



City of Tacoma  
Citizen Commission on Elected Salaries

Richard Wilkinson, Chair  
Julianna Yust, Vice Chair  
Randy Droppert  
Shari Barrera  
Pandora Schaal  
Chad Arceneaux  
Patricia O'Conner

**MINUTES**

**TIME:** Monday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019, 6:00 PM

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

**PRESENT:** Richard Wilkinson, Julianna Yust, Randy Droppert, Shari Barrera, Pandora Schaal

**ABSENT (Excused):** Chad Arceneaux, Patricia O'Conner

**Call to Order:**

At approximately 6:01 pm, Chair Richard Wilkinson, called the meeting to order

**Roll Call:**

At approximately 6:02 pm, did roll call

**Discussion:**

Richard: So I just want to also do a quick check in. So I shared my news, I'm retiring. Actually it's next Wednesday, my last day.

Julie: Congratulations.

Richard: Yeah so that's 46 years. So I'm just curious, any news to note the past 6 months? For you Pandora?

Pandora: I get to train to be an assistant manager.

Richard: Oh, that's great. Congratulations

Pandora: So, I switched from 54<sup>th</sup> to a retirement home, worked there for like 6 months. Got really sick and went back to Pizza Hut.

Richard: Oh, hahahaha

Pandora: I've been in Edgewood ever since.

Richard: Okay, so you're an assistant manager. Shari, what about you, any news?

Shari: No, not really. I mean, no nothing new.

Richard: Alright

Shari: It's busier

Richard: Oh

Shari: Ready for summer.

Richard: Oh right, it's just around the corner. Julie?

Julie: I just got back from a fantastic vacation.

Richard: Oh where was that?

Julie: Buton

Richard: (gasp) Fantastic!

Julie: So I'm pretty jazzed, but I'm back in the swings though.

Richard: Now, were you happy?

Julie: Oh Buton was amazing. It really is the land of happiness.

Richard: Yeah

Julie: Really actually shocking that they do, like productivity is not their jam, they don't care. It's really 'our' people happy. Their king has gone out of his way. It's really fantastic and the people are amazing.

Richard: That is quite a trip. Did you do any hiking?

Julie: Every day, like every day. We went up to Tiger's Nest and yeah, amazing.



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Richard: Wow, ok well we're on the record.

Julie: Yeah, when we're off the record, I'll share the pictures.

Richard: Right, right. Oh, I'm retiring Randy.

Randy: Oh good!

Richard: I'm joining the club.

Randy: Perfect, the cool kids. It's a good club to be a part of.

Richard: And so, any news for you in the past 6 months?

Randy: Uh, just golfing and I'm actually coaching little kids golf now.

Richard: Oh how fun! And no injuries?

Randy: No, no I mean we set up little lines of demarcation. You have to stay behind this line and I keep telling them, nobody wants to eat a golf club.

(chuckles)

Richard: So uh, let's get into the business of things. When I saw the date of the commission meeting coming up and I knew we hadn't met for 6 months, last February when the snow hit and we were going to have Mayor Woodard and so forth... I just thought it would be kind of a good opportunity to get reoriented as a commission and then plan the next step. So I asked for this fact sheet to be created. And Kari, you had some additional information on benefits?

Kari: It's included, they got that.

Richard: Okay. We got the ground rules back. Oh and I asked one of the district maps. I never could figure out where the districts were for Tacoma. And so we now know that Randy lives in district 1, Shari district 2, Julianna in district 3 and Pandora district 4, Patricia in district 5. And I am in district 2. I don't know where Chad lives. I'm just 5 minutes away, so... I appreciate that. So the fact sheet showed the salary so I would have a good fix on the salary of the commission.

Staff Liaison: Here's that

Julie: I guess I have a question, why Anders and Keith are higher than Ryan.

Richard: Yeah

Julie: I thought it would be a little more consistent. There's a little bit of a difference between those.

Shari: It could be when they started.

Pandora: That's what it looks like.

Kari: That's correct.

Richard: Let's ask. What's the deal?

