

October 18, 2022

**SALARY REVIEW COMMISSION
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MEMBERS PRESENT: Joe Bellitto, Heather Greenfield, Tage Hall, Mike Laurin, Elliot Raimondo, John Sellstrom, Pat Smeraldo, Ryan Thompson, Jennifer Williams

MEMBERS ABSENT:

PRESS PRESENT: Julia Ciesla-Hanley from WRFA

City Clerk/Treasurer Jennifer Williams opened the meeting.

The members introduced themselves.

After the introductions, the members selected Tage Hall to chair the commission.

Jennifer Williams went over the handouts that were provided to the group before discussions began.

Mr. Bellitto noted that the prior two commissions did recommend raises for the council members and mayor, but that council chose not to act on it due to budgetary concerns. Mr. Raimondo added that in past years, there were still union contracts outstanding and some in litigation, while this year, all contracts have been settled. He noted that he's had conversations with councilmembers that were present in those past years that confirmed that that was of some concern to them and that they did not believe that their salaries should be raised when the salaries of union members were still unsettled. He added that currently union raises have been in the range of 2-3% in line with the consumer price index.

Mr. Bellitto went over the schedule of the pay scale for the mayor and council with a 2% COLA added over the past twenty years. He added that the council president receives \$1000 more than the other councilmembers. Mr. Bellitto also included a formula to include social security while excluding NYS retirement as only a few members take part in the program. He also reviewed the survey from the New York Conference of Mayors which laid out the salaries for elected and appointed officials across the state. He added that Mike Laurin had added the median household income, per capita income and population to the survey. Mr. Bellitto noted that during contract negotiations, the administration would focus on cities of similar size and proximity to the city of Jamestown. Mr. Thompson pointed out that some cities have a different structure of government than the city, utilizing a mayor and city manager system. Mr. Bellitto agreed and noted that some cities also utilize a deputy mayor as well.

Mr. Laurin noted that he had calculated an hourly rate based on an assumption of hours worked. He added that his general consensus is that the city is low right now in all three categories and felt that the salaries should be increased. He feels that there needs to be a happy medium between being fiscally responsible and encouraging people to run for these offices while staying competitive with neighboring cities. He noted that everyone on council works hard and stays busy. Ms. Williams added that with social media, the mayor and council are more accessible than ever before and this has increased their workload significantly. Mr. Smeraldo asked if there was knowledge of the percentage of the contract increases over the past few negotiations. Mr. Raimondo noted that for 2016-2017, they were awarded 2% increases and contracts year to date are all in the range of 2.5%, but going forward will most likely be in the 2.75-3.0% range in an effort to recruit officers. Mr. Smeraldo clarified that that would equate to 10-12%. Mr. Raimondo agreed and said that it would be higher in years to come. Mr. Smeraldo noted that we can't go back 45 years, but maybe could go back five or six years as union contracts have gone up over that period. He agreed that the workload has increased substantially for officials. Mr. Thompson highlighted some salaries from the spreadsheet that Mr. Bellitto had provided as examples, depending on how far back the commission wanted to go.

Mr. Hall asked where the mayor ranked in terms of the salaries of city employees. Mr. Bellitto noted that in years past, the mayor did not rank even in the top 110 employee salaries. Ms. Williams noted that the See-Through New York survey shows the mayor ranked at 119 out of the general fund; that is not including the BPU. Mr. Hall noted that it is significantly less than the bargaining units and Mr. Thompson added that it's less than the people that he manages. Mr. Bellitto pointed out that not only does the mayor oversee the city's general fund, but that he also oversees the operation of the BPU, adding that having our own electrical light plant sets the city apart from every other city in the state. The BPU has a \$47 million budget that the mayor is responsible for overseeing. Mr. Raimondo asked if in past meetings had the question ever been raised of asking the BPU to contribute to the salary of the mayor in the form of a tax or stipend. Mr. Bellitto answered that, to his knowledge, it had not been discussed previously. Mr. Raimondo suggested that this group look into that and noted that he would work with the BPU counsel William Wright. Mr. Hall asked what something like that would look like and Mr. Raimondo responded that it would be in the form of a stipend, similar to the worker's compensation and other shared services that the city bills the utility for. He added that the BPU board would have to approve it just as city council would. Mr. Hall asked how many members served on that board and a discussion followed stating that seven members served on the board. Mr. Hall asked how much the stipend would offset the mayor's salary and Mr. Raimondo noted that it would be based on what percentage of the mayor's work is done for the BPU and that he would work on getting that answer before the next meeting. He added that he attends their board meetings, serves as their Chief Executive Officer and appoints individuals to the board, but more work will need to be done to quantify the amount of time that the mayor spends working on BPU concerns. Mr. Laurin noted that he supported the idea.

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Mr. Thompson asked what the next steps would be. Mr. Laurin asked if the stipend would be reasonable being equitable for both the BPU and the city. Mr. Raimondo noted that two things to consider are the amount of hours that the mayor spends working on BPU matters and whether or not the BPU would be agreeable. Mr. Bellitto provided some history on the BPU and city's relationship over the past thirty years as the sanitation and wastewater were transferred to the BPU in the 90s. He added that in the past, only two or three meetings were held and suggested that going forward, the committee should come prepared with an opinion on whether or not an increase was in order. Mr. Hall concurred and suggested that everyone come back with their own opinion and the group could discuss it further. Mr. Bellitto and Mr. Sellstrom noted that they would work together on updated some figures. Mr. Smeraldo asked Mr. Raimondo if he had a thought as to how much to ask of the BPU in their contribution to the mayor's salary. Mr. Sellstrom suggested the group base it on a percentage of his hours worked on BPU matters. Mr. Bellitto asked Ms. Williams to send the group the duties of the mayor and city council as spelled out in the charter as well as the boards and commissions that the mayor and councilmembers serve on. Mr. Smeraldo asked if there should be a different percentage for the city council president based on the workload of that position. Mr. Bellitto noted that the president always has more interaction with the city clerk regarding council matters, etc. Ms. Williams confirmed that the current president, Mr. Dolce, speaks with her both in person and over the phone at least weekly, excluding the number of emails exchanged. Mr. Bellitto also noted that the media goes directly to the president with questions after meetings. Ms. Williams also noted that the councilmembers serve on a number of different boards and commissions and that her opinion is that their salaries are not representative of the work that the councilmembers put in. Mr. Smeraldo noted that the development of the city, while a great thing, places additional work on the councilmembers. Ms. Williams agreed and stated that like any city department, the elected officials also are asked for more of their time.

The group decided that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday, November 15, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. in the Mayor's Conference Room.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.
Jennifer R. Williams City Clerk/Treasurer