



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**  
Meeting Monday August 7, 2023  
6:00 PM

**I. CALL TO ORDER: 6:12 PM**

**II. ROLL CALL:** Chair Dalvin Yarbrough

Commission Chair Dalvin Yarbrough took roll call of the Commissioners in attendance.

**Present:** Chair Dalvin Yarbrough

**Commissioners:** Danette Knowles, Keoni Ho, Amanda Robison,  
Thomas (Jed) Brewster, Judy Loveless-Morris

**Absent:** David Koenig

**Staff Present:** HR Manager Jen Peters, HR Liaison Monica  
Rutledge

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM July 17, 2023 MEETING**

There was a motion to approve the July 17, 2023 meeting minutes as presented.

**First:** Commissioner Amanda Robison  
**Second:** Commissioner Danette Knowles  
**Ayes: 6**  
**Nays: 0**

The motion passed.

**IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were five written public comments submitted in advance of the meeting.

Six members of the public addressed the Commission at the meeting.

**V. OTHER TOPICS FOR OPEN DISCUSSION**

Chair Yarbrough asked the Commission if any of them had additional topics for discussion. Commissioner Ho reviewed information on how the current Council salary of \$51,000 compares with Tacoma's median household salary of \$70,000. He offered some additional statistics he had compiled regarding average resident income and expenses as it applies to a current livable wage. He also reviewed salary statistics for several neighboring public entities. Commissioner Ho addressed the topics of attracting future talent to the Council by offering a full-time salary, as well as DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) initiatives. He provided statistics on BIPOC representation as it compares to demographics within different cities. He doesn't feel there is enough information at this time to consider a full-time wage but would be open to it in the future if the Council status changes to full-time status.

Commissioner Loveless-Morris thanked Commissioner Ho for providing information and data points to the group. She feels it is important to keep additional points of diversity and the complexity of the data in mind for the salary decision. In addition, wages alone will not drive who gets placed in a Council position, there are many other factors. She suggested that if an increase was issued, to monitor the outcome to confirm if there is an impact to the proposed changes they would like to see in opportunities for more Tacoma citizens. She added that by raising the salary there is also the possibility of increasing the privilege for an existing demographic.

Commissioner Brewster commented that the outcome of their current salary decision is unknown, and any impacts may take a while to become visible. He wants to see a diverse Council that represents the make-up of the community. In addition, he feels people should be paid fairly for the work that's done; the current salary is a good wage for part-time work, not for full-time. The result he would like to see is a salary that pays reasonably well for a full-time job.

Chair Yarbrough added that part of the challenge to their decision is the Council part-time status and documentation of hours worked, and if increasing the salary would change either of those factors. There is some disparity in the number of hours worked between Council members, although some hours worked do not appear on their calendars. It is a challenge deciding which change should come first to achieve the goals the Commission is trying to accomplish.

Commissioner Brewster asked where it is documented that the Council is part-time. Commissioner Ho responded that he has reviewed the City Charter and that it is vague and open. He is hesitant to vote for an increase in salary for a part-time position. If the Council collectively elects to move to full-time, he is on board with discussions for an increase. Commissioner Brewster asked what the process was to change the Council status in the Charter. Chair Yarbrough replied that the Commission's sole purpose was to

vote on the salary only. Commissioner Ho added he read in the Charter that they are only required to hold 46 sessions per year. Commissioner Judy Loveless-Morris proposed that they narrow down discussion, to decide if the Council is paid adequately and setting the salary to attract and retain the types of candidates they would like to see on the Council. Chair Yarbrough added that soon they would begin entertaining motions and going into executive sessions for discussion.

HR liaison Rutledge added for the record acknowledgement of the letter received from Council Member Daniels that was addressed to the Commission and distributed in advance. Commissioner Ho added that his comments at the meeting were in response to all the letters addressed to the Commission.