Kari: I did ask about that a little bit when they put this in there and I think it has to do with when their term was and when they're up for their next term. It's just how that works. They're kind of locked in.

Richard: And is Connor the Mayor Pro Tem?

Julie: Yes

Richard: Okay, so that's why he's at \$50,000. And I just received a benefits worksheet. Everyone see that? Okay. So let's just take a moment. Oh I think Kari you can just describe it. So all elected officials can participate in the health plan.

Kari: Correct. Basically Mayor Woodard is treated like a regular City of Tacoma full-time employee. So she is considered a 100% full-time employee so she gets the medical, dental, vision. She can participate in a flex spending program. She also does get some paid time off, life insurance and AD&D. Insurance LT&D, she participates in our retirement program through TERs and any of the optional supplemental benefits that we have she can participate in and also the ORCA program that we have with the commute trip where she can get an ORCA card or do a vanpool if she wanted. With her schedule, I don't know how that would really work.

(Chuckles)

Julie: She can do the citywide program as well as she can get a vehicle allowance?



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Kari: She could, yes. I don't really think she takes advantage.

Julie: I don't think so. I can't imagine she does. That's why I'm asking. Okay.

Kari: But we don't have in the code that she would be limited from being able to participate. And in the others you'll see they're basically 90% employees so their benefits, their medical insurance and the dental and the vision, it's prorated so they do pay a higher amount for their insurance as a 90% employee. But they're also able to participate in the retirement program, and the commute trip program and they also receive medical, dental, and vision coverage which those rates are at 90%.

Richard: I appreciate this Kari. I wanted to see the idea of total compensation. So salary and benefits and I really appreciate seeing the whole picture here. That gives me a better sense. Do you know roughly the value of these benefits? Like if you were to add a new employee, would you add 30%, 40%, or 20%

Kari: I'd have to get back to you on that which I can in email. I mean with the medical plan; I can tell you just as one of our common options I think rate for the PPO is \$15.08 a month roughly. So as an employee a 100% employee Mayor Woodards can participate at \$40 a month for employee only coverage or \$80 for family whereas the others are going to be paying more than that because it's prorated. But I can share that information at the next meeting if you'd like to.

Richard: Let's hold off on that until we're done because that might be a moot point. It is always more to the point than just salary and that was the key thing. What questions do you have about this info sheet?

Julie: I don't have any, this is fantastic.

Richard: What was that?

Julie: I don't have any questions, this is fantastic.

Richard: Good

Randy: I'm good.

Shari: This is cool.

Richard: Yeah, thank you! Then we have our ground rules too. Let's pull those out. I thought it was good to see that's kind of why I started on time because it says 'start on time' right here.

(chuckles)

Richard: So it shows who is serving for how long and just to point out number 11 on our ground rules...Maybe we should just take a moment and read through the ground rules to remind ourselves, what we said we wanted.

(time elapse)

Richard: By the way number 11 is 'revisit decisions only when there is new compelling information.'

Julie: That makes sense

Group: Yeah

Richard: I guess the only other questions that I have, and I don't know if anyone has the answer, is can we change elected officials' salaries during their term of office? Let me just give you the agenda behind that question. am very comfortable with where we are with the council member salaries. I'm not totally comfortable with where we are with the Mayor's salary. It seems a bit low to me. We'll have to revisit that in August. But I'm just curious if we said, well January 1 of 2020 we're going to increase her salary, can we do that?

Staff Liaison: Let me actually look into that for you just because I know like with our biennium or June and everything how that plays out. So, I think I remember you asked this before too and I tried getting an answer but I never fully got a straight answer so let me look into that for you.

Richard: That would be an important question.

Shari: I think too though that you have to look into the City budget. So it budgets for that so if we went ahead and changed it, it would mess with the budget.

Richard: Well, that's a good point. Hahaha

Shari: Just curious.



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Richard: Well also, I think it's just a personal instinct really. I was looking, as a little digression, but I've always been curious, what does the Mayor of Spokane get paid? And I still haven't found a good, clear explanation. I saw something, so I Google'd that today. And Wikipedia said...

