



City of Tacoma  
Citizen Commission on Elected Salaries

Ronald Malm, Chair  
Richard Wilkinson, Vice Chair  
Dianna Conway  
Randy Droppert  
Shari Barrera  
Pandora Schaal  
Julie Yust

MINUTES

**TIME:** Monday, May 7th, 2018, 6:00 PM

**PLACE:** 747 Market Street, Room 243, Tacoma, WA 98402

**PRESENT:** Shari Barrera, Julie Yust, Pandora Schaal, Richard Wilkinson

**ABSENT (Excused):** Ronald Malm, Dianna Conway, Randy Droppert

**Call to Order:**

At approximately 6:04 pm, Vice Chair Richardson, called the meeting to order.

**Roll Call:**

At approximately 6:05 pm, Vice Chair Richardson, did roll call.

**Open discussion with Mayor Woodards:**

Julie - You might know me from Teamster 117. I live in Hilltop.

Shari – I live in NE Tacoma and teach Special Ed in Federal Way. Union rep for school district.

Pandora – I live in East Tacoma. I went to Lincoln. I also study Special Ed at Eastern Washington. Work as a manager at Pizza Hut.

Richard – I live in the theater district 2 blocks from here. I moved here from Seattle where I lived for 30+ years. Tacoma is the best kept secret; I really enjoy living here. I work at UW Tacoma. I was the mayor's appointee. Although I never met Mayor Strickland, I am the HR Specialist for the commission. Assistant Vice Chancellor for HR Organizational Development at UW. The reason I got into this is because my HR Director's sister used to work in HR at Tacoma and I had spent 27 years in city government working for City Manager and Mayor in HR until I left that industry for Department of Global Health and then into higher ed. It's so great of you to take time in your schedule. In my experience with City commission, committee, I've never seen one like this where we have the final say. We have several questions for you. I would also maybe turn to the commission if you have questions for Mayor Woodards. So, we'd like to hear more about your perspective on the job especially with your unique role because you were on the council and now mayor. Share more about the nature of the job.

Mayor – The greatest excitement for me, when I walked in the door on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, is for the first time in 12 years, having been on the park board and city council, I get to have one job. A big job, but I get to get up every day and not figure out how I was going to split myself between 2 different places. As a council member, having a full time job, trying to fit in all the extra meetings with the council members and maintain my day job. Everything I do, is around this one particular job. When I decided to run I thought I was a council member for 7 years and surely it can't be any more difficult than being a council



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member. I had no idea, how busy the job was. I've been busy all my life but it might be a little bit busier than my life has ever been but the intensity of the business is completely different. There's a whole different expectation of me as mayor when I show up. Every time I show up to some of the same events but I have to have answers and remember ten different things. It is completely different than being a council member. The expectation of you as mayor is different from when you're a council member. I have gone 21 days in a row without having a day off. While there are several different facets to the job, most people think that mayor is just the face of the City, it's a lot more than that. Weekends are not mine because that is when people expect me to show up. Sometimes my Saturday is busier than my work week. I very rarely get free time on my calendar and usually it's to check emails. I wasn't able to check emails since Friday and I have 120 emails in my inbox and that's minus the spam. So I think the intensity of the job is what surprises me the most and then I talk about all the things I get to do. It's not what I have to do but it's what I'm honored to do. There's the face of the City, special events, meetings and conferences. Then there's an expectation to be the lead for the Council and being the go between for the Council that's not here full time. Then there's more technical in nature are the regional work: Sound Transit, Puget Sound Regional Council Executive Committee, Pierce Transit and our Retirement board. I'm going to go to a conference to learn more about our retirement system because it's not done just on those boards. For our retirement system board, I'm the chair of the board. We have 47 boards and commissions and 16 of them I sit on myself so the other 31 are divided amongst the other 8 council members. Some of these only I can sit on because they are my boards.

Richard – So there is leading the council, council relations, council lobbying, policies, and you have another wedge which is regional board, another wedge face of the City, I imagine there's another wedge which is managing City Manager so at some point you're the boss. Percentages would be a shot in the dark.

Mayor – And then there's my own work; the policies that I want to work on. Emails and returning phone calls. I don't know if I can tell you tonight but I'd be willing to take a stab on that and produce something. What's really funny is I have to figure out how to divide it all but it's all so fluid. There isn't a day for this and a day for that. I could start the morning with greetings to a conference. By lunch time, I could talk about a 50 million dollars' project, investment strategy and retirement. By the end of the day, I could talk about infrastructure. There is no typical day.

