

November 3, 2021

Ms. Kammy Hill
City Clerk
City of Walla Walla
15 N. 3rd Ave.
Walla Walla, WA 99362

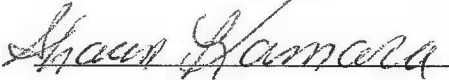
Dear Ms. Hill,

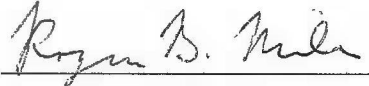
Re: THE CITY OF WALLA WALLA SALARY COMMISSION


In accordance with the City of Walla Walla Ordinance #2021-12, the members of the Salary Commission have reviewed the current compensation paid the mayor and members of the city council and have voted unanimously to increase their salaries. It is our decision that the mayor should be paid \$1,500 per month and members of the city council \$1,000 per month.

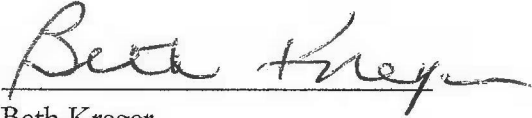
We acted in the belief that salaries are necessary to defray in whole or in part the costs incurred by public service for those elected to public office. The founders of our nation recognized that in the absence of salaries, elected offices would be dominated by the fortunate few with the financial means and leisure to enable them to serve, which is why they provided in the U.S. Constitution compensation for members elected to the House and Senate (U.S. Const. art. 1, § VI, cl. I).

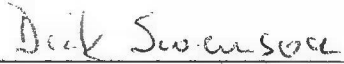
We based our decision in part on the estimates offered us by the mayor and members of the city council of the hours per month they devote to fulfilling the duties of their office and in part on a survey of the salaries paid to mayors and city councilors across Washington State in council-manager governed cities of similar size and character. Further detail on the basis of our decision can be found in the minutes of our meetings submitted with this letter.


Sherrie Kamara, Secretary


Rogers Miles, Chair


Lynn Knapp


Beth Kreger


J Richard (Dick) Swenson

Minutes

WW Salary Commission Meeting

Wed. Sept. 15, 2021

Home of Rogers Miles, 618 Hobson Street, Walla Walla, WA 99362

Attending, Rogers Miles, Lynn Knapp, Dick Swenson, Beth Kreger, Sherrie Kamara

1. Review:

1.1 Given the requirement that salaries be reviewed by the Salary Commission within 3 years, we decided that we should review them now and then decide whether to raise or lower them.

2. Current Salaries:

2.1 We agreed that the WW city council/mayor salaries are low and that coming up with a remedy would be challenging. Some pointed out that council/mayor salaries were low because their work was a form of public service, thereby raising the question of why city councilors were paid when there were many in WW who sit on boards or volunteer for civic organizations where there is no compensation. Some speculated that the difference might lie in the distinction between volunteering for a job and being hired by the voters. Others wondered whether salary was ever a factor in the decision to run by a candidate for city council. We discussed the perks of being on the city council and the expenses for which a councilor could expect to be reimbursed. We also noted the large disparity between the salary of the city manager and that of a city councilor and concluded that the position of city manager required the city to pay top dollar for a person with the proper credentials, whereas the job of city councilor was open to anyone who could persuade the voters to elect them for the job.

2.2. We considered whether raising the salaries of city councilors would result in more diversity among candidates running for city council. Some were skeptical that raising salaries would have much impact. They were confident that membership on the city council would become more diverse over time as the population of WW becomes more diverse and more people from different sectors of the population gain the time and financial means to run and serve on the city council. We decided to focus our energies on determining fair compensation and to leave it to the public to rescind our decision if they judge it to be extravagant.

3. Setting Salaries

3.1 At the city council work session of 7 September 2021, we were invited to consider two possible criteria in setting salaries for the mayor and city council members.

a. Hours Spent on the Job:

The mayor and the council members each gave estimates of the hours they devote to their office. These hours included not only the time they presided in work and regular sessions of the city council and the many boards, commissions, and committees to which they are assigned but also the time they spend answering emails, prepping for meetings, and acting as “ambassadors” for the city at public and corporate gatherings.

b. Comparable Salaries in Other Cities for Mayors and City Council Members:

Data was provided by the city clerk for the purpose of comparison of the salaries paid to mayors and city council members across cities in Washington State with populations between 15,000 and 50,000. The mayor recommended that we limit our attention to cities of similar population and with the same form of government as the city of WW (i.e., Council-Manager). The mayor also reminded us that “the city of Walla Walla provides virtually every

conceivable service that a city could provide that a lot of cities don't." The mayor cited as examples the WW public library, the WW police and fire departments, and the Sudbury landfill. Having WW operate these facilities rather than contracting these services out increases the burden of oversight responsibilities of the mayor and city council.

- c. On 9 September 2021, we were presented with yet another criterion for setting salaries when the city clerk emailed us a two-page table of data that the mayor had compiled regarding a Defund the Police proposal under consideration by the city council. As interpreted by the mayor in a separate email to us on 9 September 2021, the table attested to the value of the work that the mayor and city council were doing on behalf of the city's residents. Thanks to the oversight of the mayor and city council, WW was able to deliver services with great economy to its residents. Given the low median household income from which the city draws its revenues, WW returns more per capita to its residents in the form of services than most of the other 19 Washington state cities listed in the table.

