

Citizens' Independent Salary Commission Report and Recommendations

Executive Summary

As a result of the Regular Municipal Election on October 6, 2009, voters established the Citizens' Independent Salary Commission. The Commission was created and charged with the task of studying and setting the salaries of the Mayor and City Councilors.

The five member Commission deliberated a total of 77.4 hours to produce this report and recommendations with the assistance of staff support of about 275 hours. The Commission has determined that City Councilor members will receive an annual salary of \$17,500 beginning with the Councilors elected in 2011, with an additional \$2,000 for the president. The Commission believes the Mayor's salary is not consistent with the average compensation of a chief executive officer for a \$500 million corporation with 6,000 full time employees. However, the Commission believes the wage provided the mayor is adequate at this time.

Charter Amendment

Through the charter amendment, the Commission was given the authority to evaluate the annual salaries and determine whether they should be increased or decreased. The Commission has authority to consider all factors relevant to the salaries. Parameters given to the Commission are as follows:

- (a) The Commission shall consist of five members selected by the Accountability in Government Committee. All members shall be residents of the City of Albuquerque and shall not be an officer, official or employee of the city or an immediate family member of the same. The term of each member shall be for four years, unless a member is selected to fill a vacancy, and no member shall be appointed to more than two terms. The initial terms of members of the newly established Commission shall be staggered; the initial term for two members shall be two years and the initial term of three members shall be four years.
- (b) At least one year prior to each regular municipal election, the Commission shall review the salaries paid by the city to the Mayor and Councilors. If after such review the Commission determines that the salary should be increased or decreased, the Commission shall file a written salary schedule with the City Clerk indicating the proposed salary.
- (c) Changes to the salaries shall not be effective for the incumbent Mayor and Councilors, but shall be effective at the beginning of the next term.
- (d) Any change to salaries recommended by the Commission shall be subject to the referendum procedures as provided for in Article III, Section 2 of the Charter.
- (e) All meetings of the Commission shall be open to the public and subject to the Open Meetings Act, Sections 10-15-1 et seq. NMSA 1978.

Commission Members

The Accountability in Government Oversight Committee appointed the following people to serve on the Commission:

Name	Term End Date
John A. Carey, Chairperson	2014
Joe Conte	2014
Ellen Driber-Hassall	2012
Dick Heath	2014
Kenneth Petrulis	2012

As specified in its charter, the commission was selected through a process established by the Accountability in Government Committee. Members have no ties or conflicts with the City of Albuquerque, the Mayor or Council. The Commission carefully approached its work with a thoughtful approach to research and the utmost transparency.

Neither the Mayor nor Council has requested a pay increase. All acknowledged knowing the salary for the positions prior to seeking election and chose to do so for many reasons other than the salary.

The Commission sought public input through two public and media forums and through an interactive website that allows for public comment. All Commission meetings were open to the public.

At its initial meeting, the Commission established the criteria by which it would render its recommendations that included current salary information, duties of office and comparisons with similarly situated cities. The Commission did not consider benefits or other forms of compensation, only salaries.

Salary Information

Presently, the Mayor of Albuquerque is paid \$103,854 annually. This reflects a voluntary five percent (5%) pay decrease sought by the mayor in 2010. City Councilors are paid a salary of 10 percent (10%) of the Mayor's salary, which is currently \$10,940 annually for each Councilor and \$21,881 for City Council President.

These combined salaries account for less than one-half of one percent of the overall City budget (0.0456%). The Mayor and Council receive the same cost of living allowance as city employees. The 10 percent (10%) formula as related to the Mayor's salary has not been adjusted for Council members since 1974.

Duties of Office

The Commission studied the requirements of both the Mayor and City Councilors' positions. The Commission developed a questionnaire to seek information regarding typical daily and weekly functions, the amount of time devoted, and motivation for seeking office. The amount of time devoted varies among Council members; however, on average it seems to require about 30 hours per week. The Mayor's position is more than a regular 40-hour week. The Commission met with Councilors from various parts of the City, as well as with the Mayor and the City's Chief Administrative Officer. The Commission also interviewed various Council staff to seek input on job duties. Since the original charter of 1974, the Commission is convinced that the duties of office have evolved and increased over time.