Julie: I thought we did get that

Randy: We did that in the meeting last time.

Group: (various forms of agreement)

Richard: Did we get Spokane's salary?

Randy: \$185,000

Richard: Ok, thank you. I just forgot that. I apologize. So, at the same time, Spokane is, I mean, we're not...Spokane is different than us and we're different than them, but it still seems like the Mayor's salary is a bit low to me so.

Randy: What's the population of Spokane?

Richard: About the same as ours.

Randy: Really?

Group: (various forms of agreement)

Richard: Well I think there are a few thousand more.

Randy: Huh

Pandora: It's because of all of the colleges.

Randy: Um, I've always, I've argued from the get-go that the Mayor was paid too little. When you look at people she's responsible for, who answers to her, other people are making close to \$300,000 working for her.

Richard: Yes

Randy: The Fire Chief was \$243,000 or something when I looked.

Richard: Wow

Randy: I mean, it's a big number

Richard: Yeah

Julie: So I would throw out there...I'm sorry Kari, we know each other in a different context because I do work for the labor union that when we have positions and we're in labor negotiations right now and the City is offering the people who work for the City doing the roads, and the street, and the sewer 1.5% and they're not making a budget at the table...When we sit here and talk about increasing Victoria's salary. While I can understand that, I have a really hard time thinking about, she gave all the represented by contract people 3% last year for 2019. I have a really hard time thinking about raising her salary and I think I expressed this last year, by anything more than what she gave represented folks, or unrepresented folks. Like I think that there's an absolute way to tie that together and say 'you're expecting folks in your city to live on less than what the CPI is going up by. I have a really hard time bumping her up \$50,000 when she's not... And there's a team of people, I'm not expressly saying that it's her, but when the City as a general isn't choosing to take salaries up even to CPI.

Richard: What is CPI right now?

Julie: at 3.3 and in negotiations there's a standard offer right around 2%.

Richard: Got you.

Julie: But anyone unrepresented by a contract receives 3% January of 2019.

Randy: And I come from a fire background and it seems like we always got at least CPI.

Julie: That's historically been true.

Randy: Yeah

Julie: Absolutely. That's unfortunately not the way the City has moved in the last few years.

Randy: Huh



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Richard: Well I think it's a fair point I mean, and it is something we get to decide in August for if we do anything.

Julie: Right

Richard: Obviously status quo is in the absence of agreement. We have status quo.

Julie: And I'm not saying I'm opposed to anything. I don't want it on record that I'm opposed to and I think we can have a lively discussion. I just think there needs to be some equitability in terms of...we're talking about livelihoods of folks. We should make some connection. It shouldn't be an arbitrary number.

Richard: I think not being an arbitrary number is spot on. I think it's also, whatever we do, even though the Mayor's salary is, you know you don't have any comparison to it, there's no market. There is an impression, or people are going to read into it, something that may not have been intended. And I think we're being very conscious of the kind of public relations aspect of any change would be highly appropriate. So anyway, as we think about our agenda for August, I think that's going to be an important topic for us to discuss. Is there anything else that, in terms of just basic information that would be helpful to the commission like background information, anything like that, anything that you would like to see to help us in August?

Randy: Is it safe to assume that comparable cities offer the same or similar benefit packages? Is that a reasonable assumption?

Kari: For our package? Is it...

Randy: Like is the Mayor of Spokane going to get a benefits package that is similar to this?

Kari: I am not aware of that. I mean for sure we can check into that. I know you've gotten the numbers on the wages from the AWC survey, but we can see if there's anything in there as far as the benefits package for you and bring that to the August meeting if you like.

Julie: I would imagine that mayors in other cities are given the opportunity to buy the city's health insurance.

Kari: I would assume; I just don't know all of the particulars about PTO.

Julie: I can't imagine that... no, no, no, no

Randy: But if you've heard, that's \$40

Julie: Right

Randy: And \$80. We paid \$110 for my wife and our kids in the years we were fighting fires. I mean it almost felt like we were stealing.

Richard: Yeah, in this day and age it seems true.

