



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, August 6th, 2018, 6:00 PM

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

PRESENT: Richard Wilkinson, Pandora Schaal, Shari Barrera, Julie Yust, Dianne Conway

ABSENT (Excused): Ronald Malm, Randy Droppert

Call to Order:

At approximately 6:06 pm, Vice Chair Richardson, called the meeting to order.

Roll Call:

At approximately 6:07 pm, did roll call.

Open discussion with City Council Members:

Richard suggested for Commissioners to announce the District they live in. Each Commissioner stated the District they live in. Deputy Mayor stated that District 1 is where he lives.

Q: How prepared were you for the time demands of serving on the City Council and what surprised you?

He was relatively prepared in the sense that he was ready to do whatever it took to do a good job. What surprised him is how a lot of small things tend to add up. He stated that the job looks part time on the surface where in theory, the only "full work day" is a Tuesday but in practice, there are committee meetings, responsibilities to tend and attend to, as well as several choices to make. Flexibility is needed to be an elected official because the way its set up is difficult for people who are not self-employed, who aren't business owners, or independently wealthy to be able to attend the many _____.

It was challenging for him to find another job that would allow him the flexibility to be able to perform his job as an elected official.

The biggest thing to keep in mind and what is really the goal for the Council as a whole is knowing kind of people you want to serve on it. The ideal is having elected leadership that actually looks like the people they represent. Not just people from one walk of life, or one Council District.

A Commissioner asked: What do some of the Council members do?

Justin: Tech worker; works for a technology company.

Council Member Thoms: Navy Reservist and runs a Lobbying Firm



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Council Member Blocker – Full time dad

Council Member Ushka:

Council Member Beal: Planner for the City of Puyallup

Council Member Hunter: Retired

Conor McCarthy: Is a Lawyer

Council Member Mello: Pierce County Conservation District

Mayor Woodards: Full time

Chairperson Wilkinson –

Asked what the range of the number of hours is that the Council members put in on Council business during the course of a week.

Council Member -

Average of about 15-20 hours per week (Full work day is Tuesday, one or two Committees in the evening, Policy Committees, various Boards and Commissions, Neighborhood Council meetings, Neighborhood Business Districts, Regional Commissions, National League of Cities, etc.)

Chairperson Wilkinson –

Asked how Council members go about setting boundaries for their Council service.

Council Member -

Said that it is not necessarily that they are always working, but they are always “on”. They always have their phone next to them to answer any calls, emails, or text messages from Code Enforcement, Public Works, Police Department, etc. They are always ready to start working if they are needed.

Council Member -

Shared that only the inside of her home is private to her. A constituent may call them in the middle of the night if they have an emergency, etc.

Commissioner -

How often do people come up to you when they see you in the supermarket line, or something?

Council Member -

Quite often. As Council members, they become a little bit more visible in the community.



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Council Member -

Stated that on average she spends about 55 – 60 hours per week, when counting the community meetings, committees, etc.

Council Member -

Believes that the scheduling of this role, kind of shuts some people out from running for office or even considering it because people at the lower end of the socioeconomic scale who are not making a ton of money are unable to leave their full time job to run for office. The role of Council Member somewhat favors the privileged. It is necessary to have flexibility in order to hold the position.

Council Member -

She has not had another full time job after being elected Council Member. Fortunately, she can make due on her salary and was fortunate to be able to refinance her house.

Chairperson Wilkinson -

If the Council role is envisioned as Part time, why work 55-60 hours? It's a bargain for the City, but it wasn't what you were asked to do and it seems unfair to him and unreasonable to expect a Council Member who was elected to be a part-time Council Member, to put in more than a full time week. Why do you do that?

Council Member -

Explained that if she went back to work full time, she will have to eliminate a number of her Committee positions. You have to think why do people run? What neighbor am I going to say I'm not going to help today? What event am I going to say: "I will not be there to hear your concerns"?

Council Member -

Stated that if the City Council went through the trouble of appointing someone, he wants to make sure he is making his time count. People who run for Council care about their City, districts, neighborhoods, and care about the people in them and that is part of why they want to serve in this capacity. On Paper, the people are electing a part time Council member but between the Committees, going to study sessions, and the going to the actual Council meeting, really, the job is much more encompassing than that. It is part of the expectation of the role. A Council member is supposed to be the person that is in the community.

