



REDMOND SALARY COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 23, 2023 @ 6:30 p.m.

1. Call Meeting to Order

Cathryn Laird called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm.

Roll Call/present:

Othman Erekaeni
Chandrasekhar Goka
Matthew Kanter
Fernando Medina Corey
Kara Simon
Karen Tennyson

Not present:

Konstantinos Boulis

A quorum was present.

Staff:

Cathryn Laird, Human Resources Director
Mary Grady, Sr HR Analyst

Approval of March 9, 2023 Minutes:

- Karen moved to accept the minutes, and Kara seconded;
- Fernando requested two additions to the minutes: that Mayor Birney had commented that the Commission cannot change the number of hours that Council works, and that the Mayor had indicated that Council works quarter-time.
- Matt questioned to vote with the additions
- Minutes approved with the two additions, 6-0

Review and Acceptance of the agenda:

- Moved to accept by Matt and seconded by Fernando
- Fernando asked to add his Wage Model Options Proposal into item #3 of the agenda
- Agenda was accepted with addition of this item to #3, 6-0

2. Public Comment

One written comment was received and was provided to those present. It was submitted by Lisa Weber, Chair, 48th LD Democrats, and was dated March 8, 2023, and it reads as follows:

Whereas the Redmond City Council has recently appointed a new community member led salary commission tasked with evaluating the salaries for Redmond City Councilmembers; and

Whereas candidates from diverse backgrounds are less likely to run for office, and when they do they face higher barriers being elected; and

Whereas candidates from different socioeconomic backgrounds provide valuable and often ignored perspectives to political office; and

Whereas the current salary of city council members is near \$20 per hour assuming a 20-hour work week; and

Whereas \$20 per hour is not a living wage for even a single adult in Washington State; and

Whereas \$20 per hour is not even half of a living wage for a single adult with any children; and

Whereas Democrats should push for living wages in every profession; and

Therefore be it resolved that the 48th District Democrats encourage the Redmond Salary Commission to recommend an increase in Redmond council member salaries to be a minimum equivalent to a living wage for a family of our, or \$45 per hour.

3. **Work Plan/Discussion**

Cathryn provided the following reminders:

- Welcoming and Respect
 - Cathryn stated that the City is embarking on a city-wide effort, both internally and externally, to ensure employees who work at the City and the community who interact with City staff feel welcomed and respected. This means taking the time to interact in a way that is patient, kind, and appreciative. She highlighted the importance of ensuring our interactions are respectful and reminded the Commission that the staff are here to work with them to gather data and guide the process, and asked that the Commission please treat staff with patience and kindness. She stated that staff will be respectful to the Commission during interactions, and that we all have the same goal, which is for you to make a decision on the Council's salary for the next four years.

- Reminder of Commission's Role
 - Cathryn reminded the Commission of their role, in accordance with Ordinance 2111, Section 6: "As provided in state law, the Redmond Salary Commission shall have the authority to establish the salaries of City elected officials, and to that end may order that the salaries of...the City Council be increased or decreased. Salaries for the City Council shall be uniform as to all Council positions."
 - The Commission can only set Council salary; they cannot determine if Council will be full time or part time.
 - Also noted, Council salaries must be the same (uniform) also in accordance with Ordinance 2111, section, so whatever salary is selected would be based on the same amount for each Council member.
 - Commission members requested a written statement from the City Attorney about how hours are established and set; Cathryn agreed

to reach out to the City Attorney.

- Quorum Reminder – Cathryn also provided the following reminders:
 - Remember to not discuss this process outside of these meetings with three or more commission members.
 - Thank you for continuing to not “reply all” to emails.
 - If you would like to present proposals to the commission, please do so at the meeting rather than you sending out to all commission members prior to the meeting.

