



Council President: Breean L. Beggs

Date: May 15, 2020

Spokane Municipal Code tasks the Salary Review Commission with reviewing and establishing the salary of the mayor, council president and council members. Please respond to the below survey questions to assist the Commission in understanding the requirements of your position.

The SRC Ordinance: SMC 2.05.040 A states: *It is the goal of the commission to base salaries of the mayor, council president and council members on realistic standards so that the elected officials may be paid according to the duties of their offices and so that citizens of the highest quality may be attracted to public service. The commission shall have the duty to review and establish the salary of the council president and council members. The commission shall study the relationship of salaries to the duties of the mayor, council president and council members.*

A. In your view, what is the relationship between the Mayor's and the Council Member's DUTIES?

The City Council, with the assistance of its staff, develops and sets all the top level policies and budgets for the City of Spokane, engages directly with community members throughout the City in revising those policies and budgets and is responsible for overseeing the implementation of those policies by the Mayor and her staff. Because the Council has very few staff compared to the Mayor, Council Members are required to quickly become experts in all the lines of business conducted by the City and master the intricacies of a budget that is close to \$1 billion. Council Members spend a tremendous amount of time every week, including evenings and weekends, hearing community concerns and explaining in accessible terms how and why the city operates. The Mayor's job is to work closely with her City Administrator to inspire and supervise the almost 2,000 employees who implement the policies and budgets approved by Council while providing excellent customer service to the community. Both the Mayor and Council Members serve as spokespeople and ambassadors to the media and the community at various events, meetings and presentations.

B. In your view, what is the relationship between the Mayor's and the Council Member's SALARIES?

Currently, the Mayor is compensated at a substantially higher amount than Council Members and is the only one from the group that is expected to give up outside professional compensation. As the community expects more from Council Members in terms of time commitment and professional expertise, there seems to be little rationale for nearly a four to one difference in compensation. Each job has different specialties, but both jobs require the highest level of professionalism, superior communication skills, policy sophistication and financial expertise.

WORKLOAD & RESPONSIBILITIES:

C. Please comment on the scope of the position of Council Member/President. What do you view to be your principle duties or responsibilities?

As Council President, my first duty is to directly manage an office of twenty-one people, which is an increase in office personnel of 31% since council salaries were last adjusted. Because there is little formal hierarchy among an office that includes seven elected officials, effective management is even more challenging than in a traditional top down organization. My second duty is be council's chief liaison with the Mayor and her top cabinet officials on a wide variety of policy and procedural issues. Past news stories have demonstrated that the ability to maintain a collaborative relationship between the administration and council is an important factor in successful city government both during a crisis and in normal times. My third duty is to set agendas for council meetings and maintain an orderly meeting process that allows effective community engagement. This takes both strategic thinking and excellent communication skills given the often raucous engagement by some community members during public meetings. My fourth duty is to directly engage with interested community members across the entire city, not just the district where I live. I accomplish this by email at all hours and all days of the week, by telephone, by in-person private meetings and dozens of public meetings and speeches each month. My fifth duty is to envision and develop innovative policies for the City with the assistance of other council members, our policy staff and members of the administration. I accomplish policy development by outlining effective processes, including all voices and developing written final work product that can be adopted by ordinance, resolution or written agreement. Finally, I am an ambassador to other government entities, boards and commissions on behalf of the City of Spokane, including numerous committees and work groups.

D. Have you found that having a full time Legislative Aide has impacted the number of hours you work? Please explain.

Legislative Assistants are extremely important in leveraging my time and effectiveness, but they do not reduce my hours worked, just what work I do. My Legislative Assistant provides effective support in scheduling meetings, helping me deliver email messages, that I compose, managing social media communication, completing administrative paperwork, handling preliminary communications for me, closely editing my written work product, etc. As a result, I am able to reach and hear from an exponentially higher number of community members than I would have if I handled all those things myself. In my over four years on city council, I have seen the expectations of community members for instant direct contact with me and other members increase significantly. We have only met those expectations with the assistance of our Legislative Assistants, but the more people we reach, the more people expect faster communication back from us.

E. What is the estimated number of hours per week that you spend on tasks directly related to your City Council work: I have averaged sixty plus hours each week since I started this position in January of 2020. This is due in part to my transition into this new position, the many changes to the office with additional personnel and the COVID-19 crisis. I don't know how long that pace will continue but I estimate it will always be well over forty hours each week.

F. How many committees/boards are current assigned as a member to:

City Commissioned: The current list shows 18 City assignments plus numerous committee, subcommittee and work group assignments arising from those boards(e.g. on the Health District Board I also serve on its Executive Committee and as Chair of its Policy Committee.) Non-City Commissioned: 1-2 groups at a time, usually as ad-hoc assignments for a project that interests me as opposed to serving as a regular board member.

G. Do you believe your workload, time commitments, work complexities and/or challenges as a Spokane City Council Member are in alignment with your current annual salary: Yes: _____ No: X

Comments: I love my work for City Council, but Council Members are some of the lowest paid city employees, despite having ultimate authority to set the most important policies in our community and manage a budget of almost \$1 billion. If one were to compare the skill set, knowledge and experience to do the current job of a city council member, let alone president, at a high level of performance, you would have to pay somebody over \$100,000/year whether you were recruiting them for the public or private sector. In my opinion, the majority of current city council members are only able to accept the current salary amount for their level of service due to their unique financial circumstances, which substantially limits the pool of effective applicants. Most are paid substantially less than they would have been paid in their previous full-time employment. Many of the Council staff are paid more than Council Members. Almost everybody I work with from the Mayor's staff is paid significantly more than I am even though I have a higher position in the organization and am expected to be knowledgeable and capable of setting policy and budgets in all lines of city business. Again, I love the work and volunteered to run for this office so I don't have any complaints for myself, but am concerned about the size and quality of the applicant pool in future years as the city becomes even more complicated to manage.

