

## INDEPENDENT SALARY COMMISSION

### Public Comment Report

Date Range: January 1, 2023-April 6, 2023

Total Public Comments received: 4

Email: 1

Public Comment Form: 3

Meeting Q&A: 0

Verbal Testimony: 0

#### RAW PUBLIC COMMENTS (attachments included at the end)

Date	Comment
2/28/23	I hope this commission can figure how the city can afford 12 salaries, Plus the Mayor and a city manager, how much will all these new positions cost? If the new system of city council members are not compensated, then how does the city attract qualified candidates that can work for free, pay for campaigns and be available for meetings? I am concerned that we could end up with candidates that are wealthy enough to run for election or are retired so have time to run.
2/28/23	I am concerned about the costs of compensation for so many council members.
3/16/23	I am concerned that this plan of so many members of the city council will be very expensive for the cities tax payers. I also worry that a new city manager and office will be very expensive to maintain. I worry that is council members are not compensated that only wealthy Portlander's or retired residents can participate if meetings are held during the work day. I am interested in knowing how this committee will agree on these issues.



## League of Women Voters® of Portland

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To: Independent Salary Commission (ISC) April 6, 2023 c/o  
Jamey Duhamel for distribution to ISC members  
From: Debbie Kaye, President League of Women Voters of Portland (LWVPDX) for the  
LWVPDX Salary Team

The LWVPDX thanks the ISC for being the inaugural group setting compensation for Portland's elected officials as of January 2025. The ISC faces a tight timeline, but we are confident that the Commission will successfully complete this vital task. The League supported Measure 26-228 due to its interconnected reforms to improve Portland governance and elections. We also agreed that it was time to end the practice of the City Council setting its own salaries and that giving this task to an independent group comprised of human resources professionals was most appropriate.

We offer the following suggestions and observations in a spirit of collaboration and hope they are useful. We also acknowledge that you may already be planning to consider these ideas. It seemed prudent, however, to send this memo early in your process.

We begin with the following overarching points:

- The League strongly recommends setting compensation levels that will open the door for a broad range of people to consider running to serve as Portland elected officials.
- Assistance from the Bureau of Human Resources is valuable, but their compensation philosophy and job assessment approach for city employees does not appear to be applicable to your discussion of salaries for elected officials. The League recommends that the ISC develop a compensation philosophy and approach specifically for elected officials.
- There are no Oregon cities comparable to Portland so comparison research should venture beyond our state to municipalities similar in size to our city.
- The record of the March 8, 2023 City Council hearing confirming the ISC, clearly indicates the Council's understanding that the job of councilors who take office in January 2025 is full-time. This has always been the position of the LWVPDX as well. In our view, the combination of administrative and legislative roles in the current commission form of government results in a more than a full-time job. What we see as falling by the wayside is time for robust response to constituent requests and needs, as well as seeking timely and meaningful public input on policy development and legislative decision making. These activities will fully replace bureau management responsibilities.
- Charter provisions are the beginning and not the end of guidelines for the review of compensation for new elected officials. The rest of this memo provides more details on this point.

Drilling deeper into the multiple facets of Measure 26-228, the charter provisions focused on the new mayor and councilors must be recognized as being just a floor, in terms of understanding the work of these future elected officials.

The League of Women Voters of Portland:  
*To promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government.*

A major illustration of this pertains to budget development and adoption. Before Measure 26-228 the charter was silent on this topic and the current budget development process had evolved over time and involves intermingled legislative and administrative council action as outlined in an extensive Budget Manual prepared by the City Budget Office.

Appropriately, however, the Charter Review Commission did not try to fill that gap with Budget Manual details. Instead, they added two basic points:

- That the city council is the budget committee, which is inserting a term used in state law regarding municipal budgeting, and
- A May 5 deadline for a proposed mayoral budget.

That May 5 deadline is linked to the early May timeline for release of the mayor's proposed budget in the current budget development process. That budget development process, however, begins the previous fall and after 2025 the new city council will still play a significant role. In other words, these two references in the new charter related to budgeting do not mean that councilors will be passively waiting for that May 5 deadline.

Indeed, an extensive role for the new council during future budget development, and many other elements of its legislative work, is informed by the charter reforms requiring the election of a larger city council via ranked choice voting. This facilitates proportional representation by electing three new councilors from each of four new council districts. The current five-member city council translates to 132,000 residents per member compared to 55,000 residents per each of the twelve new city councilors.<sup>1</sup> Compared to the current council, which is elected on a citywide basis, this improved ratio will enable councilors to be far more responsive to constituents. Constituents will also expect that new councilors gather extensive public input so that policy development and legislative decision making are informed by community-based solutions.

A related point is that the Charter Review Commission's appropriate rejection of smaller single-seat districts and recommendation for larger multi-seat districts facilitates a balance between councilor consideration of district and citywide needs. This means that new councilors will not just be working in their own districts, but will also spend time working with councilors from other districts in committees and as a full group.

All of this reinforces the full-time nature of the new city councilor positions.

Given that the new mayor will no longer have legislative duties and will be hiring a city administrator, it could be argued that the mayor's job will not be full time. The League does not share this view.

A final point related to the Auditor: Since there is an education requirement to qualify as an Auditor candidate, it may be helpful to learn the salary range for the head of Portland's audit unit and the head of the audit division in the office of Oregon's Secretary of State. It should be noted, however, that Portland's elected Auditor has a broader range of responsibilities than either of those positions that more narrowly focus just on performance auditing.

Thank you for considering these comments and let us know if we can answer any questions.

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<sup>1</sup> Calculations are based on 660,000 Portland residents which is rounded from Portland State University's 2021 population estimate of 658,773.