

To: City Council
From: City Clerk
Re: Salaries of Controller and City Council

The Council President asked for a brief history and review of the controller and city council salaries.

The Home Rule Charter was adopted on 4-23-1996 and became effective 1-1-1997. The charter established the following salaries for elected officials: Mayor \$65,000; Controller, \$49,894; Council President, \$6,649 and Council at \$6,140.

The salary of the mayor can be changed by ordinance under the charter; the salaries of the Controller and Council can only be changed by a charter amendment.

Salaries and benefits of all elected officials were determined by ordinance, prior to the charter. All officials were eligible for benefits and eligible for a pension. The Charter prohibited the Council from participating in the pension. They could purchase health care benefits at costs. In addition, the charter prohibited the Controller and Council from taking a position in the city until one year after leaving office. An opinion issued by the City Solicitor's office opined this prohibition also applied to a member of council being appointed to council in the event of a vacancy.

In 2002, in an attempt to increase the salary of City Council, the following question was posed to the electorate: Shall Section 204 be amended to allow an increase in Council's salary by ordinance provided that it shall not exceed one-half the salary for the entry wage in the lowest pay level of an occupied full-time position. This failed, November 5, 2002 - 3,114 to 12,678.

In November of 2007, Council raised the salary of the mayor from \$61,493 to \$95,000 after a blue-ribbon panel study. Council, in effect, amended a proposed bill that established the mayor's salary at \$85,000 with \$5000 step increases in 2011, 2012 and 2013; and subsequent years indexed to the National Bureau of Labor Wage Index to establish the salary at \$95,000. At that time, the salary was comparable to Director's salaries. There was a suggestion that the Mayor's salary be reviewed with an eye to keying it to a Department Directors salary.

The Controller and Council Salaries have not changed since 1997. Looking at the comparisons below, Council is in the very low end of salaries – especially given the fact Allentown is the 3rd largest city in Pennsylvania. The only council salary lower than Allentown is Reading. Generally, both Council and the Controller do not receive health benefits and pension.

The Controller's salary tends to be lower in the survey as well; in most cases the position is seen as part-time, and staff tend to have higher salaries than the controller.

The legislation for the increase in the Controllers salary that has been suggested hinges on (relatively) the same variance between the salary of the Mayor and the Controller when the Charter was adopted.

The salary comparison is as follows:

	Mayor	Controller	Council Prez	Council
Allentown	95,000	49,894	6,649	6,149
Bethlehem	90,500	49,000	7,600	7,100
Easton	83,638	21,389		9,371
Erie	95,000	38,000	7,500	6,000

Passed in February 2023 – effective next year, the Erie Council adopted this tiered structure:

0- 12 months service as a Council Member: \$6,000;

12- 24 months service as a Council Member: \$8, 000

24-36 months service as a Council Member: \$ 10, 000

36+ months service as a Council Member: \$ 12, 000

Council President shall receive an additional \$2, 000/ year for service as President.

Harrisburg	80,000	20,000	21,500	20,000
Lancaster	77,932	8,5000	8,5000	8,000
Reading	72,500	63,000	5,500	5,000
Scranton	75,000	40,000	12,500	12,500
York	75,000	20,000	10,000	10,000
Lehigh County	75,000 (Ex)	62,500	8,000	7,000

Tidbits: Los Angeles City Council salaries are the highest in the nation, at \$178,789, they are higher than New York, whose council members earn \$112,500, and San Francisco, at \$95,868. The Chicago City Council earns \$110,556. Philadelphia City Councilmembers currently make \$142,751 per year, while the City Council president currently makes \$179,167 per year.

Effective: A change would only impact newly elected councilpersons and controller going forward. If a tiered structure such as Erie was approved, the newly elected councilpersons would start at ground zero, they would not recoup a pay based on previous time in office.

Relevant Charter and Code References:

SECTION 204 Compensation.

- A. Each Council Member elected at the first election under this Charter and in subsequent elections, or already in office when this Charter takes effect, shall receive an annual salary in the amount of \$6,149. The President of Council shall receive \$500 in addition to the salary of a regular City Council member. Increases in the salary of city Council members may be attained only by referendum.
- B. In addition to their salary, Council members may, at their own expense, purchase into the existing health care plan for city employees for themselves and for their families at the group rates, charged by the health care provider, to the city, available to City employees. City Council members shall be reimbursed for their legitimate expenses related to the office of Council and shall receive no other benefits.

SECTION 307 Compensation.

- A. The Mayor shall receive an annual salary in the amount of \$61,493 until such amount is changed by City Council.
- B. City Council may determine the annual salary of the mayor by ordinance, but no ordinance changing such salary shall become effective until the date of commencement of the term of the Mayor elected at the next regular election, provided that such election follows the adoption of such ordinance by at least six months.

SECTION 402 Eligibility.

The candidate for City Controller shall be a registered voter of the City and shall continue to reside in the City throughout the term of office. The City Controller elected at the first election under this Charter shall receive an annual salary of \$49,892. All future increases or decreases in the City Controller's salary shall be by referendum.

Mayor salary established by Ordinance:

§ 5-10 Compensation of Mayor.

[Amended 12-20-2007 by Ord. No. 14562]

Effective January 1, 2010, the annual salary of the mayor shall be \$95,000.