Julie: Oh I'll bet. The City has done a really great job of keeping insurance costs reasonable.

Richard: It would be interesting, although I suspect that any full-time mayor is going to get a full-time package. That would be my assumption. But also full-time mayors vary. Like ours has a city manager. I work in Redmond and they have a full-time mayor who was the chief administrator officer as well. They had a deputy mayor of course.

Julie: Odd

Richard: Isn't it a weird set up? Ok so any other pieces of information that would be helpful to the Commission? Do we want an updated salary survey of elected officials? Julianna, you want that?

Julie: I'm comfortable with the information we've received so far.

Richard: Ok

Julie: I wished that we could have had the last meeting and had an opportunity to talk to council again.

Richard: Yeah

Julie: I know it's just, it doesn't work that way so...

Richard: Great

Staff Liaison: I mean we do still have our next meeting in August.



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Julie: We'll be making a decision at the August meeting so we don't have time to talk to folks and have them here.

Richard: Well, we can have Mayor Woodards come to the August meeting.

Julie: Do you feel that she would say anything different than she did last year when we had her here?

Richard: Yeah, I think so. Well I don't know. What do I know? Hahaha

Shari: She's had a little more time under her belt.

Julie: She does.

Richard: That's exactly, that's my thought Shari, that she would have more experience to draw on.

Shari: Because last time she was here she what, had been on a couple of months?

Pandora: Yeah, that's about it really.

Richard: And also, for Chad, for anyone who wasn't here before. He didn't get a chance to hear from her, the Mayor. It would be nice to get a chance to reconnect. I'd like to have the Mayor back.

Staff Liaison: Ok

Richard: So if you can use your power Chantra.

Staff Liaison: Ok, I'll sweet talk my way in.

(Chuckles)

Richard: Oh I would've said, let's have a subpoena.

(chuckles)

Richard: Be like Congress. Sorry

Staff Liaison: I hate subpoenas.

Julie: I don't think I'd sign my name to that one.

Richard: No, no, no that doesn't go into the minutes by the way Chantra please.

Staff Liaison: It's already recorded.

(chuckles)

Richard: Oh God, making stupid jokes wind up in the minutes.

Shari: It's being recorded too.

Richard: That's right. Oh phooey

Staff Liaison: I do have a question though. So what if the Mayor is not able to attend?

Julie: No problem

Shari: That's alright

Staff Liaison: I mean do you guys want...

Richard: That's ok

Staff Liaison: Just mayor, ok. Alright.

Julie: I think between the survey and having council in here last time, we got a really robust sense of what they were going to say and I don't think that much would have changed since we had them in last year.

Richard: What information would be helpful to evaluate the Mayor's salary when we meet in August?

Mine really is kinda a gut and that's not a good basis for making salary decisions. Particularly of it has lasting implications.

Shari: I know that she mentioned that she had to buy clothes and some other things because of all of the engagements that she has.

Richard: Right

Robert: I mean, she's out there in the face of the world, needs to be dressed nicely, probably has to buy stuff at auctions and appears to be playing the game appropriately. I think all of those things are things that we don't factor in and to me the mayor is the executive of a significantly sized corporation here. I mean, however many employees we have here in the City of Tacoma

Julie: about 2,600



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Robert: Yeah, that's a lot of people that you're responsible for. And to me, the \$100,000 number has always seemed crazy low. There are firefighters here in Tacoma, and I mean line firefighters that are making significantly more than that.

Richard: Right

Julie: I think for me knowing if it can take effect once we make that change or if it has to wait until next term would be a significant piece

Shari: Here's my question, so Anders, Keith, let's go with last names... Ibsen, Blocker and McCarthy, no no and Mello all make \$46,010. Ok, if they were re-elected, would they be making then the \$44,990?

Julie: Right because their new term would start.

Pandora: Correct

Shari: So would they take a dip because that's the way I'm reading it.

Julie: Correct

Richard: What else would be helpful in making an informed decision?

Randy: I liked last time when we talked about median incomes and household incomes. And to me that at least provides a balance to some extent. If we could get updated numbers on what's happening in the City of Tacoma that'd be cool.

