

Meeting of the Northampton Elected Officials Compensation Advisory Board

Monday, April 24, 2023 • 5:30 p.m.

[Online Zoom Meeting](#) (Meeting ID: 848 0435 0600)

Minutes

Board members present

- John Bidwell – Chair
- Tara Brewster
- Felicia Corbeil – Acting Clerk
- Deb Henson
- Peter Whalen – Vice Chair

Board members absent

- Sam Hopper – Clerk
- Javier Luengo-Garrido

Additional attendees

- *Jim Nash, City Council President/Ward 3*

Minutes

Call meeting to order

- Meeting called to order at 5:33 p.m.
- Announcement meeting is being audio and video recorded
- Roll Call
 - John Bidwell: Present
 - Tara Brewster: Present
 - Felicia Corbeil: Present
 - Deb Henson: Present
 - Peter Whalen: Present

Previous Meeting Minutes: Vote

- Peter Whelan moved to approve minutes from the April 10, 2023 meeting, Tara Brewster seconded
 - John Bidwell: Yes
 - Tara Brewster: Yes
 - Felicia Corbeil: Yes
 - Deb Henson: Yes
 - Peter Whalen: Yes

Public Comment

Jim Nash, City Council President from Ward 3

- Discussion of compensation
 - Believes individuals are aware of benefits/compensation involved when deciding to run for an elected position.
 - Northampton is a town where the community likes having communication with their elected officials and often has elected officials show up at events and answering phone calls/emails all hours of the day.
 - Worries that without proper compensation, we will lose good people. We want people to run for 3-4 terms so they have the time to do great work for the community.
 - Feels health insurance has the ability to provide stability and a cost effective plan for individuals who wouldn't otherwise have access.

Discussion Items

Team Updates

- Discussion of information from John

The role of compensation in increasing the diversity of elected officials

1. We assume that diverse representation is good for Northampton
2. We assume that diversity is encouraged through increased pay.
3. References:
 - <https://democracyfund.org/idea/pursuing-diversity-and-representation-among-local-election-officials/>
 - <https://www.democracymarket.com/analysis/analysis-pay-legislators-more-for-better-representation/>

We focus on what is fair:

1. We look at what is fair (i.e, benchmark against similar cities, but we can also take into account jobs with a similar budget, staff, and responsibility/impact if we want).
2. We look at what the job demands (skills, time), including if the job has become less/more time intensive.

We do not consider the city's budgeting: John checked with City Chair Jim Nash who said that:

1. We are not supposed to consider the city's budget when looking at compensation.
2. It is the responsibility of the Council to decide what can/can't be changed due to budget.
3. Precedent: Every 3 years, the City reviews non-elected positions (both union and non-union) and they start with assessments/recommendations that do not look at the city budget.

- Discussion of items from Deb’s research

	Health Insurance (% paid by city)	Retirement/options
Agawam	Yes (50-70%)	No, but yes to life insurance
Easthampton	Yes (75%)	Yes (Mayor pays into City retirement & pt-t ees OBRA 7.5%)
Greenfield	Yes (Mayor only – 80% HMO; 60% PPO)	No
Pittsfield	Yes	Yes (optional for elected; mand for others)
West Springfield	?	?
Westfield	Yes (77%)	Yes (no match by towns, but officials can contribute to plan)

- Most bench mark cities have some type of health insurance benefit. Most cities do not match retirement contributions of city employees. School committee members are often not included in health/retirement contributions from the city.

- Discussion on the Mayor’s compensation

The Mayor's Compensation

- Current: \$92,500: The current salary is ranked 98th (see Addendum 3 - [FY2022 Northampton Salaries](#)). In 2014, the last time the Board made its recommendations, the mayor’s salary ranked 64th.
- An increase of 27.08% to keep up with inflation would be a salary of \$117,549 (source: [CPI Inflation Calculator](#)). This would rank the position 34th in City pay.
- The average mayoral salary in the 6 benchmarking cities/towns for which we have data is \$102,700. This would rank the position 59th in City pay.
 - Positions are elected and we shouldn’t base the amount on a specific person as officials can and will change over time. The board should use a percentage increase with a reasonable foundation for the amount.

- Recommendation for a 27% (inflation adjustment increase) plus 2% for mayor and other elected officials for increased duty and responsibilities that were not present in 2014.
 - Recommendation for Mayor's salary to be increased to \$119,325 (a 29% increase).
 - Northampton is a leader in many ways and a lot is expected of people, and the demands of many positions have changed.
 - We should try to be respectful of city budget so as not to be disregarded.
 - Board members generally agreed that the compensation increase should be tied to a traceable number.
- Deb Henson moved to approve a mayoral salary of \$119,325, Tara Brewster seconded.
 - John Bidwell: Yes
 - Tara Brewster: Yes
 - Felicia Corbeil: Yes
 - Deb Henson: Yes
 - Peter Whalen: Yes
- Discussion of Part-Time Elected Officials Compensation

Part-Time Elected Officials' Compensations

- Do we apply COLA adjustment since 2014? Other?
- Current compensation
 - Ward City Councilor \$9,000 + benefits
 - At-Large Councilor \$9,500 + benefits
 - City Council President \$10,000 + benefits
 - Ward School Committee Member \$5,000 + benefits
 - At-Large School Committee Member \$5,500 + benefits
 - Trustee of Smith Voc & Agri \$5,000 + benefits
- Question raised if part-time positions should follow the same compensation increase as Mayor - more specifically looking at the lower compensation for School Committee members and trustees.
- Board agreed that nothing has come up in our research or our conversations with elected officials that would suggest School Committee members should be compensated differently than in proportion to City Council.
- Brief overview of difference between At-Large Councilor and Ward City Councilors as it pertains to their difference in compensation.
- Deb Henson moved to approve a 29% increase to Part-Time Elected Officials Compensation, Felicia Corbeil seconded.
 - John Bidwell: Yes
 - Tara Brewster: Yes
 - Felicia Corbeil: Yes

- Deb Henson: Yes
- Peter Whalen: Yes

- Discussion of Health Insurance Benefits for Elected Officials
- Board members unanimously agreed that there was no need to further discuss health benefits as we would not be proposing any changes to what is currently in place.

Determine The Next Steps

- Subcommittee will meet in 2 days to discuss the draft with a 29% increase for all elected positions.

Adjourn

- Peter Whelan moved to adjourn meeting, Tara Brewster seconded
 - John Bidwell: Yes
 - Tara Brewster: Yes
 - Felicia Corbeil: Yes
 - Deb Henson: Yes
 - Peter Whalen: Yes
- Meeting adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

Upcoming Meetings

- May 1, 2023 @ 5:30 p.m. via Zoom