



CITY OF WAUWATOSA
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EMPLOYEE RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, January 12, 2010

Committee Room #1

PRESENT: Alds. Berdan, Donegan, Ewerdt, Krol, Walsh

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Didier; Alds. Birschel, McBride, Meaux, Nikcevich, Wilke; J. Archambo, City Admin.; A. Kesner, City Atty.; B. Aldana, Asst. City Atty./HR Dir.; Police Chief B. Weber

Ald. Donegan as chair called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Discussion of mayoral compensation

Ald. Donegan instructed that the deliberation on this subject is limited to evaluation of the compensation of the current mayoral package according to the duties. This is not an evaluation of the current or any other mayor's performance. There will also be no deliberation with regard to changing the ordinances that pertain to the mayor's position as well as a change in the way city government runs. No matter what the committee does at this time the action will not take effect until after the next mayoral election in 2012. With regard to some comments made by members of the public, this issue was not initiated by the current mayor. It was initiated by a member of the Common Council

Ms. Aldana commented that she has attempted to gather information for the committee from various sources including state statutes and various charter ordinances. She explained that mayors do many duties and activities beyond anything that is outlined in the state or municipal codes. She researched back to 1984 when the city administrator's salary was approximately \$50,000. She also included an exhibit that was in the Journal Sentinel comparing similar municipalities. She endeavored to gather other municipal salaries; however, she found that most of the other municipalities had a different structure of government with just a mayor or just a city administrator.

Ald. Donegan asked if Ms. Aldana would agree that one of the more significant duties identified is that of Chief Executive Officer and Head of the Police and Fire Departments. Ms. Aldana explained that some years ago there was a dispute between a former city administrator and mayor regarding who had this authority. The legal opinion states that the police chief has to follow the mayor. The mayor has the final authority. She added that the Police and Fire Commission also have authority over hiring and firing of department personnel.

Ald. Donegan asked if the mayor wished to deploy officers differently than the chief, the mayor has authority to do that. Ms. Aldana responded that the answer was basically yes. The mayor has authority in a number of different areas such as the Plan Commission, veto authority over the Council and authority over certain bond transactions. She added that the mayor's position is not defined as either full or part time. The mayor's salary was last changed in 1984. She noted that the ordinance does provide that the mayor shall not engage in any job for compensation that might prohibit them from performing their duties as mayor. Ms. Aldana noted that when a city does not have a city administrator the mayor's salary is usually higher. When there is both a city administrator and a mayor the mayor's salary is usually lower.

Ald. Donegan asked where the city stands on a per capita basis with the combined salary of the city administrator and mayor. Ms. Aldana answered that Wauwatosa is in the middle of the chart.

Mayor Didier commented that there are mayoral duties that are defined statutorily, but she has heard from different people that the mayor's position has become more full time over the past 10 or so years. Using the term full time or part time is incorrect. All mayors have put in full time hours at different times of the week, month or year. She outlined the activities she is currently involved in. Yesterday she was at work at 8:00 a.m. She left at 2:00 p.m. to attend the Intergovernmental Cooperation Council. From there she went home and spent some time answering emails then came back to city hall to preside over the Plan Commission which ended at about 8:45 p.m. Today has been about a nine hour plus day. Any time there is a discussion on this issue there needs to be an acknowledgement of all the mayors that have worked this position full time. She stressed that the mayor has to make themselves accessible 24/7.

Mayor Didier added that the mayor also presides over and conducts the executive budget review. The mayor has membership in the U.S. Conference of Mayors, League of Wisconsin Municipalities, the ICC, and the Plan Commission. The mayor also presides over the Emergency Operations Command Center, and makes appointments to the city's boards and commissions. The mayor communicates with constituents, holds town hall meetings, issues proclamations, makes classroom visits, give city hall tours and helps with fund raisers. Another area the mayor is involved in is development issues, meeting with business and community groups and the school district. The mayor is an ambassador and liaison between city government and citizens on a daily basis.