Staff Liaison: Sorry Randy, you wanted updated numbers with... I'm sorry, what was that again?

Randy: What is the median income in Tacoma right now? Or what's household income? Whatever we can do to get a measure of what the general population is experiencing.

Richard: Yeah, I got the information from the south, that database that I'm familiar with, but I don't know if that's, I don't know what like in the world of compensation here where you turn for data like that. It would be helpful to have current figures on median household income, median salaries, what else? I wonder are there any? The thing is the elected mayor is so unique that I was trying to think if there were any other executives or chairmen or boards of directors you know. But I don't know if that makes any sense. She's more like a chairman or board of director than chief executive.

Randy: That's true.

Richard: But it's not like having a big corporation like Multicare, CHI Franciscan, places like that. Any other suggestions from the compensation corner? Kari? What would you be looking at if you were trying to set the Mayor's salary, what would you be looking at?

Kari: Salary survey data would be a big part of that yes, and comparators.

Shari: It would be interesting; I mean that Spokane is comparable so what would they make as well? I mean, just kinda look at that, look at those numbers in terms of what does that look like?

Randy: So here's a site called Salary.com which I know nothing about. The average Chief Executive salary in Tacoma, Washington is \$846,000 as of April 27<sup>th</sup> 2019.

Pandora: 800, no.

Randy: The range falls between 652 and a million.

Richard: Hahaha a 900% increase, that would be...

Randy: Yeah, that would not go over well

Julie: I will tell you right now that a 900% increase would be something that I would vote against.

Randy: Yeah and I would be opposed to it. Hahaha

Julie: Just trying to be a little realistic about what I'm coming into the room with.

Randy: So maybe that's not a viable number to even to compare to. Maybe we just need to stick to what other mayors are doing.

Richard: Yeah. I think what other mayors are getting paid, updating that figure would be helpful.

Shari: But to comparable cities. I mean Spokane's a good one

Julie: Outback

Shari: Huh?



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Julie: Not outback, you know Orting, Puyallup. Well, not even Puyallup really.

Staff Liaison: Do you guys...

Richard: Would it make any sense to look at Oregon? Or Idaho cities? I don't know that's not too many.

Julie: Sticking in Washington, I'd stay in Washington.

Shari: I'd stay in Washington too, I looked at the teacher pay in Oregon, my husband and I decided we are not moving there.

Richard: Oh

Shari: When I was taking a 50% pay cut.

Richard: (gasp) You're kidding!

Shari: 50% pay cut. All of my experience, my 29 years of teaching experience, they'd only give me 12 years. So I went from as far over on the salary schedule and all the way down and making as much as I possibly could to the middle of their salary schedule. I went hmm yeah, that's not for me.

Julie: So even hitting the top wouldn't even get you...

Shari: Oh it wasn't even high. And they didn't take into account that I have a Masters and 90 credits which is the equivalency of a PhD. And unless you have the PhD you don't get the credit.

Richard: Wow. That's ok, so not Oregon.

Julie: If we were living in Vancouver having this discussion it would make sense to look at Oregon but living where we are, I just don't...

Shari: No, it's just a whole different... and plus if you factor in they have an income tax vs sales tax...

Richard: Yeah, ok well.

Julie: Well and are we asking you guys to put together the top 5, the top 10? Is 5 biggest cities, is 10 biggest cities, what's our framework that we're asking for? I think to give them so they have a real sense of what we need.

Shari: Spokane's comparable. But where else is comparable?

Randy: Bellevue

Julie: Well the AWC book would have that

Randy: Bellevue and Federal Way would probably be.

Shari: Yeah they would be comparable.

Randy: Everett is a maybe.

Julie: Do we like just city size? We could look at...

Randy: You gotta look at the type of government as well. You gotta balance both of those.

Shari: And what benefit packages if you could find that info out would be great.

Kari: We will check.

Julie: I think what you bring we'll be excited to see.

