



INFORMATIONAL MEMO

CITY COUNCIL of SALT LAKE CITY

August 27, 2024

Given the fact that legislative bodies are responsible to set and fund their own salaries, it is safe to say that those salaries are highly influenced by the desire and duty to be fiscally responsible, and to meet the taxpaying public's expectations that elected officials are conscientious with the public's money. In some cases, the public expects not only fiscal responsibility but fiscal conservatism from those who are elected, unlike other government employee salaries, which are usually based on objective market data, and are not as heavily reviewed by the public. That said, there are policy considerations to weigh with the unique positioning of Salt Lake City as the Capitol City, including rapid growth, and upcoming national and international activities that are placing a greater burden on all elected officials in the City to fulfill their duties to the taxpaying citizens of the City, and make sure to represent the City's interest in all of those conversations.

In the FY 2025 City Budget, the Mayor recommended, and the Council approved an increase in the Mayor's salary to \$211,764. This set the Council salary at \$52,941 given that the Council salary is currently set by ordinance at 25 percent of the Mayor's salary. That ratio was set in 2018. Until this previous budget year, the Council and Mayor have received the same annual cost of living increases as other City employees but there has been no extensive review of comparable City salaries for Councils or time commitments. The Mayor's salary for FY 25 was based on an extensive review of the Mayor with respect to other City Managers in Utah, and other Mayors in cities with the same form of government as Salt Lake City. The City's HR department compared the Mayor's salary to City Managers because under the Salt Lake City's form of government, the Mayor is the City's full-time chief executive, which is analogous to a City Manager in other forms of government. No such similar review was performed for Council salaries in cities with the same form of government (full time Mayor; part time Council). *Staff has provided **Attachment A** to provide a sample list of other City Councils' salaries, although it should be noted that the same political pressure applies to those cities, and they may also be operating in different forms of government with different expectations for the Council Members; hence the wide range.*

The Council expressed its intent during the budget process to schedule a time before the end of the calendar year to more fully evaluate several of the factors related to the City Council Member salaries. This memo provides information on various **policy lenses to consider this issue** that the Council may wish to discuss:

1. Increased time commitment and community expectations for participation & response

- Based on a staff analysis of scheduled meetings for Council Members, Council work session and formal meetings, and time spent responding to constituent requests and emails, Council Members spend between 90-150 hours each month on City business, or 21-35 hours per week if averaged out over a year. The average among Council Members is 27 hours per week and the median is 26 hours per week.
- While each Council Member serves a different number of hours each week based upon particular policy issues before the Council at the time, needs of the district, service on outside committees, personal approach, and other factors, the amount of time it takes to be a member of the Salt Lake City Council effectively representing residents has

increased significantly since 1980 when this form of government was initially established.

- Community organizations expect elected representatives to attend constituent meetings, requiring a significant investment of time. Each City Council district currently has 3-8 community councils with regularly scheduled, typically monthly, public meetings. District 7 is the exception with only the Sugar House Community Council which covers a population significantly larger than other community councils. There are currently 27 community organizations registered with the city. When the form of government was first established, and the salary ratios were set, the entire City had only eight community councils.

2. Compensation Philosophy

- **Equal Opportunity:** In the 2018 adjustment to their compensation the Salt Lake City Council specifically added the consideration of ‘equal opportunity to serve as a City Council Member.’ The Council evaluated whether there were realities about the structure and compensation for the position that unintentionally limited the likelihood that people from all walks of life and all income levels were able to serve. **It has been several years since the Council made that adjustment, and this is the first opportunity the Council has scheduled to determine whether the changes made are adequate meet the concern identified by the Council in 2018.**

Policy questions:

- Is the compensation adequate to cover expenses associated with the time demands of the position, including the cost of time off from full-time employment, childcare expenses, out-of-pocket expenses, etc.?
- Are there practical aspects of the elected office that limit who can serve in the office of Salt Lake City Council Member? Examples might be timing of the public meetings, expectations of attendance at small group briefings, expectations of attendance at community council meetings and other public functions, etc. Are there ways to address these challenges outside of the compensation discussion without limiting effectiveness (electronic meetings for example)?
- **Policy Concept of a part time ‘Citizen Legislature,’ and ‘Citizen Legislators:’**
 - The form of government established in Salt Lake City, under State Statute, is based in the same concept as the Utah State Legislature – informally it is referred to as a ‘citizen legislature’ and the members of the body are informally referred to as ‘citizen legislators.’ The 1979 ballot language approved by voters said, “The Council shall be a part-time legislative body and shall meet at least twice monthly. Compensation of the Council Members and employees of the City shall be set by the Council.”
 - A fundamental basis of the citizen legislature concept is that the legislators do not serve full-time. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, the model anticipates that the legislators have a profession and/or means of support outside of legislative service. Serving as a legislator in a ‘citizen legislative’ model typically means that the compensation for the legislative work is a secondary source of income.
 - Citizen legislators are considered to be more representative of the public because their primary work is not for the government. They are considered to be “an outside set of eyes” to fulfill the oversight duty and other duties of the legislative branch.
 - As part-time elected officials, theoretically they can be more directly engaged in the communities in which they live. The model is recognized as “close to the people” because the legislators are making decisions on behalf of the public while being members of that public and experiencing similar day-to-day circumstances in the community.
 - The Council may wish to consider the following **policy questions** relating to

this aspect of compensation philosophy:

- Council Members have **not** expressed an interest in changing the form of government, but it may be helpful to get a good understanding of the level of flexibility that the City has in operating within the Council-Mayor form of government with regard to compensation philosophy. Particularly how is part-time service defined/compensated?
- Is the concept of having a ‘citizen legislature’ essential to the form of government?
- Where along the continuum of compensation does the Council want to balance the policy concept of maintaining a ‘citizen legislature’ with the concept of setting the compensation at a level that maximizes the number of people who can serve?
- What are the downsides to the ‘citizen legislator’ concept? Does the ‘citizen legislator’ model imply that some portion of the time and resources of the elected official are expected to be volunteered/donated by the elected official? Does this inadvertently limit the pool of potential candidates?
- If the donation of time and resources is an expectation of serving on the City Council, might the position be inadvertently limited to those who might have one of the following situations:
 - Be retired
 - Have significant free time
 - Have personal financial means
 - Have flexible work hours
 - Have more than one income in the household
 - Have a job or source of income that is not affected by time away due to Council work, etc.

3. Increased complexity and profile of legislative issues, economic development projects, and international events

- **State Legislature** - Each year since 2018, the Utah State Legislature has been increasingly involved in development in the Capitol City, whether through the Inland Port, the State Fairpark, or various high-profile economic development projects like facilitating Major League Baseball, the National Basketball Association or National Hockey League. This requires the investment of significant time and coordination on the part of City Council Members to adequately represent their constituents in the many discussions that happen to form legislation that ultimately impacts Salt Lake City residents.
- **Homelessness** - Since the previous compensation discussion, the Council has joined the Administration in elevating the homelessness crisis to the state level. Recognizing that Salt Lake City resources are not sufficient to solve this issue alone, Council Members are more regularly involved with advocacy and engagement, to ensure that state leaders hear the on-the-ground experience of City residents as it relates to this state-wide issue. This includes participating more regularly in Wasatch Front Regional Council, Utah League of Cities and Towns, and State level organizations.
- **Complex challenges of growth** - The City is experiencing unprecedented growth which brings new challenges that require focused attention of both the Executive Branch and the Legislative Branch. This includes many more conversations and constituent interactions about zoning reform, anti-displacement measures, and a focus on the City’s role in providing affordable housing.
- **Events and Economic Development** - The City is preparing to welcome the world in anticipation of the 2034 Olympics. In addition to that, Salt Lake City has proven to be a successful host to many high profile events, including the NBA All-Star game in 2023. Hosting these events is an honor for the City, and also comes with increased

time commitments for elected officials.