SALARY FACTORS:

H. What do you believe should be the primary factors used in considering the Council Member's Salary:

If I was in charge, I would set the Mayor's salary based on similar positions in similar sized cities adjusted for the cost of living and then set the Council President's and Council Members' salaries as a percentage of the Mayor's salary. Council President would be higher to reflect the greater responsibility and time required than a regular Council Member. I would support paying Council Members more in their second term than their first term due to the tremendous learning curve of the position and the value they bring after four years on the job.

I. Should the goal to attract "citizens of the high quality" in the case of a Council Member have the same meaning as for a non-elected (appointed) administration-hired competitive position such as a Fire Chief, Chief of Police, City Attorney or other professional management position?

I see no reason to distinguish between the two in a city the size and complexity of Spokane. The same reason you would want the most qualified and effective City Attorney is why you would want the most qualified and effective Council Member. The City simply can't afford a second or third rate Council Member based on the unwillingness of qualified candidates to take a substantial cut in their professional compensation.

J. Should the fact that appointed officials serve at the pleasure of their appointing official, but an elected official has a different standard of accountability to retain the job, be a factor in deciding salary?

Serving in elective office for a full time or close to full time position is much more difficult in my opinion than in serving in an appointed position. If one is on the appointed position track, one can simply move to a new location to seek employment. Elected office requires one to serve only in the community where one is well-known. And since Spokane has term limits, any service on Council or as Mayor requires an interruption in professional life that cannot be parlayed into a long-term career at the city. In addition, campaigning on one's personal time and experiencing the intense scrutiny of public office is far more stressful in my experience than even the high profile positions of Chief or City Attorney.

K. Since you were elected to office, has anything financial or time-wise come up that has been a surprise to you?

I was surprised by how many evenings and weekends were required to be effective at this position.

L. How important was the salary to you when you chose to run for City Council? In your opinion, how important is the salary to a future candidate for City Council?
The salary was not important to me. I took a substantial cut in my annual compensation to serve on council. It was worth it to me to have the ability to facilitate positive community change for Spokane. I was previously volunteering dozens of hours each week to try and accomplish the same goals. Joining the Council meant that I gave up those volunteer assignments, resigned myself to less pay and time with my family, but have been able to find substantial personal fulfillment in improving Spokane. However, my sense is that there are not many people in the prime of their professional career who would be able or willing to do the same so I think the salary would be a very important factor for future candidates. I have talked to many of my fellow attorneys in Spokane who are passionate about serving the city but can't imagine taking the pay cut to do so. Because many people from racial and other marginalized groups have a smaller piece of the economic pie in our community, keeping Council salaries artificially low will likely make it harder to achieve equitable representation on the Council.

M. Do you pay any expenses out of your own pocket in order to perform any official duties?

I pay for my own parking and often travel expenses and copying expenses outside of city hall. They are not significant in my opinion but might be impactful for someone in a different financial situation.

N. Which cities or organizations would you consider the Council Member's salary should be compared to?

I am not particularly knowledgeable about the compensation or job duties of other cities in the Northwest. I also believe that Spokane's charter that provides for a "Strong Council" to balance out a "Strong Mayor" is unique in terms of powers and responsibilities. Because Spokane is the second largest city in Washington and by far the largest city in the region, if I was looking for a peer comparison I would look to the cities in the Northwest that have essentially full time council members with a staff of at least fourteen members and then adjust for cost of living using an objective cost of living measuring instrument.

O. Please share any additional information, comments, or advice that that you would like the SRC to consider in this salary review:

The current Spokane City Charter was adopted in response to the River Park Square financial fiasco which cost the taxpayers well over \$100 million and the City will be paying off the bonds that financed the legal settlement until close to 2030. The belief of the people that proposed the new charter was that the old style of city council was more of a ceremonial group that rubber-stamped proposals by the administration. The hope was that by empowering the City Council and the Mayor's office, there would be appropriate checks and balances to prevent future catastrophic mismanagement. Initially after the voters adopted the charter, the council was understaffed and less active than they are now. Their pay was definitely the lowest of any full-time employee in the city. As staffing and pay have increased, the production of City Council has increased dramatically. There are some who are uncomfortable with Council exercising all their power under the charter. I find that a robust council working closely with a robust mayor is the best of all possible worlds and leads to better policies, budgets and outcomes than either branch of government could accomplish on their own. Of course it requires both branches to work together to truly achieve success, but parity in pay and influence tend to support collaboration and in just the first few months of this new year, this new administration and newly constituted council we have seen the fruits of that collaboration. I urge the Salary Review Commission to broaden the pool of qualified and exciting new leaders who will be able to afford to devote their full-time professional selves for their four to eight years of elected service on behalf of the City of Spokane. Thank you for your service and vision for the future.

Thank you for your time and attention!

DEADLINE: 12 P.M. FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2020

**Please return your completed survey to:
Meghann Steinolfson, Interim Human Resources Director
msteinolfson@spokanecity.org**