



City of Tacoma
Citizen Commission on Elected Salaries

Dalvin Yarbrough, Chair
Danette Knowles
Keoni Ho
David Koenig
Amanda Robison
Thomas Brewster
Judy Loveless-Morris

MINUTES
CITIZEN COMMISSION ON ELECTED SALARIES
Special Meeting Monday July 17, 2023
6:00 PM

I. CALL TO ORDER: 6:04 PM

II. ROLL CALL: Chair Dalvin Yarbrough
Commission Chair Dalvin Yarbrough took roll call of the Commissioners in attendance.

Present: Chair Dalvin Yarbrough

Commissioners: Keoni Ho, Danette Knowles, Judy Loveless-Morris,
Amanda Robison

Absent: Thomas (Jed) Brewster, David Koenig

Staff Present: Council Member Catherine Ushka, HR Manager
Jen Peters, HR Liaison Monica Rutledge

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM May 1, 2023 MEETING

There was a motion to approve the May 1st, 2023 meeting minutes as presented.

First: Commissioner Judy Loveless-Morris

Second: Commissioner Danette Knowles

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

The motion passed.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments submitted.

V. CITY OF TACOMA COUNCIL MEMBERS CATHERINE USHKA AND KEITH BLOCKER

Council Member Blocker was not in attendance. Council Member (CM) Ushka joined the meeting and Chair Yarbrough thanked her for attending. CM Ushka thanked the

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Commissioners for serving and summarized her previous experience on the Charter Review Committee, describing how the Salary Commission came to be within the City. CM Ushka said her service on the Council is both a privilege and a vocation. She currently represents District 4 and briefly described her prior experience on the Tacoma school board. She described running for office and accepting the position, aware of the pay offered. CM Ushka summarized how she spends her time, between Council meetings, and various appointments and Committees. Her schedule varies widely, from 10-20 hours per week up to 60-80 hours per week. Council Members also represent the City on the weekends and anytime they're in public. Aspects of the job she finds most rewarding are seeing the impacts of policies and programs and working with individuals across cultures to solve challenges. CM Ushka addressed the possibility of full-time status, stating opinions differ amongst the Council members. The Council should be reflective of the community and full-time may be a way to assist with this. She ran for office knowing what the salary was and is grateful for the increases that have been issued since. She loves her job and considers it a privilege to be able to represent people in the City. She thanked the Commission again for taking the time to listen to her.

Chair Yarbrough opened the floor for questions, asking CM Ushka how many hours she typically averaged per week previously, and she replied certainly 40 or higher. She has currently cut back some on evenings and weekends. Chair Yarbrough asked her to describe some of her main responsibilities. CM Ushka replied her primary focus is her constituent work. In addition, she has Tuesday Council duties, and serves as Chair on the Pierce County Board of Health as well as the Community Vitality and Safety Committee. She also serves on the Law and Justice and Law and Justice oversight Commissions. She aims to increase voice, diversity, and equity within her district. In addition, she championed the anti-racism resolution at the Health Board which she is very proud of.

Commissioner Ho thanked CM Ushka for meeting with them. He briefly commented on the CM calendars that were sent to the Commission and asked CM Ushka about her Sister City Africa and NLC Washington DC trips. CM Ushka described her role at the conferences and described some of her activities while attending. Commissioner Ho asked for additional detail on the time spent on duties while on these business trips. CM Ushka replied that there are daily conference workshops and evening receptions, so free time is very limited.

Chair Yarbrough asked CM Ushka for final thoughts on her role and CM salaries. CM Ushka replied that the Council has full-time work and commented that the current salary is reflective of full-time work in Tacoma, depending on your occupation. She added that the Mayor being full-time is appropriate based on the additional requirements in the role of representing the City. She considers the work a vocation, a value more than time and money and that the current salary is getting close to the median income in Tacoma. She compares any lack of compensation to the privilege of serving. She feels the City should

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offer equitable compensation so that people from all cultures and generations can run for office. She is grateful for the Commissions' thoughtfulness and questions on behalf of the current Council as well as future Members.

