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# Elected Salaries in Denver

Finance & Governance Committee  
Tuesday, March 19, 2024

# Agenda

- Current Status of Denver's elected official salaries and raises
- Research
- Proposed Changes
- Ballot language
- Questions & Discussion

# Elected Pay in Denver – Charter Requirements

The process for Denver council members to modify their salaries is dictated by Denver’s City Charter. Section 9.2.2 of Denver’s charter states:

- (A) After January 1 of any general election year for elected Charter officers, but before the general election, the salaries of such officers shall be fixed by ordinance for the ensuing term within the limits set forth in this section. The salaries shall not exceed the lesser of:
  - (i) The current salaries adjusted for the cumulative percentage change over the preceding four years in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers, Denver-Boulder-Greeley, or its successor index; or
  - (ii) The current salaries adjusted for the cumulative percentage change over the preceding four (4) years in the mean salary of employees in the Career Service

# Research

Research showed our peer cities generally use three specific processes in which elected officials' compensation are addressed:

1. External commissions
2. Tying salaries to other regional elected officials
3. Using set formulae to determine salaries

Nine peer cities were looked at in the research. Those cities were:

- Baltimore, MD
- Columbus, OH
- Detroit, MI
- San Francisco, CA
- Jacksonville, FL
- Memphis, TN
- San Diego, CA
- Indianapolis, IN
- Philadelphia, PA

# Research – External Commissions

- An ad hoc commission or civil service commission evaluates salaries of elected officials and recommends changes
  - ✓ Baltimore, Columbus, and Detroit all use an ad hoc style commission
    - Baltimore has a 7-member commission with 3 members appointed by the mayor, 3 by council, and 1 by the comptroller. Members confirmed by council and serve 4-year terms. All changes recommended must be approved by council ordinance.
    - Columbus has a 5-member commissions with 2 members appointed by the mayor, 2 by council, and 1 jointly by mayor and council. Council must approve any recommendations.
    - Detroit has a 7-member council appointed by the mayor and confirmed by council. Recommendations are adopted unless 2/3 of council reject
  - ✓ San Francisco uses a civil service commission
    - This commission covers all city employees, and its 5 members are appointed by the mayor for six-year terms

# Research – Salaries Tied to Other Elected Officials

- Jacksonville, Memphis, and San Diego tie their elected officials' salaries to a certain percentage other elected officials
  - ✓ Jacksonville's charter states that their council members' salaries shall be equal to ½ the salary of the Duval County (their county) commissioner.
  - ✓ Memphis' charter states that their council members' salaries shall be equal to the salary of the Shelby County (their county) commissioners.
  - ✓ San Diego's charter states that their council members' salaries shall be equal to 60% of the salary of the judges of the superior court of the State of California.

# Research – Specific Formulae

- This is currently the practice under the Denver Charter
- Indianapolis and Philadelphia use a specific formula, set in their charter, and adjust salaries each term automatically
  - ✓ Indianapolis
    - Elected officials receive the same cost of living increases that city employees receive.
  - ✓ Philadelphia
    - Annual salary increases are automatically adjusted by multiplying existing salary by the Consumer Price Index multiplier, unless the multiplier is less than one, then no change is made.

# Proposed Changes to 9.2.2

- (A) ~~After January 1 of any general election year for elected Charter officers, but before the general election, t~~The salaries of ~~such~~ elected Charter officers shall be fixed by ordinance for the ensuing term within the limits set forth in this section. The salaries shall ~~not exceed~~ be the lesser of:
- (i) The current salaries adjusted for the cumulative percentage change over the preceding four years in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers, Denver-~~Boulder-Greeley~~Aurora-Lakewood, or its successor index; or
  - (ii) The current salaries adjusted for the cumulative percentage change over the preceding four (4) years in the mean salary of employees in the Career Service.
- (B) Salaries fixed by ordinance pursuant to this section shall become effective on the first day of the ensuing term. The ordinance, ~~once it is enacted~~, shall be self-executing and may not be modified, repealed or superseded during the term of office.



# Ballot Language

Shall the Charter of the City and County of Denver be amended to remove the requirement that City Council vote on elected official salaries every four years prior to the general election and to remove discretion in setting the salaries, and instead require that the salaries be as stated in ordinance, and any future adjustments shall continue to be the lesser of either the CPI increase for the Denver Metro Area or the cumulative percentage change for Career Service Denver employees?

*\* Companion ordinance sets the salaries at July 17, 2023 levels for future reference*

# Questions & Discussion