

Local Officers' Compensation Commission
City Hall
10 N. Division Street
Virtual Meeting via Zoom
July 30, 2021
11:30 AM

Members Present: Stan Chubinski, John Godfrey, Walt McIlroy, Deb Owens, Ross Simpson, Becky Squires, Jeremy Wilson. All members of the LOCC members confirmed they were attending the meeting remotely from Battle Creek, Michigan.

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Victoria Houser, City Clerk

Call to Order: Clerk Houser called the meeting to order at 11:34 am, recognizing a quorum was present.

Nomination of Local Officers Compensation Commission Chair

Ms. Houser stated the first order of business was to nominate a Chairperson to preside over the meeting.

John Godfrey nominated Becky Squires to serve as Chairperson of the Local Officers Compensation Commission (LOCC). This nomination was supported by Deb Owens and affirmed by all LOCC members. Becky Squires accepted the nomination to serve as LOCC Chairperson.

Approval of Minutes:

Chair Squires noted the next order of business was to approve the minutes from the last LOCC meeting, June 3, 2019, asking if there were any changes needed. There were none.

A motion was made by Stan Chubinski, supported by John Godfrey, to approve the LOCC meeting minutes of June 3, 2019. All yes, none opposed. Motion approved.

Discussion on City Commission Compensation:

1. Municipality Council/Commission Compensation
2. Municipality Council/Commission Benefits
3. Municipality Council. Commission Duties
4. City Commission Budget

Mr. Wilson expressed appreciation to Clerk Houser for the survey and the summary worksheet of the data collected, stating the information is very understandable and useful. Mr. Wilson noted Battle Creek Commissioners' compensation is at the average of the municipalities that reported, referencing the per-meeting compensation average was \$202.34, only \$2.34 more than Battle Creek, and the per resident expense was only a few cents less than the average. Mr. Wilson calculated the impact to the city budget to be only \$4,200 annually if the compensation was increased to the average.

Ms. Houser confirmed the 2021/2022 budget had already been set, but some expenses may be less than anticipated, and if needed, a budget amendment could be presented to the Commission. Responding to Chair Squires' inquiry, Ms. Houser confirmed current revenues were anticipated to be less than prior years, providing an example of a loss of income tax revenues due to many people who normally work within the city currently working from home, which may not be in the city, thus resulting in reduced income taxes. As to government funding, Ms. Houser responded to Mr. Simpson, stating the city was the recipient of ARPA funds, noting the funds had restrictions, but plans for the use of the funds had not yet been determined.

Mr. Simpson expressed concern the Commissioners have a difficult, stressful job, especially during the recent year due to the pandemic, relating their experience to his staff and his business, noting he has the ability to retain staff by offering incentives. Mr. Simpson felt it was important to show the commission that their service is appreciated.

Chair Squires reminded the LOCC members that the City Commission was not a full time position, they were not technically city employees, and that most commissioners had full time jobs or other sources of income, such as

retirement. Chair Squires stated that from her perspective, serving on the commission was not because of the pay, it was to serve the community, stating she considered elected official compensation to be a stipend only.

Mr. Godfrey agreed, stating it is a dedication to the city, stating he was fine maintaining the current compensation, or an increase if the LOCC members felt it was appropriate. Mr. Godfrey noted that when the compensation was raised in 2005, it was approved when a commissioner did not understand the vote and intended to vote against an increase.

Ms. Owens agreed Commissioners do not serve for the money, but from a different perspective, as a former employee of city, noted a lot of employees were furloughed during the last year, some losing their jobs, and stated it was important to send a positive message to employees.

Mr. Chubinski, also a former employee, noted there were many years when unrepresented employees received no wage increases or experienced increases in benefit costs. Mr. Chubinski stated this is not the time to increase commission compensation, especially when several employees have lost their jobs, noting some departments have been eliminated.

Mr. Godfrey, stating from a community standpoint, noted a lot of residents have suffered financially, stating now is not the best time to increase commission compensation, expressing concern it would send the wrong message.

Mr. Simpson agreed that staff went through difficult times, but he was hopeful the federal funds would help the city budget.

Chair Squires recommended the LOCC send a positive message, noting that while the LOCC appreciates all hardships the commission has been through the last year, they think it is important to recognize the loss of others, in city staff who took pay decreases, while others lost their jobs and some city departments were reduced or eliminated, and throughout the community, and although all LOCC members feel the commission is worthy, it is not the appropriate time to increase commission compensation.

Mr. Wilson agreed, stating that as Battle Creek compensation was at the average of other municipalities, not a lot less than others, he could support a motion to maintain current compensation levels.

As to the request for a cell phone stipend, Mr. Godfrey informed the LOCC that he left messages for the mayor, the vice-mayor and his ward commissioner to ask how they felt about a stipend for cell phones. Mr. Godfrey stated the mayor and his ward commissioner responded that a cell phone stipend was not necessary, stating their employer or company provided a cell phone stipend.

Mr. Wilson also expressed his belief a cell phone stipend was not necessary, stating it is becoming more common in industry for employees to pay for their own amenities, noting unlimited cell plans are affordably available, often not resulting in an additional cost to the commissioner.

Ms. Owens agreed most everyone has unlimited coverage for cell and data, also stating that while she was mayor, she offered the mayor's office to any commissioner who wanted to meet with a resident.

A motion was made by Mr. Godfrey, supported by Mr. Wilson, to express appreciation to the City Commissioners for their work and the hardships they have endured during the pandemic, but it was also important to recognize the loss of others, to city employees and community residents who experienced wage decreases or job losses, and although the Commission is worthy, it is not the appropriate time to increase commission compensation, determining it was appropriate to maintain the current commission compensation.

Ayes: Chubinski, Godfrey, McIlroy, Owens, Simpson, Squires, Wilson

Nays: None

Motion Approved

Public Comment: Ryan Stange, IT, confirmed there were no members of the public signed into the meeting for public comment.

Commission Comment: There were none.

Adjournment: Chair Squires adjourned the meeting at 12:05 PM.