Richard – Advocacy for your own initiative. I mean you're elected with some type of platform you have to deliver on or make a good faith effort.

Mayor – I work with the City Manager and so we spend a lot of time in conversation about how to handle certain things whether it's about the hiring of the Community and Development Director or feedback from the council members.

Richard – Last question, the citizens that want your help with something.



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Mayor – All the time. AARP, wanted to look at an age friendly city. That's something I really could see us doing. I'm leaving you all to go have dinner who will be giving a presentation tomorrow supporting partnership about anti-racist communities around affordable housing and homelessness. Tomorrow night, I fly out because Tacoma was chosen of 1 of 6 cities across the county to participate in the Mayor institute. We are the only City west of the Mississippi that got chosen.

Richard – You mentioned your role and City Manager role. How would you differentiate between your job and that of the City Manager? Is it pretty clear to you?

Mayor – It's very clear to me. I don't manage staff. I get a lot of information from staff. I get consulted a lot by staff and the City Manager. At the end of the day, it is the City of Tacoma Manager's decision. We interact a lot because it's within the City Manager's interest for me to have buy-in. Keeping me aware and on board is important for the City of Tacoma Manager.

Richard – Who sets the agenda for City Council?

Mayor – I set the agenda for City Council but it is with her help. We work in partnership with everything. If staff has something that needs to get to Council, City Manager comes to me and says she needs something on the agenda, but I have the final say.

Richard – Do you have the mayor has head of vote along with council. Are you a tie breaker or do you have a vote?

Mayor – I have a vote. So when we set policies, I'm one of 9 votes.

Julie – Considering we have a limited amount of time with you and salary is an uncomfortable conversation. What do you want us to know about the amount you make?

Mayor – I will say when I decided to run for mayor, I was still under the guideline of the initial salary but I had the heart to serve. When I found out that you had changed the cap on the salary, I was thrilled to death because I think the service that the mayor gives to the City, and the expectation of the mayor in Tacoma are different compared to other cities. It's not optional to show up to something. People elect you and that's what they expect from you and I don't think it's unrealistic expectation. About being a council member, you know a lot of our council members have full time jobs when they run, it is really hard, we call this a part time job but the expectation, information to know and comprehend, it's a lot. I feel incredibly overwhelmed for my council members who have to hold down 2 jobs and those who get elected, lose their job. We talk about affordable housing, but maybe a few have really great jobs or flexible jobs but this is a hard working job. If given more time, if there were more opportunity to do great things, our council members who have flexibility with their job do great but for those who don't, it's more difficult. Yes, it's uncomfortable to talk about. I would not want to see our salary decrease. I honestly believe that I work hard for every dime that I make. In addition to being present for all of



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these things, every non-profit fundraising in Tacoma, expects me to be there and expects me to write a check.

Richard – Because the commission is still relatively new, what would be your advice to the commission? For us to have good faith and fair effort on our part.

Mayor – I remember when you first formed, they asked us to fill out this survey that kind of documented. Most of us don't have time to fill out. We didn't really have staff. I think talking to city council members, you would get a lot more from that than asking them to fill out a survey. We are already so overburdened by trying to respond to the needs of our community. The scrutiny and the amount of work is not work it. People who run for office in this community, run to serve. But I think in that service, it should be compensated for because of the expectation on the other side of it. So I've been in church most of my life. I remember arguments about why should we pay him (pastor) so much? He's a servant. If you call him at 2 o' clock in the morning, you expect him to answer. If you run into him at the grocery store and ask him a question, you expect him to solve it. Elected officials are the same thing. When are you evaluating your recommendation?

Richard – We don't have a schedule. We're still learning our job.

Staff liaison – We have to make a decision by September.

Mayor – even if it's status quo, a decision has to be made by September. I would suggest talking to a new council member, or Ryan Mello. Talk to somebody who've been on the council for a long time. I would talk to council member Beal, or council member Ushka or council member Hunter. I know the Cola went away. I know the year increase went away and maybe September is when you'd decide whether to do the cost of living.

Richard – In the beginning, we had very little time when seated with the September deadline, we knew that we could always review it and now we're getting into a cycle of review. Thank you.

Mayor – I appreciate you all for making this commitment. I know it's a difficult conversation and I appreciate you being brave enough to take it up and be the face for us. Whatever decision you make, you have to own that decision and you have to be comfortable to have enough information to say no this is why it's different. When you think about Vancouver, what's expected of Pierce, Snohomish, King County, I mean I got to go to china to talk to investors and we're g3ettng more investments from china. The mayor of Vancouver is probably not doing that and the city manager is not the one to go to china. She's here running the day to day operations of the city.

