



City of Tacoma
Citizen Commission on Elected Salaries

Richard Wilkinson, Chair
Brandon Kindschy
Klaus Nalley
David Koenig
Amanda Robison
Thomas Brewster
Davlin Yarbrough

MINUTES
CITIZEN COMMISSION ON ELECTED SALARIES
Virtual via Zoom
Monday May 2, 2022
6:00 P.M.

I. CALL TO ORDER: 6:00pm

II. ROLL CALL: HR Liaison Olson

PRESENT:

Officers: Chair Richard Wilkinson

Members: Brandon Kindschy, Klaus Nalley, Amanda Robison, Thomas Brewster, Dalvin Yarbrough

Absent: David Koenig

III. APPROVAL of MINUTES FROM AUGUST 23, 2021 MEETING:

Motion to approve: Klaus Nalley

Second: Dalvin Yarbrough

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

IV. COMMISSION FUNDAMENTALS – ROLE, AUTHORITY, TERMS

- Chair Wilkinson Shares Commission Frequently asked question document
 - i. Commission has one job, to set the Mayor and City Council Member Salaries
 - ii. Commission is selected by lot of Pierce County Auditor, one from each of the five districts. Two are appointed by the Mayor. Each serving three-year terms.
 - iii. The Commission must submit its decision to the City Clerk by September 1 of the calendar year
 - iv. The Commission meets at least once or up to 4 times a year

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- v. City of Tacoma Human Resources Department provides support staff to the Commission
- vi. The Commission was created to bring more objectivity to salary setting of elected officials and to avoid the conflict of interest of setting their own salaries.
- vii. The Commission considers the workload of the Mayor and Council, what other officials are paid in Washington State, economic conditions, pattern of salary increases granted for City employees, both union and non-union, the financial ability of running for office for a broad range of Tacoma Citizens.
- viii. The Mayor and City Council receive benefits, with the cost based on the mayor being full time and the Council being part time.
- ix. Commissioners are subject to the city's Ethics Code and are required to complete the Attorney General's Open Government Online Training.

V. QUESTIONS FOR THE MAYOR

- What have you learned going into your second term?
 - i. The last two years have been tough for the Council, the City and for the Community. Especially political leadership. Many mayors have decided to not run for reelection.
 - ii. The ways in which community holds elected officials accountable have been difficult. She has never been concerned for her safety, but people had started to show up at her front door to protest. As a single woman that started to scare her. She is open to meeting anyone and willing to. She didn't want to leave in the middle of the pandemic and get Tacoma back to where it was headed before the pandemic.
 - iii. She has learned you never know what is going to happen next and that she cannot do everything. Virtual only made it worse.
 - iv. Relationships matter. This is how we get the work done. If it hadn't been for the relationships, she has built over the years covid would have been more thought.
 - v. Being collaborative isn't a buzz word - it is how you get the work done. Sometimes that means that things don't go fast. The blessing and the curse because she wants to take as many people with her as possible and that can mean taking a long time to get things done.
- What would you say are the two or three most significant lessons you've learned about being an effective Mayor since you were first elected? What surprised you about the role?
 - i. How getting engaged regionally and nationally can be leveraged for good things for her community. Example: she is active with the National League of Cities. This has paid dividends to the City. Tacoma is working

on two initiatives through this where one is providing jobs and how to set up a better internal contract process. Also were able to be a part of the National League of Cities Opioid Institute. Through that we were able to learn about safe stations and implement some in Tacoma. We set up a County Wide Opioid task force and advocated for more funding.