Richard: Yeah, I think top 5 will be compelling for me. I mean we're not like California where you have like 10 cities over 1 million, we're limited. But I think Vancouver might be interesting. And each city has its own uniqueness.

Shari: And Vancouver keeps growing.

Richard: Yeah, it's really grown a lot. Ok, so with that, any other discussion, so do you like the idea of Mayor Woodard come on in August if possible?

Julie: If she's available.

Richard: If she's available, great. If we have questions if you recall that we came up with during the minutes of our last meeting so I don't know if they're still useful.

Julie: I like the format that we did last time that we just asked her to talk a little bit as opposed to peppering her we kinda saw things come out. So a little more informal then maybe. So maybe only asking her to be here for 30 minutes so we can have time to have a conversation afterwards.





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Richard: Yeah, I think that's perfect. Now in August we still have to decide what we want to recommend for salaries by September 1 so that's an important action. So I think the 2 things are oh no wait, 3 things that I see for August are Mayor Woodard's visit, the salary information and the decision for the 2020 salaries. I see that we don't have a place to approve the minutes. Hahaha, we probably should do that.

Staff Liaison: There were some changes and edits to it so that will be on the next meeting's agenda.

Richard: Ok, just so you know there are a couple of paragraphs in the minutes that I asked be deleted because they don't make sense. If you look here, I show on page 3 of the minutes...

Julie: I do apologize; I didn't print them out.

Shari: I looked through them.

Richard: Well there's stuff in here that's just gibberish and there's one date that's incorrect. And they should be and the approving should be on the agenda take actions. Ok so, what else, I think we're potentially done.

Staff Liaison: Ok so, what I've gathered, action items for us: we're going to reach out to the Mayor and see if she can attend the August 5<sup>th</sup> meeting, we're going to research top 5 mayor's salaries for comparable cities. So far I have Spokane, Bellevue and Vancouver. So I'm assuming the other 2 you'd like us to decide?

Julie: We said Federal Way maybe

Richard: Yeah

Staff Liaison: Federal Way and?

Julie: Redmond? Redmond might be high on the tech industry though.

Randy: Everett was the other possibility.

Julie: Everett might be good.

Randy: Bellingham might be a possibility

Julie: They're growing like crazy and they have a university so that's a good one.

Staff Liaison: Bellingham? Ok, alright so I have Spokane, Bellingham, Vancouver, Federal Way and Everett.

Julie: Sure

Shari: That's a good breakdown.

Staff Liaison: Ok, perfect and then...

Richard: I'd be interested in which of those are charter cities as well.

Staff Liaison: Charter cities?

Richard: Yeah

Julie: Um Bellevue not, Spokane, Seattle and Spokane

Richard: Are charter cities?

Julie: No, that's the tier 1, yeah cus Bellevue is all up in arms that they're not tier 1.

Staff Liaison: Did you guys want...

Richard: Oh is that right?

Julie: Yeah

Richard: Poor them

Staff Liaison: Did you guys want Seattle as part of this too? Or

Richard: I don't think so

Julie: I mean, it's a little like Spokane. I doubt we're going to get pretty much anything.

Staff Liaison: Ok, and I think the last action item was the benefits.

Kari: Benefits along with the salary, we'll work on that.

Richard: And the grand total.

Staff liaison: And the salary question.

Richard: The salary question, can we change the salaries mid-term?



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Julie: Can we change mid-year, yeah.  
Richard: And also the updated median income.  
Pandora: That's a lot.  
Richard: Yeah  
Staff Liaison: You always give us lots of work to do.  
Richard: Well I want you guys to feel valued.  
(chuckles)  
Julie: Cus they don't have a full time job  
Richard: No, exactly! Without us, what would you be doing?  
(chuckles)  
Julie: Anything else?  
Staff Liaison: Luckily we meet quarterly.  
(chuckles)  
Richard: So, I think with that, we'll entertain a motion to adjourn.  
Randy: Motion moved  
Pandora: Seconded  
Richard: All those in favor?  
All: Aye

**Adjournment**  
(6:33 pm)

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Richard Wilkinson, Chair

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Melanie Jay, HR Assistant, Human Resources