Review of addition to agenda: “Wage Model Options Proposal” provided by Fernando, which suggested four model options to pursue:

- Salary stipend
- Minimum wage for hours worked
- Equitable living wage
- Living wage plus full-time hours

Fernando explained that he wants a Council that is able to focus on its work for the City and not have to rely upon another job or source of income. Discussion about what other cities have done occurred and Bellingham was identified as having increase pay. Staff had been in contact with the HR Director at Bellingham and said that the information they received from Bellingham was that pay for Council there was increased Higher pay for two main reasons: The city does not provide insurance premiums for part-time employees, therefore council members had to pay out-of-pocket for benefit premiums for their dependents. The increase in council pay allowed council members to pay for their dependent benefit premiums. The second consideration was focused on Whatcom County Council member salary and wanted to be more equitable with their pay. The Commission asked for more information from Bellingham about what kind of compensation model they adopted, so staff will try to gain more information.

Other discussion included the following:

- Perhaps adding to wage model that the minimum pay for council members is one month’s rent;
- Reminder of importance to balance what is best for council members with what is best for City; too high a salary could cause a referendum; however, the referendum process may not occur unless the salary was outrageously high;
- Need to be careful to not include determining how many hours should be worked, as this is not allowed by the Ordinance;
- A suggestion was made to consider a monthly living wage at one adult and 2 children in King County, which according to the Living Wage data from MIT, would be a \$55.43 hourly rate, or \$115,294 annually, or \$9,608 per month.

The Commission asked if the City Attorney might be able to join a meeting so legal questions could be asked; Cathryn agreed to explore this option.

Matt proposed adding a “floor” to what the council pay should be (whether one-month’s rent or other) and the Commission was in agreement. Fernando will rewrite his proposal to incorporate Matt’s suggestions.

The Commission also asked about the Mayor’s current compensation, which is \$145,000, plus approximately 37% for benefits. The Commission also asked about projected inflation, but staff said this is very difficult to predict. Inflation has been on average 3% a year, but since 2021 has been volatile, making it challenging to predict.

Prep interview questions for meeting with Council President and Vice President at April 6, 2023 meeting:

Council President Forsythe will attend the April 6th meeting remotely at 7:00 pm, and Council Vice President Kritzer will attend in person at 6:30 pm.

The Commission reviewed a proposed list of questions, revising and deleting some, and came up with a finalized list. The questions will be provided ahead of time to the Council President and Vice President so that discussion time can be used efficiently at the next meeting.

Review of data/continued discussion:

- Cathryn stated that if the Commission decided to pay a council salary at \$115,000 plus 37% benefits, it would have an impact on staff morale and may not justify the body of work that they do. Consideration should be given to duties/time/accountability to determine fair salary for what they are doing, and that they work less than part time, along with balancing civic duty; meeting with the two council members at the next meeting will help provide more insight on this.
- Fernando felt that the living wage of \$55.43 in King County is most important. He said that other voices, like single mothers, need to be heard on Council who may not be able to afford be on Council because they have to work other jobs. Citizens who are not wealthy may not serve on Council, so this may lead to unbalanced representation.
- Chandra stated that Council is a strategic position at a high level, and paying more for the role may provide for better quality council members with a public service mindset, and agreed that low pay may cause some to be excluded.
- Karen stated that Civic focus is most important and many council members have served on Council who were not wealthy.
- Cathryn stated that the Commission could consider reducing the cost of benefit premiums rates from part-time rate to full-time rate that can positively impact overall salary, and handed out a copy of current health plan premiums. She also said the Commission can consider providing COLA adjustments annually until the Salary Commission meets again and handed out information on CPI-W and COLA information that staff have received.

4. Prep for April 6th Agenda

The tentative items for the April 6th meeting agenda include:

- Discussion with Council President and Vice President
- Discuss and review information/data
- Attempt to reach consensus toward goal, with only two meetings remaining after the April 6th meeting

5. Adjournment: the chair adjourned the meeting at 8:45 pm.

Next Meeting Dates: *(All times from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.)*

April 6

April 20

May 4 (last official meeting scheduled)

Completed Meetings:

February 23 (process meeting)

March 9 (first official meeting)

March 23