4. Relationship between the salary for the Mayor and the salary for Council Members:

- The current ordinance establishes a link between the Council Member and Mayoral salaries, with Council Member salaries set at 25 percent of the Mayor’s salary. The Council has the authority to change that ordinance.
- The 25 percent figure reflects the ratio that existed when the Council / Mayor form of government was established. The salary of Council Members had lagged to be less than 25 percent in the years between 1980 and 2018, and the Council re-established that ratio with the 2018 salary discussion.
- Policy questions relating to this concept:
 - Is the percentage based upon an assumption that Council Members would dedicate roughly 25 percent of the full-time position of Mayor?
 - Is it based upon an assumption that the pay of a council member is more of a ‘stipend’ provided to cover a portion of the elected officials’ efforts, with the balance of the service to the public expected to be provided by the council member as a public service?
 - Is it intended as a ‘salary’ that roughly relates to the number of hours worked? If so, is it appropriate for the Council to consider adjusting the percentage based on the increased demands of the position that are outlined elsewhere in this report? The following chart illustrates various percentage levels for discussion purposes only (it is provided again in the options section):

FY 25 Mayor’s Salary	\$ 211,764
(current) 25%	\$ 52,941
30%	\$ 63,529
33%	\$ 69,882
35%	\$ 74,117
40%	\$ 84,706
50%	\$ 105,882

5. The value and limitations of salary comparisons to other cities

- In 2018, salary surveys of Council Members in other municipalities showed significant variation in annual salaries, regardless of whether the Council is part or full time. In 2018 there was no consensus from the data about what City is most comparable/appropriate for Salt Lake City elected officials.
- Staff has conducted a similar review with more recent data and found similar results (**see Attachment A**).
- In addition to the inconclusive survey data, some challenges arise when comparing salaries for elected officials such as differences across forms of government, separation of duties/powers, demographic and economic variations, actual hours worked, and other factors. It is particularly difficult to identify comparable situations due to the population of the City vs its role as the Capital City and its role as a regional hub.
- As a local point of reference, Salt Lake County Council Member compensation is \$48,222 for 2024.

6. Equality of compensation between Legislative and Administrative elected officials:

- In adopting the FY 2025 budget, the Council supported a new approach to set the compensation of the Salt Lake City Mayor. Rather than limiting the comparison to the salary of mayors in Utah or the salaries of mayors in what might traditionally be considered comparable cities, the Council recognized the unique situation of Salt Lake City and agreed to bring the salaries of city managers into the comparison, since the, under the City’s form of government, the Mayor is the full-time chief executive of the

City.

- Is there an argument to be made that the position of Salt Lake City Council Member is as unique as the Salt Lake City Mayor's position?
- Recognizing that Salt Lake City's form of government has a full-time Mayor and part-time Council, should Council salaries be increased to address the added workload experienced by all elected officials in the Capitol City? How would the Council define part time? Is the 25 percent figure less relevant than in 2018? (see item 2 above – the concept of Citizen Legislator, and item 4 above).
- There may be legal considerations relating to part-time vs. full-time status that the Council may wish to discuss further with the City Attorney.

7. Other issues raised in relation to the compensation discussion:

- **Comparison with Area Median Income (AMI), living wage, and other City jobs** – Some Council Members have requested to have information about the AMI for Salt Lake City, along with a review of other jobs in the City in a similar range as is being discussed for Council compensation, as context for the “what is the definition of part-time” discussion.
 - AMI for SLC in 2024 is \$92,000 per year.
 - **Attachment B** includes a sample of City jobs with FY 25 compensation information. Note that these roles are full-time roles with different qualifications and experience.
 - Living wage in SLC is \$47,160 for a single person no children, and \$110,946 for a family of four with two adults working. Staff referenced this MIT analysis as it includes information for a variety of family types: livingwage.mit.edu/metros/41620. *Staff note: the housing expenditure data in this analysis appears to be significantly lower than other housing cost data recently reviewed by staff. It is possible this analysis has not yet updated that portion of the data. The Council may wish to engage with the Gardner Policy Institute to create a more Salt Lake City-specific data set as it relates to understanding a living wage.*
- **Regular review** - Several Cities require a regular schedule of evaluation of elected officials. Some Council Members expressed interest in requiring by ordinance a review every 4 years.
- **Additional compensation for leadership** - Additional compensation for SLC Council Members who serve as the City Council Chairperson and Vice Chairperson to address the time necessary to fill these roles. If the Council is interested in this, the Council staff could research amounts provided in other jurisdictions. If there is interest in this concept, the Council could determine whether RDA leadership would be compensated at the same level as the Council Chair and Vice Chair.
- **Other reimbursements** - Evaluate the benefits and reimbursements that are established for Department Directors and other City employees, such as mileage reimbursements or use of City vehicles on City business, to determine whether some may be appropriate to extent to Council Members as a matter of equity.
- **Term Limits** - The possibility of term limits, to mitigate concern about people serving multiple terms and being considered ‘career politicians’ rather than ‘citizen legislators.’ The Council could ask the City Attorney to determine whether term limits could be put in place by the City, or whether State legislation would be needed.
- **Document policy considerations** – The Council may wish to document the core policy principles to inform any future compensation discussion.
- **New form of government** - Consideration of whether the demands of City Council Members are such that a discussion of the impacts of full-time status may be worth discussing in the future. The opinion of past City Attorneys has been that changing from a part-time elected legislative branch to a full-time elected legislative branch would