- In what ways does the Mayor make the greatest difference in bettering the Tacoma Community?
 - i. She is also active with the US Conference of Mayors. The Boston Mayor is now the Secretary of the Department of Labor and he recently visited because of his relationship with her. They went over workforce development issues. A Secretary of Labor has not visited in over 50 years. She was in DC recently and met Nancy Pelosi, who will be visiting next Wednesday. Having these relationships put Tacoma in a better position.
- How do you spend your time during a typical month?
 - i. Mayor Woodards calendar is shared, and it is very full
 - ii. Orange is informational, green is meetings, blue is speaking engagements. Pink, which is overlaid, is called project time for peace of mind. The only time she has to do emails and return phone calls, to think, to read. IF it is not covered by another engagement. She takes meetings on the weekends as well. The dark blue are meetings she Chair's. There is very little blank space.
- What are your key regional responsibilities?
 - i. We have about 50 boards and commission that the City Council is required to sit on. She sits on Puget Sound Regional Council and Association of Washington City. She sat on the Sound Transit Board, but she had to give it up because of the schedule commitment and conflict with the Tacoma Employee's Retirement Board she is required to chair. She is also responsible regionally. South Sound Housing Affordability Partnership. It is a formal organization and working regionally to address affordable housing. Workforce Central Board, and the representative on the Economic Development Board.
 - ii. During Covid, the Governor did not call the City Manager, he called the Mayor. Regionally she is expected to show up like a strong mayoral government. Advocating together regionally has helped to get funding.
 - iii. Active nationally as well. Incoming president for National League of Cities, which has 19,000 cities nationwide. US Conference of Mayors. This puts Tacoma in the room. She met with the Department of Justice and is currently courting the Department of HUD. How to get more police. She has had five invitations to come to the White House. It is not just about hearing her name called, it is about Tacoma being recognized. It is on the minds of people. She was on the White House lawn for the signing of the infrastructure bill.

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- Which mayors of other communities do you see as peers both within and outside of Washington State?
 - i. She would say Kent, Spokane and even Seattle. I am in the same meetings as Mayor Harold. The expectation of me is the same.
- In the past we've been surprised at how much money you have to spend in your Mayoral role for which you are not reimburse. Would you please describe why this is so and give us a sense of how much you have to spend each month in fulfilling your role?
 - i. This was much easier during covid as there weren't many in person events. There is an expectation of a mayor when you show up to Tacoma Urban League, the YWCA, Goodwill's Dinner, or United Way when they have a raise the paddle. There is an expectation the Mayor will contribute. In all cases the City cannot make donations on the Mayor's behalf. We have so many non-profits in Tacoma, and part of the issue is she loves them all and they are important to her. Very rarely on a raise the paddle does she get out of there without paying less than \$250. She does not want to look like she does not care. She takes it very seriously the great work that is done in her community. She attends one a couple times a month, and pre covid it was a couple times a week. There are all kinds of ways she is asked to participate. When she wants to tell community members thank you or if she travels and wants to purchase thank you gifts that all comes out of her pocket.
- What do you most wish the Tacoma Citizens would understand about the Mayor's role? What do citizens frequently get wrong about the job?
 - i. That they knew we had a City Manager form of Government.
 - ii. Sometimes what people think she can do and what she can actually do are different. However it doesn't change their expectation of what they want her to do. The City Manager just doesn't go to meetings with all mayors. Sometimes she will bring the City Manager with her to meetings. Elected officials like to work with elected officials. That counts for County and even government to government like with the Puyallup Tribe. She is very proud that the City of Tacoma has the best relationship with the Puyallup Tribe that we have had in the history of the Land Claims Senate. We also have one of the best relationships with county government as well. Even though her and Bruce Dammeier think differently, he and the mayor collaborate on the issues that are important and they agree on. Her biggest mentor was Harold Moss, former Mayor of Tacoma. He used to say "get as many fingerprints on the knife as possible". She took it to mean get as many people to buy in as possible. If we can continue to talk until we find common ground then we are all better off.
- What is your role in relation to the City Council? How much say do you have in setting the agenda for Council deliberations?