**VI. CITY OF TACOMA INTERNAL BUDGET: KATHRYN JOHNSTON, BUDGET OFFICER**

Katie Johnston discussed the process for biennial budget projection and planning. She added that wage projections and negotiations with bargaining groups are ongoing throughout the biennium. She noted that the labor projections should be close to budget to adequately project expenses and maintain service levels. Katie added that the budget office is aware of the potential for wages falling above or below budget, due to bargaining contracts and the necessity for a living wage and market-based pay within our community. Katie briefly discussed the previous 2021-2022 biennial budget challenges coming out of the pandemic. She described high wage growth, and a jump in the regional CPI.

Chair Yarbrough noted that there were no set parameters guiding the Commission and asked Katie if she could suggest a reasonable expectation. Katie explained that the budget office and departments are accustomed to working with 2% adjustments up or down to their budgets. A substantial wage increase would need to be managed somewhat differently. She added that the City has an approximately 4-billion-dollar budget, and the Council wage expenses are spread out across the organization, minimizing the impact of an increase.

**VII. 2024 SALARY VOTE**

Commissioner Brewster made a motion to raise the Council salary to \$75,000 per year, with the expectation that the Council would work full-time in response. There was no second motion, the motion failed.

Commissioner Ho made a motion to maintain all current salaries under consideration. There was no second motion, the motion failed.

There was brief discussion on crafting the motions and the voting process. Commissioner Brewster further explained his reasoning for his initial motion.

## Citizen Commission on Elected Salaries

Commissioner Brewster re-raised his motion to increase Council salaries to \$75,000 per year. Commissioner Loveless-Morris seconded the motion.

Pursuant to RCW 42.30.110.G An executive session was called to discuss the current motion.

The meeting reconvened. Commissioner Loveless-Morris made an amended motion to increase the current Council salaries by 20%. Commissioner Robison seconded the motion. There was a vote of three Aye's, the amended motion failed.

Commissioner Brewster made an amended motion to raise the current Council salary by 25%. Commissioner Robison seconded the motion.

Pursuant to RCW 42.30.110.G An executive session was called to discuss the amended motion.

The meeting reconvened. Commissioner Ho made an amended motion to increase the Council and Deputy Mayor salaries by 2%. Commissioner Knowles seconded the motion.

Pursuant to RCW 42.30.110.G An executive session was called to discuss the amended motion.

The meeting reconvened. Chair Yarbrough briefly discussed the protocol for holding executive sessions. Commissioner Brewster made a motion to take a roll call vote on the amended motion. Commissioner Knowles seconded the motion.

There was a vote on Commissioner Ho's amended motion to increase the Deputy Mayor and Council Member salaries by 2%.

Commissioner Danette Knowles – No. She feels 2% is too low to retain Council Members.

Commissioner Ho – Yes. He feels the 12% increase last year was excessive and 2% is more in line with the current CPI.

Commissioner Amanda Robison – Nay. She feels that 2% is too low.

Commissioner Jed Brewster – No. He would like to move forward and see more consistency with a full-time Council.

Commissioner Judy Loveless-Morris – Nay. She feels this is not enough of a tool to address the challenges of inequity.

Chair Dalvin Yarbrough – No. He feels 2% does not reflect the direction they would like to see and does not match the work and efforts put forth by the Council.

The amended motion failed.

## Citizen Commission on Elected Salaries

There was brief discussion on the option of scheduling an additional special meeting.

Commissioner Loveless-Morris made a new motion to increase the salaries by 20%. Commissioner Brewster seconded the motion. She cited the complexity of the work along with the hope that the Council will meet their full-time expectation. In addition, she hopes it will help attract and retain high talent.

Pursuant to RCW 42.30.110.G There was an executive session to discuss the new current motion.

The meeting reconvened. Chair Yarbrough briefly reviewed the RCW pertaining to executive sessions.

Commissioner Loveless-Morris restated her motion to increase the Council salaries by 20%. Commissioner Brewster seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken.

Commissioner Danette Knowles – No. She feels our current salary is similar to comparable cities, and there is no guarantee of the Council working full-time.

