in Washington. The article pointed out politicians such as our Mayor still have pensions when not many Fortune 500 companies offer them. He observed the article didn't look good for the Mayors. He said he was not ready to make a decision in the short amount of time left in this meeting, especially knowing their decisions will need justification.

Chris Adams recommended they also think about attracting citizens of the highest quality, and asked if \$167,000 will accomplish that. Caroline Mason recalled City Managers can be paid even more.

Caroline Mason asked Sharon DeHaan about pensions. Sharon DeHaan replied the elected officials and the City do pay contributions into the State of Washington retirement system. When they come on board with the City of Everett they decide if they want into the pension system. If they elect in they contribute a portion of their salaries each pay period. It is the same system as other City employees. She added Judges have another system.

John Dickson asked what happens after their terms are up. Sharon DeHaan replied they can take the money out, or stay until a certain age. While working, the City's portion is paid by the City. It is a guaranteed pension, based on the highest five years of earnings. She was asked about the percentage of salary paid in, she will get the figure from Payroll and send out an e-mail with the percentage.

Next meeting

The next meeting is April 15, 1:00 PM, Mayor's Conference Room.

The meeting adjourned 2:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Joni Siewert