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- i. The Mayor is responsible for setting the agenda.
 - ii. Sometimes she feels like a coach, helping the council to keep moving the ball forward.
 - iii. A 5 to 4 vote is politics and a 9 to 0 vote is leadership. We don't always have to agree but if we can get to 9 and 0 that means we worked together. 9 and 0 is always her goal because that means that everyone got a say in the policy.
 - iv. It is her role to find the best path forward. How can she bring everyone together to move forward. I share wins with everyone. It is her job to make sure all of her council members are successful. It takes a lot of work.
- Mayor Woodards Parting Comments
 - i. What allows us to get good people in leadership. Looking through an equity and diversity lens. Other councils in other cities have council members who have come in at the end of a career where they have already made their money. Our current City Council of Tacoma's demands have increased. People are accessing their government in different ways. She would be remiss if she didn't suggest for the Commission to speak with the Council as well. That we should begin to have a conversation about having a full time council if we want it to reflect our City. We have lost good council members to their full time jobs because they couldn't afford to be a part time city council member. The vision of the council has evolved along with the demands of the community.
 - Debrief of discussion with Mayor:
 - i. **Commissioner Kindschy:** Her schedule being so busy stands out.
 - ii. **Commissioner Delvin Yarbrough:** That people are starting to understand the importance of local elected officials. People are engaged, not just sending a letter, wanting more rapid responses. She made good points of showing what is expected of them today as opposed to yesterday.
 - iii. **Commissioner Amanda Robison:** Her networking. The working with other cities.
 - iv. **Commissioner Klaus Nalley:** She makes herself available. At one point in the pandemic, Klaus emailed local county officials with his concerns, and not one of the three local officials took time to get back to him. Here she is with people protesting at her front door. People want to know that government is there doing what they are supposed to. She is a great ambassador for Tacoma.
 - v. **Commissioner Thomas (Jed) Brewster:** Looking forward the decisions we are making are for the office of Mayor, not this particular Mayor. Weighing in our minds the wage being something that would draw in good people.

- vi. **Chair Wilkinson:** It was a pleasure to hear how she has matured into this position. She is an excellent representative of Tacoma and the pride she has in our community.

VI. ELECTED OFFICIAL COMPENSATION AND COMPARATIVE DATA

- Human Resources Manager, Jen Peters, presented spreadsheet with data of comparator organizations across the state. You want to focus on the column that says “form of government”. We want to provide the data, however, for the two different forms of government. You can see the form of government, population size of city, number of full-time employees, mayoral annual salary and council member annual salary. You can see this data is quite varied and inconsistent. Last year, we did go out and confirm that the majority of Cities are using a Commission to set salaries.
- The cities highlighted in orange are First Class Cities, a designation of having a population of 10,000 or more at time of organization and has a charter adopted under the state constitution.
- The chart on the bottom gives high level economic indicators. We have the CPI-W for 2021. The 12-month June-to-June CPI will be announced in July, which we will have available by the August meeting. It is trending much higher than what you are seeing now. Even the CPI-W for February is around 8.1%. Please note this is last year’s number.
- We provide the Tacoma median household income number. This is a census number from 2020 that is not updated annually.
- The far tab on the right is the council members terms.
- The middle tab is the other comparable organizations benefits. It is a mix bag. Most are offering some form of benefits. One thing I noticed is there has been some movement in benefits offered. An increase rather than decrease.
- Chair Wilkinson opens to the Commission for comment or question:
 - i. **Commissioner Yarbrough:** Looking at this I am always confounded by some of the smaller towns paying so much.
 - ii. **Chair Wilkinson:** That is what is difficult here because there really is no market for elected officials. It is a confusing snapshot. It is always striking to me is that Mayor of Tacoma is viewed equal to other First Class Cities like Everett. It is hard to get apples-to-apples comparison. It makes me see how underpaid the mayor is.
 - iii. **Commissioner Thomas (Jed) Brewster:** Are all of these mayors full time or some part time? Commissioner Wilkinson confirms some are part time.
 - iv. **Commissioner Wilkinson:** The Mayor is really in a bit of a hybrid position. I also forget how many employees the city has and how large their budget of two billion dollars is.

- v. **Commissioner Brandon Kindschy:** The target is always moving. Covid is a perfect example of that. She had a growing responsibility with that. So many more meetings and the call to recruit for those resources. That is a constant need.

VII. TOPICS FOR 2022 MEETINGS: AUGUST 1, NOVEMBER 7

- Interview with a Council Member or two
- Updated Compensation data to be provided

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to end meeting: Commissioner Thomas (Jed) Brewster
Second: Commissioner Amanda Robison

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0

Meeting adjourned 7:25pm