3.2 We agreed that current salaries for the mayor and city council were set too low, and we set about considering how much they could be raised without arousing public anger. Despite one review by a salary commission in 2017, salaries for the mayor and city council had remained fixed since last set by a vote of the city council in 2007. A suggestion was made that we begin by restoring in today's dollars the value these salaries had lost from inflation since 2007. Once calculated, perhaps the increase would seem sufficient, and we could claim to the public that we had not really raised salaries at all, thus leaving to another commission whether to raise salaries in the future and by how much. If, on the other hand, the increase seemed insufficient we could avail ourselves of one or more of the three criteria to increase salaries further. Conversation then returned to a consideration of the criteria, particularly the comparative, that should govern any decision to reset salaries at a higher amount. One commissioner reported on her attempt to pick six cities comparable to WW in both population and city government whose salaries she averaged after dropping the highest and the lowest to arrive at a salary of \$1300 per month for WW's mayor (roughly \$16 per hour for the 80 hours a month he/she devotes to the job) and around \$1000 per month for a WW city council member (roughly \$25 per hour for the 40 hours a month he/she devotes to the job). There was also a discussion of value as a criterion for setting salaries. Some wondered whether other forms of recognition rather than a salary increase could assure the mayor and city council members that their work and sacrifices on behalf of the residents of WW are appreciated.

4. The Work Ahead

4.1 We adjourned our meeting at approximately 2:52 pm. We agreed to meet again on Wednesday, 29 September at 2:00 pm at Sherrie Kamara's house: 531 Catherine Street, Walla Walla, WA 99362.

- 4.2 Among items we hoped to act upon in the interim before our next meeting are the following:
- a. Determine the present-day value of the 2007 salaries for the mayor and members of the city council by applying the consumer price index.
 - b. Contact previous council members about salaries.

Sherrie Kamara, Secretary, WW Salary Commission
Rogers Miles, Chair, WW Salary Commission

Minutes

WW Salary Commission Meeting

Wed. Sept 29, 2021

Home of Sherrie Kamara: 531 Catherine Street, Walla Walla, WA 99362

Attending: Rogers Miles, Dick Swenson, Beth Kreger, Lynn Knapp, Sherrie Kamara

1. Review:

1.1 It was the consensus of the commissioners at our 15 Sept. meeting that the salaries of the WW mayor and city councilors were too low and needed to be raised.

1.2 We also agreed to set salaries by pursuing two possible methods:

a. Calculating what their current salaries ought to be if the WW mayor and city councilors had benefited from cost of living increases since the year their salaries were last fixed in 2007.

b. Calculating what their current salaries ought to be if the salaries of the WW mayor and city councilors were comparable to the average salaries of WA state mayors and city councilors in cities of similar size or character.

2. Calculating what their current salaries ought to be if the WW mayor and city councilors had benefited from cost of living increases since their salaries were last fixed in 2007.

2.1 Our meeting began with the report of one member's effort to measure what the WW mayor and city councilors would be paid today had their fixed salaries benefited from cost-of-living adjustments. This member concluded that the benefit did not amount to very much and would not result in an increase to their salaries that would satisfy our desire to compensate them fairly. This member recommended that we focus our attention on the second possible method for setting salaries.

3. Calculating what their current salaries ought to be if the salaries of the WW mayor and city councilors were comparable to the average salaries of WA state mayors and city councilors in cities of similar size or character.

3.1 A second member reported to the commission on the member's effort to link salaries to the average of salaries paid to WA state mayors and city councilors in Council-Manager governed cities of similar size and character.

a. This member selected the following cities:

Walla Walla-Mayor \$500/month, council member \$400/month

Longview-Mayor \$1,500/month, council member \$950/month

Puyallup-Mayor \$1,408/month, council member \$1,205/month

Bothell-Mayor, \$1,450/month, council member \$1250/month

Bainbridge Island-Mayor, \$4,000/month, council member \$3,000/month

Ellensburg-Mayor, \$1,000/month, council member \$500/month

Moses Lake-Mayor \$1,000, council member \$500.

Maple Valley-Mayor \$930, council member \$730/month

b. This member struck from the list the city with the highest salaries, Bainbridge Island, and the city with the lowest, Walla Walla.

c. Then this member averaged the salaries of the remaining: Longview, Puyallup, Bothell, Ellensburg, Maple Valley, and Moses Lake.

d. The results: \$1,214/month for mayor and \$855/month for a city councilor.

3.2 We considered the possibility of pursuing other comparisons. The WW mayor and city councilors function as legislators in WW's Council-Manager form of government. One could determine, for example, what salaries they might receive if their salaries were proportional to the salaries received by county and state legislators in WA in terms of populations represented and hours of service rendered. We decided we lacked the resources to pursue such comparisons.

3.3 We also discussed how much of a raise in the salaries of WW's mayor and city councilors the public would accept. One member recommended that in the future the mayor and city councilors be required to report to the city clerk on the hours each spends attending city council meetings and civic events, responding to phone calls and emails, and serving on the boards, committees, and commissions to which they are assigned. This would give the salary commission and the public better data than the rough estimates provided for us by the mayor and city councilors at the city council working session on Sept. 7.

4. The Decision of the Salary Commission

4.1 It was moved and seconded that the salaries for city council members be set at \$1,000/month and that of the mayor at \$1,500/month. Approval of the motion was unanimous.

4.2 In accordance with WW City Ordinance No. 2021-12, the Salary Commission will relay its decision by letter to the WW city clerk. It was the consensus of the commissioners that their letter communicate not only the salaries they had voted to approve but also their reasons for approving them as well as recommendations for how the Commission should operate in the future—how often it should meet, what data points it should consider, and what other methods it should use for setting salaries.

4.3 Before the meeting was adjourned, we agreed that we needed to meet again to approve and sign the letter that we will submit to the WW city clerk.

Sherrie Kamara, Secretary, WW Salary Commission
Rogers Miles, Chair, WW Salary Commission