Commissioner Loveless-Morris thanked CM Ushka and asked her if increasing the Council salary would have an impact on attracting candidates, building diversity pathways and the long-term vision for CM positions. CM Ushka replied 'Yes' and detailed a few reasons why.

VI. MAYOR/COUNCIL MEMBER CALENDAR REVIEW

Chair Yarbrough asked HR liaison Monica Rutledge to review a portion of the email response from the City Manager's Assistant to further clarify the questions from the Commission about the content and use of CM and Mayor Calendars. Chair Yarbrough asked if there were any further questions from the Commission. Commissioner Ho commented that it was helpful to gain some insight into the daily schedules of the Council and Mayor and replied that he had compiled some statistics based on the calendar entries. He added up the time from calendar entries for each individual CM and came up with a varying average of 22-37 hours worked per week. Chair Yarbrough added that it is important to consider that there are time and tasks to account for that are not typically added to a calendar such as reading and meeting prep time. Commissioner Robison concurred and added that time spent engaging in public activities is not reflected on the calendars. Chair Yarbrough thanked CM Ho for providing the information. Commissioner Ho further commented on the current CPI, recently published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics at 4.6%, noting that Council Members recently received another 6% increase. Commissioner Knowles commented that meeting preparedness and public engagement are basic expectations of many jobs. Chair Yarbrough added that you may not expect to be compensated for that extra time, but also not always required to hold a second job when you are in those types of roles. He added that there is often work to take home in the off hours in the role of public servant, and that preparedness is an expectation. Commissioner Knowles asked if there was consideration or guidance for prep time built into their schedules, possibly limiting the number of committees they each participate in. Commissioner Ho commented there was a minimum requirement of participation on 2 internal and one external committees. Commissioner Loveless-Morris suggested while allowing for the complexity and adaptability required in their roles, that they use their calendars in a standardized way to account for their time to help create performance metrics to assist in salary assessment. Chair Yarbrough concurred, as did Commissioners Knowles and Ho, and he added the data would also assist with accountability and transparency. Commissioner Loveless-Morris added that it is important to remain flexible and allow for the complexity and emotional requirements of the job.

VII. COMPENSATION DATA REVIEW: JEN PETERS, HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER

Jen Peters reviewed the information that had been updated in the data spreadsheet previously sent to the Commission, regarding comparable entity salaries, benefits and population data. The updated spreadsheet will be sent out to the Commissioners as a follow-up to the meeting. Commissioner Ho asked the Commissioners to consider the CPI-W when making the 2024 salary decision, which last year was at 10%, and has dropped this year to 4.5%, and will likely drop further in the future. Chair Yarbrough added that regardless of where the CPI-W is, to keep in mind the positions the CM's are in, their realities on the ground, as well as the future of the Council. Commissioner Ho added that considering the latter may have affected the Commission decision last year. Chair Yarbrough relayed that the 2023 decision was made by the Commission as a group, with different members last year, and a decision can be made considering all data and human aspects.

VIII. OTHER TOPICS FOR OPEN DISCUSSION

Commissioner Ho referred back to the calendars, the CM part-time status and further defined household median income, pointing out the roughly \$60,000 current median income is household combined total. Chair Yarbrough encouraged the Commission to take more time to review all of the numbers and think about what makes sense prior to the August 7th decision meeting.

IX. TOPICS FOR AUGUST 7TH 2023 AGENDA

A draft of the agenda for the August 7 meeting was reviewed and there was brief discussion. There were no additional suggested agenda items.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Yarbrough announced that the August 7th, 2023 would be his last meeting, due to relocation.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting.

First: Commissioner Judy Loveless-Morris

Second: Commissioner Danette Knowles

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Meeting adjourned 7:35 PM