Commissioner Keoni Ho – No. Echoing Commissioner Knowles' response and citing his data research and other reasons why he feels a 20% increase is not justified.

Commissioner Amanda Robison - Yay. She feels this increase would be a step forward in allowing people serving their community to afford to live here and provide for their families without taking a second job.

Commissioner Jed Brewster – Yay. He feels that salary is a tool to use as a means of moving forward to a full-time Council, which will benefit the City. He plans to communicate his reasoning and expectations directly to the Council Members.

Commissioner Judy Loveless-Morris – Yay. She requested additional quantitative data such as the Council calendars to assist in the salary decision. She hopes a vote to increase salary will be used to positively impact the citizens of Tacoma.

Chair Yarbrough – Yay. The Commission has requested and taken in a lot of information this year to come to a reasoned decision. He is hopeful this will help lead to a full-time Council. He also feels they are playing a little catch-up with the salary, and that we need to attract talent to meet the City's needs.

With 4 Yay's and 2 No's, the motion for a 20% increase for Council Members and the Deputy Mayor passed.

There was a brief 5-minute meeting adjournment.

The meeting reconvened at 9:28pm.

## Citizen Commission on Elected Salaries

Human Resources Manager Jen Peters reviewed the salary history of the Mayor, previously provided to the Commission.

Commissioner Robison made a motion to issue a 5% increase to the Mayor salary. Commissioner Knowles seconded the motion.

Pursuant to RCW 42.30.110.G There was an executive session to discuss the proposed motion.

The meeting reconvened. There was a roll call vote on the current motion to increase the Mayor's salary by 5% for 2024.

Commissioner Danette Knowles – Yes. She feels it keeps the Mayor's position competitive with other cities and allows Tacoma to draw good candidates.

Commissioner Keoni Ho – No. He feels the position already has a substantial income in comparison with peers.

Commissioner Amanda Robison – Yay. She feels it is a reasonable raise to keep us competitive.

Commissioner Jed Brewster: Yay. He feels that 5% increase is enough for now and would like to see it increased in the future.

Commissioner Loveless-Morris – Yes. She echoes the comments of the other Yay's voiced before her.

Chair Dalvin Yarbrough – Yes. He feels if you want a good Mayor working for your town, you need to pay them what they're worth.

With 5 Yay's and 1 No, the motion passed. Chair Yarbrough thanked the Commission for all their work over the past year.

### **VIII. NEW CHAIR APPOINTMENT; COMMISSIONER EXPIRING TERMS (2)**

Chair Yarbrough relayed that this was his last meeting, and a new Chair would need to be appointed. Commissioner Knowles nominated Commissioner Judy Loveless-Morris as the new Chair. Commissioner Brewster seconded the motion. Commissioner Loveless-Morris declined the nomination, and in turn nominated Commissioner Brewster as the new Chair. Commissioner Knowles seconded the motion. Commissioner Brewster accepted the nomination.

There were 5 Yay's and no Nay's, the motion passed.

### **IX. TOPICS FOR NOVEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup> 2023 AGENDA**

- Commissioner Ho would like to add drafting a letter to the Council to convey their ideas

## Citizen Commission on Elected Salaries

- Commissioner Knowles would like to see more hard data on what they are doing in their districts to make a difference, and what their hours look like.
- HR Liaison added a reminder for a Commission By-laws discussion.
- Commissioner Loveless-Morris suggesting assigning different tasks to Commissioners such as reviewing calendars, and possibly shadowing CM's during their workday.

There was additional discussion on what the Commission would like to review for the next salary vote, and reflection on their current salary decision for 2024.

### **X. ADJOURNMENT**

New Chair Brewster and the other Commissioners thanked Dalvin Yarbrough for his contributions to the Commission as Chair.

**Chair Brewster made a motion to adjourn the meeting.**

**First:** Commission Chair Brewster

**Second:** Commissioner Judy Loveless-Morris

**Ayes: 6**

**Nays: 0**

**Meeting adjourned 10:01 PM**