Richard – What are some of your take away?



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Julie – I didn't realize that September is our deadline to make a decision. I would be interested in making a proposal that each of us take one or two council members and attempt to set up a meeting with them individually. Is that not possible?

Richard – We have no need to change our decision. First I think we need a current list of council members. I also need to be reminded by whoever the legal advisor is, when we make a decision, I don't think we change their salaries mid-term. What is the effective date for changing elected official salary? Is it when they get re-elected?

Staff liaison – My understanding that whatever is decided by you guys will go into effect immediately. However, I believe there was some talk about it in the past and I can check with our legal advisor and get back to you.

Richard – I can write you the question I want answered and copy you guys for you to bring back to your legal advisor for guidance.

Julie – Did we ever get the information about Spokane?

Shari – City council members pay is only for part time?

Liaison – For us, yes. But there are other municipalities that are full time.

Shari – In relation to other cities we look at, are those city councils part time or full time?

Liaison – I don't have that information. It varies by municipalities.

Richard – What comments sticks with you?

Shari – I didn't know that the mayor had to pay out of pocket. She pays for her events and isn't reimbursed for that.

Julie – I know that a lot of time that the mayor is extended an invitation, they'll comp for it.

Pandora – It was interesting when she mentioned she goes to China. Other cities or state will ask nearby for help.

Shari – She did say she's going to China for something about opioids epidemic.

Julie – China is the big money building that hotel. Some of the stuff that's happening is circumstantial to where we live and it's hard to say well other mayors aren't doing this and other mayors are. If Seattle was having the opioids crisis as we are, then Jenny will be involved in something like that. It just so happens that it's in our backyard and not theirs. Maybe it's happening because of some of the pieces in play.



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Richard – I just feel that if we're trying to recognize. We're not compensating this mayor but it's the mayor position. What is the compensation of that level of accountability?

Shari – I think I kind of understand what the mayor and city manager does but it's her interpretation of what they do.

Richard – For me, I appreciate her trying to part out the different aspects of her job. I also have empathy for the members of City Council. Former deputy mayor who came here and talked about the roles. It's fascinating.

Shari – it would be nice to have a few of the council members to come in.

Julie – it sounds like we're not allowed.

Liaison – The only thing about that is that because this is a public commission, everything has to be public and recorded.

Richard – What if we invited 3 of them to our August meeting?

Julie – I would suggest we reach out to any of the 8 council members for who's available.

Liaison – we don't have to make a decision by September if that's what you're worried about.

Richard – I don't know what the mechanism is for inviting city council. Maybe you can find out how to extend the invitation.

Julie – is it something simple as reaching out to the mayor and putting it in her calendar.

Liaison – I can send a message to their support staff to see if any of the council members are available.

Richard – have you guys seen the survey?

Shari – we could use the questions from that survey.

Richard – we choose use them. What's the job? What's really going on? I think Mayor Woodard's point that it's one thing to put in writing and another thing to have a personal sense.

Shari – I think it's interesting that members lost jobs because they took the position. It's awful.

Richard – Let me add to my communication to Chantra; both the question about timing of effective date and invitation to council members for you to pass on.

Liaison – Less work for me, I'm all for it.



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Richard – I still struggle with what's the criteria for making a fair decision.

Julie – The thought of having a mayor and city council, I don't know why they got away with COLA but linking it to CPI. The union has to sit through negotiations every 2 years. I work closely with labor negotiation department, the means of the contract that we're establishing this year, whatever you're going to give your constituents is what you should take home. There's not an element that you get 12% and these guys get 2. So that folks can live in this city.

Richard – I have to think about the average.

Julie – You have to look at like police and fire. Basically if you can't come to a decision at the table, you go to an arbitrator.

Richard – What's the index that makes sense?

Julie – The Consumer Price Index is what you look into every year. That's how much the cost of consumer and goods raise every year. So if your wages aren't going up, you're essentially back sliding. That's why when you mention some of these places, where's that income disparity come in?

Richard – is there some way that we can have some reference point so that we have confidence in our decision?

Julie – comparable are great until you get a base line number. Where are your metric? If you tie it to something like the CPI, then you can raise it every year. Then you do have a metric and reasoning as to why you raise something.

(Conversation continues)

**Review & Approval of February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018 Minutes:**

All in favor.

**Adjournment**

(7:00 pm)



Chantra Real, HR Assistant, Human Resources



Richard Wilkinson, Vice Chair