

Salaries for Mayor and City Council – Felice Zensius

Should the pay be removed from the City Charter? Should the pay for Mayor and City Council be increased?

Salaries for the Mayor and City Council are specified in the City Charter. The current Council Member pay was established back in March 8, 1977 and compensation for the Mayor was established June 2, 1970. The Mayor earns \$3600 per year and the City Council Members earn \$1200 per year. Council Members salary is based up \$50 per meeting attended limited to two paid meetings per month. The Mayor receives a \$200 monthly stipend plus the monthly \$100 meeting fee for a total of \$300 per month. So with perfect attendance the Mayor earns \$3600 per year and the City Council Members earn \$1200 per year.

Additionally, City Council Members including the Mayor receive a \$110.98 monthly mileage allowance and they are reimbursed for attending conferences and they are eligible for health benefits. Alameda City Council Members who serve on three boards or commissions earn additional stipends for that service. Salaries for City Auditor, Treasurer, Manager, Attorney and Clerk are set by the council thus they are not specified in the Charter.

So, we have two methods to determine compensation. First, we could remove the compensation for the Mayor and City Council from the Charter using the same process for all City elected officials. Compensation would be in line with cities like Alameda considering demographic, economic, geographic area and tax base. So, taking a look at that, Mayoral salary in Napa is \$35,860 and they have a population little over 78,000 and Alameda has a population a little over 75,000. In Mountain View, the Mayor makes \$8,924 and they have over 76,000 residents. In San Leandro, the Mayor earns \$25,000 and they have a population the largest of each that I'm going to cite, they have a population of around 87,000. Mayors earn \$22,000 in Milpitas for a population of 74,000. So you could look at those and come up with an idea for Alameda based on cities that are around us that have comparable populations.

Another option to determine salaries is to follow the California state government code. That sets salaries for non-charter cities based on populations and remember that Alameda is a charter City. For cities under the California state government code with 50,000 to 75,000 residents the state recommends \$500 a month. For cities like us with 75,000 to 100,000 residents, the State suggests \$600 a month. Alameda's population is around 76,000. As a charter City Alameda does not have to follow the government code, but it does provide a useful guide if we want to look at how to set salary. For annual increases, the State Code allows City Council salaries to be adjusted up to 5% per year. Alternatively salaries could be adjusted based on Consumer Price Index (CPI).

So, what are the pros and cons of increasing salary.

Pros

- Increasing salary would attract a larger pool of candidates who maybe would not be able to financially run.
- It moves the offices from volunteer positions.
- Alameda should pay elected officials a fair salary for their work
- It would not require an election to pay the increase
- Salaries would be consistent with other comparable cities like Mountain View and San Leandro

Cons

- Would require an additional expenditure from the City's General Fund
- Would remove direct voter approval for Council pays