Comparable Cities

- The Commission determined that it would be useful to review the available salary information for cities that are both similar in population, employee count, budget and geography for purposes

The following graphic illustrates the geographic dimensions of cities studied and the subsequent spreadsheet demonstrates how Albuquerque compares to reasonably similar cities.

Comparison of Regional Cities

City	FTE Employees	Population [2008 Census Bureau]	Form of Government (Mayor - Council or Council - Manager)	Annual Operating Budget (FY11 or most current FY)	Mayor Salary	Council Salary
Albuquerque NM	5,926	521,199	Mayor - Council	455,534,000	\$103,854	Council member: \$10,379; Council President: \$20,758
Austin TX	12,736	786,386	Council - Manager	650,200,000	\$78,425	\$67,556
Denver CO	10,369	598,707	Mayor & Council	864,124,800	\$145,601	Council member: \$78,173 Council President: \$87,539
El Paso TX	6,194	613,190	Council - Manager	693,060,294	\$45,000	\$29,000
Kansas City MO	6,769	488,299	Council - Manager	1,230,443,937	\$123,156	\$61,569
Las Cruces, NM	1,332	93,452	Council - Manager	317,900,000	\$73,892	\$29,569
Las Vegas NV	2,952	558,383	Council - Manager	528,400,000	\$65,248	\$49,000
Mesa AZ	3,597	463,552	Council - Manager	943,709,000	\$76,003	\$38,064
Oklahoma City OK	4,327	551,789	Council - Manager	875,926,956	\$24,000	\$12,000
Salt Lake City, UT	2,781	183,102	Mayor - Council	758,956,285	\$114,145	\$22,829
Tucson AZ	5,419	541,811	Council - Manager	994,108,390	\$42,000	\$24,000
Tulsa OK	3,957	385,635	Mayor - Council	518,532,000	\$105,000	\$18,000



Recommendations

After careful and transparent study, the Commission establishes that City Councilor members will receive an annual salary of \$17,500 beginning with the Councilors elected in 2011, with an additional \$2,000 stipend for the Council President. The Commission believes the Mayor's salary is not consistent with the average compensation of a chief executive officer for a \$500 million corporation with 6,000 full time employees. However, the Commission believes the wage provided the mayor is adequate at this time. As the Commission is an ongoing working group, it will continually consider salaries for the Mayor and Council.

It became quite clear early on in the Commission's deliberations that Council members are required to devote a vast majority of their time to Council business. Attending Council meetings, public gatherings, constituent relations and research for meetings is a significant undertaking. The Commission considered the impact of the time commitment on one's ability to serve as a Councilor. The current structure appears to allow only certain types of citizens to seek office.

For example, at a salary of just under \$11,000 annually, most City residents would not be able to seek this office without having other means of support. Individuals with families who have full time employment would simply not be able to leave their "day job" to serve as a Councilor.

The current pay for a City Councilor is less than that of a high school student working in a pizza parlor at under \$7 per hour. The role of a City Councilor in this major metropolitan area is a very strategic role that affects the daily lives of 521,199 citizens in a governmental entity with almost 6,000 employees with a budget of almost half a billion dollars. It is imperative that Albuquerque's elected Councilors be remunerated in a manner compatible with attracting the very best candidates and office holders. In today's world, the position demands essentially a full time effort and a highly skilled individual.

The Commission discussed this issue at length. It determined that for Council to truly represent the public it serves, an adequate salary is essential to attract those who are both *willing* and *able* to serve. To attract diverse, representative cross-section City residents, the Commission believes this increase is essential.

While current members were aware of the salary as they sought office, the Commission believes the requirements of the position dictate that future Council members deserve increased compensation. It is important to note that this salary structure will not take effect until the next Council is elected in 2011. No currently elected Councilor has sought a salary increase from the Commission.

With an increase to Council salaries to \$17,500, with an additional \$2,000 for the president, the total budget for the mayor and council is less than one-half of one percent of the overall city budget.

Summary

The citizens of Albuquerque elected to establish the Citizens' Independent Salary Commission. The Commission studied the roles of Councilor and Mayor, sought input from the public and studied like-sized municipalities in determining this outcome. As the Commission continues its work, it will also continue to seek input from interested persons.

In conclusion, the Commission thanks the Mayor and the Council for their dedicated service to the City of Albuquerque and its people.

Exhibits www.cabq.gov/audit/citizens-independent-salary-commission

Charter

Sample Questionnaire

Meeting Minutes