Chairperson Wilkinson -

Added that while it is striking how many demands are placed on the Council, he appreciates and respects the time they put in, however, just showing up at a meeting does not necessarily serve the people as much as another activity. He asked the Council Members where they believe the biggest return on investment of their time in terms of making a difference in the community is?

Council Member -

Earlier in the year, when evictions in the Tiki Apartment Buildings was happening, he spent about 2 hours on a Saturday afternoon where he spoke to about 12 different tenants and felt like he got more out of those conversations than half hour one on one conversation with a landlord lobbying



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group. He ensured the Commission that making time where there is a lot of people where you can have meaningful interactions with them is worthwhile.

Council Members -

Added that sometimes, as Council members, they are asked to vote on things like capital projects, etc., and they must be well informed on such topics, therefore, they cannot miss certain meetings.

Council Member -

Believes the question Chairperson Wilkinson asked was not a fair question.

The Council member backed her statement by saying that for any single thing, there are a number of components that come to play, there is a policy or a problem you need to do outreach, do research, and meet with people to get pros and cons, and meet with one's peers on the best solutions. The most important thing is to have good governance and good policy that moves the initiatives forward that you want.

What gives the biggest impact is the synergy between knowing the constituency and knowing the data. She continued saying that the conversations she has with her peers are equally as important because they each come with different perspectives and ideally, that's how a representative government should be because they bring perspectives from their constituency, as well as their own knowledge base.

Council Member -

Gave an example of a Community Town Hall meeting hosted by renters at risk of losing the roof over their head. He said that many of those constituents were not voters, had never engaged their City government before, don't have the internet, don't know their phone numbers, etc. By discounting face-to-face meetings will send the idea that only people who approach them will get their time, like lobbyists, lawyers, and people with free time. The component of policy should also be considered because going to conferences, meetings, and reading helps enlighten you to bringing the best policy to people.

Commissioner –

Is it your perception that other Council members do the same amount of work, or is there variability?

Council Members –

Variability. They provided the commission with a better picture of the different availability that different Council Members have to dedicate to the role. They gave an example of Council Member Hunter and Council member Beal: Council member Hunter is now retired and her availability may be more than Council member Beal who has a full time job. The requirements placed on that role is the quite similar but his time is stretched thin. If you're being visible, prominent, collaborating effectively with your colleagues, and get on the same page with things, it's going to take some time, and definitely more than 15-20 hours per week.

Council Member –

Asked if Part-time meant 15 – 20 hours per week.



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Commissioner –

Answered: “Yes”, 15 – 20 hours.

Council Member –

What does the City of Tacoma das an employer define as part time?

Commissioner –

20 to 32 Hours

Chairperson Wilkinson –

Said 20 to 25 hours seem reasonable to him. If people choose to work beyond that, it is their choice. He does appreciate the time the Council members devote to the community. He also asked if they help each other at all and if there is a collective sense of what is reasonable.

Council Member –

Responded by saying that sometimes someone can't make a meeting, so the alternate goes on their behalf. They think of the system as a whole.

Chairperson Wilkinson –

Asked the Council members how they think the Commission should establish their compensation and what they think the Commission should factor in. He asked if they should look at neighboring cities.

Council Member –

No two cities are alike. Overall, cost of living for the area and what it takes to raise a family here. In terms of the living wage is in Tacoma, may be a good way of looking at it. What does the average person in Tacoma earn here, cost of transportation, etc., may be a little more helpful.

Council Member –

Their pension must also be accounted for.

Chairperson Wilkinson –

Asked if there were any final thoughts from the Council Members.

Council Member –

Appreciates the Commissioner's thoughtful work and all of the time they spend on the Commission.

Chairperson Wilkinson –

Thanked the Council Members for their input and for joining them at the meeting.

Commissioners shared their observations and reflections from the conversation with the Council members.



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Adjournment
(7:06 pm)


Chantra Real, HR Assistant, Human Resources


Richard Wilkinson, Vice Chair