Chief Weber commented that he has been the police chief for almost 20 years. At the time he started, he thought the mayor's salary was very low and it hasn't changed in all this time. People run for mayor to serve the city. The city administrator runs the day to day operations. The mayor is the figurehead and provides the culture of how government is going to function. The mayor provides leadership and brings out the best in those around us. The mayor can't do anything without the support of the Common Council. He felt that the form of government shouldn't be changed. The city administrator should not have to do all the things the mayor has to do.

Mr. Archambo noted that the calculation of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) will produce a salary figure in today's dollars. The COLA and the CPI adjustments are strikingly similar.

Ald. Donegan added that the salary adjusted according to the COLA would be \$53,071 in today's dollars and the adjustment according to the CPI would be \$51,007. The consumptive power of the Mayor's salary is less than half of what it was when the salary was first established.

Ald. Donegan asked about the Journal Sentinel Poll. Stefanie Scott, reporter for the Journal Sentinel stressed that it was not a scientific poll. There were 342 votes cast over a period of a week: 1) 49% said the salary was too low, 2) 39% said it was just fine, and 3) 17% said it was too high.

Richard Bachman, former alderman, 2229 N. 115th Street, commented that he was approached to run for mayor in 1972. At the time, the position was considered full time. Later on they decided to hire a full time city administrator and a part time mayor probably because the mayor at the time wanted to have the job as part time until his impending retirement. Mr. Bachman agreed with Chief Weber that any elected official should have the city in their heart no matter how much they get paid. He noted that he worked many hours as an alderman. Many of the mayors have had some kind of income from other sources and many of the mayors were on the Sewerage Commission which pays \$10,000 plus benefits. He didn't think that a raise in the mayor's salary would be a good idea because in the future the aldermen will want higher salaries as well. He felt that then the city will not get people who will be elected to the Common Council mainly because of their love of the city. He stressed that there is no way to run the city without a good, experienced city administrator.

Ald. McBride agreed with Mr. Bachman. The proposal to raise the mayor's salary 100% is too high. He could support an increase maybe to \$30,000. He noted that there is a very serious recession going on and the Council has agreed to hire an Economic Development Director at \$130,000. It is not the time to raise the mayor's salary so high.

Ald. Nikceovich appreciated what the mayor had to say. She has also talked to former Mayors Estness and Walsh. They all worked similar hours. At this point in history Wauwatosa has become a small big town with a lot of changes. The city is on one of the main arterials in the state. The Council has a responsibility to Wauwatosa's citizens. She was comfortable with the mayor's salary range being increased to between \$60,000 and \$90,000 to make it commensurate with the amount of work being done. There are a lot of policies and procedures that are dictated by the mayor. The city has had the good fortune to have the mayors we have had. We need the full attention of the mayor in office. No one who needs a living wage would apply for this job. The low salary has decreased the pool of people who can do this.

Kari Schwenkner, 2207 N. 68th Street, commented that she just saw the Common Council create a position at the \$130,000 level and now to increase the mayor's salary at the levels being discussed is outrageous.

Tom Gaertner, 6829 Terrace Court, mentioned that he liked the Jeffersonian notion that people serve in public office to do their civic duty and then return to their former lives. If he ran for mayor he would want to do it part time. He didn't like the notion of raising the compensation package for the mayor by this Council which he believes engaged in partisan politics during the last election. He agreed that paying more for the mayor would invite increases for the aldermen.

Melody Baker, 10349 W. Woodward Avenue, noted that at the time the Economic Development Director position was created the Council was asking a lot of the residents. Doubling the mayor's salary is too much. It would be dangerous if it became a career rather than a service.

Ald. Krol mentioned that comments have been heard on both sides. He suggested that since the committee has time, they didn't have to rush to make a decision.

It was the consensus of the committee to hold this item for two weeks.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Carla A. Ledesma, City Clerk
City of Wauwatosa

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