necessitate a change in state law (to create that form of government as it does not currently exist) followed by a vote of the public. If the Council is interested in a future conversation on this topic, it may be helpful to determine whether there is appetite at the state level to create a form of government that includes a full-time legislative body. Note that this would also change the Mayor’s role in City government.

POLICY BALANCING

Value Statements – Many, sometimes conflicting, values exist when discussing compensation for municipal elected officials. Some examples include:

1. Local elected office is a public service and should be compensated minimally.
OR
 Absent reasonable compensation, the pool of potential candidates could be inadvertently limited to persons of financial means, which is counter to the City’s stated policy goals of equity and inclusivity.

2. Discussing elected official salaries can be a controversial topic, therefore it is easier to evaluate them very infrequently.
OR
 It is best for the public to be aware of the compensation level and have the opportunity to comment on those salaries each year, or at some regular interval.

OPTIONS

The following are options that could be considered independently or combined, that have been raised for consideration, based on all factors listed above as well as specific ideas raised by Council Members:

1. **Make no change at this point.** The Council could ask staff to conduct more research in a variety of areas, with or without outside resources, to prepare for future discussions.

2. **Change the ratio of pay in relation to the Mayor to reflect the increased time Council Members spend on City business:** *this chart is provided for discussion purposes only*

FY 25 Mayor’s Salary*	\$	211,764
(current) 25%	\$	52,941
30%	\$	63,529
33%	\$	69,882
35%	\$	74,117
40%	\$	84,706
50%	\$	105,882

As noted above, based on a staff analysis of scheduled meetings for Council Members, Council work session and formal meetings, and time spent responding to constituent requests and emails, Council Members work 90-150 hours each month, or 21-35 hours per week if averaged out over a year. *This would require an ordinance change and depending on amount, budget adjustments.*

3. **Increase compensation based on comparison with other Cities.** As noted above, it is difficult to conclude an appropriate “peer” set of Cities, and as shown in **Attachment A**, salaries for Councils vary widely whether or not those Councils serve full time and may be further influenced by the form of government in those cities. *This would require an ordinance change and depending on amount, budget adjustments.*

4. **Increase compensation for leadership positions**
 Several Cities reviewed by staff compensate leadership positions with an additional stipend to reflect the increased workload leadership positions often have in representing their respective bodies and conducting official business. This extra compensation ranges from \$1,000-\$10,000

additional. *This would require an ordinance change. It is likely the Council office budget could absorb this increase if on par with other Cities.*

5. Require by ordinance a time-certain evaluation of Council compensation

Several Cities reviewed by staff require that elected official compensation is re-evaluated every 4 years (time is usually separated from election years). The Council may wish to discuss this option. *This would require an ordinance change and no budget adjustment.*

6. Delayed effective date

Some have raised the option that the Council could decide to make any potential ordinance changes effective at some future date.

7. Other

If the Council is interested in pursuing any of the above changes Staff would work with the Administration to determine if it would require an ordinance to amend the Elected Officials component of the Compensation Plan and whether there would need to be any adjustment to the Council Office budget (*see notes above*).

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Comparison of select Council compensation

Attachment B – Sample of City employee compensation