



To: Volunteer Citizen-Based Charter Committee

From: Cathy Standiford, Partner

Subject: Mayor and City Council Employment Status and Compensation

Date: December 8, 2015

The Charter Committee is considering elements pertaining to the Mayor and City Council that should be included in the Charter “skeleton.” At its July 14, 2015 meeting, the Charter Committee expressed an interest in discussing whether the Mayor and City Council members should be full- or part-time. More recently, the Committee decided to consider whether the Charter should address compensation for the Mayor and Council members. This memorandum provides information regarding employment status and compensation Committee members may wish to consider in developing specific recommendations.

Background

Section 14 of the existing San Bernardino Charter establishes a four-year term for the Mayor and staggered four-year terms for City Council members. The Charter contains no term limits for any elected office.

Charter Section 24 specifies that the Mayor be a full-time position and establishes compensation at 50% of the salary for a San Bernardino County Superior Court Judge. Based on the current average salary for such judges the Mayor’s current salary is approximately \$92,305 per year, or \$7,692 per month.

The Charter establishes compensation for each City Council member of \$600 per year or \$50 per month. The Mayor and Council members also receive an auto allowance of \$600 per month, although this form of compensation is not specified in the Charter. Retirement, health and other benefits are provided as required by state and federal law and the California Public Employees Retirement System.

Employment Status Comparisons

Management Partners conducted telephone interviews with the city clerks of 17 comparable charter cities to determine whether the mayors and council members function in a full- or part-time capacity and to confirm current compensation. We also reviewed charter language for each city.

Table 1 summarizes the employment status for the mayors of comparable peers. It shows the more common practice is for the mayor to serve on a part-time basis, consistent with the council-manager form of government. City council members are considered to be part-time in all 17 of the comparable agencies.

Table 1. Mayor Employment Status in Comparable Cities

Population	Full-Time	Part-Time	Comments
200,000 to 299,000	2	2	Chula Vista and Stockton charters specify the mayor is to function on a full-time basis
300,000 to 399,000	0	4	No charters specify the mayor is to be full-time
150,000 to 199,000	0	9	Mayors in Glendale and Oceanside are not directly elected and have same powers and compensation as council members
TOTAL	2	15	

Compensation Comparisons

California Constitution Article XI, Section 5(b) authorizes charter cities to establish compensation for council members. Some charters state that compensation for elected officials will be established by municipal code, ordinance or resolution. A few identify a specific amount of compensation within the charter itself. In these cases, the compensation may only be changed by a charter amendment approved by the electorate.

Several cities (such as Irvine, Anaheim, and Oceanside), have charter provisions stating compensation will be set in accordance with the Government Code as applicable to general law cities. Government Code § 36516 establishes salary limits for mayors and council members salary limits based on population size. For example, cities with populations between 150,000 and 250,000 may provide a maximum salary of \$800 per month. The limit for general law cities with populations greater than 250,000 is \$1,000 per month. However, the salary cap may be increased by local ordinance so long as the amount of the increase does not exceed 5% per calendar year.

Table 2 summarizes whether specific salary information for each elected position is contained in the charter. It shows that 12 of the 17 agencies do not specify the amount of compensation.



Table 2. Summary of Charter Provisions for Mayor and Council Member Compensation

Population	Salary Specified by Charter	Salary Not Specified by Charter	Comments
200,000 to 299,000	1	3	The Chula Vista Charter specifies mayor’s compensation is to be 66% of the salary of a superior court judge and councilmembers are to receive 40% of the mayor’s salary. Irvine charter states compensation will be set based on Government Code provisions for general law cities. Compensation in Modesto and Stockton is set by ordinance based on recommendations from a Citizen’s Salary Setting Commission following a public hearing.
300,000 to 399,000	2	2	Bakersfield and Santa Ana charters provide a specific salary amount. Anaheim follows compensation requirements for general law cities. Riverside establishes amounts by ordinance following a public hearing.
150,000 to 199,000	2	7	Torrance and Salinas charters specify a compensation amount. However, Salinas is in the process of updating its charter and may remove this provision.
TOTAL	5	12	

Table 3 summarizes the current compensation for mayors and council members in the 17 comparison charter cities. It shows the monthly compensation for mayors ranges from \$100 to \$10,154, while monthly compensation for council members ranges from \$100 to \$4,061 per month.

Table 3. Comparison of Monthly Compensation for Mayors and City Council Members

City	Mayor	Council Member
200,000 to 299,000 Population		
San Bernardino	\$7,692	\$50
Chula Vista ¹	\$10,154	\$4,061
Irvine	\$880	\$880
Modesto	\$3,600	\$2,000
Stockton	\$6,032	\$1,377
300,000 to 399,000 Population		
Anaheim	\$1,500 ²	\$1,500 ²
Bakersfield	\$2,000	\$100 ³
Riverside	\$6,569	\$3,284
Santa Ana	\$200	\$125
150,000 – 199,000 Population		
Glendale ⁴	\$1,430	\$1,420
Hayward	\$3,330	\$2,081



City	Mayor	Council Member
Lancaster ⁵	\$600	\$600
Oceanside ⁶	\$1,644	\$1,644
Palmdale	\$2,065	\$759
Pomona	\$1,638	\$819
Salinas	\$800	\$600
Santa Rosa	\$1,200	\$800
Torrance	\$100	\$100

¹Mayor receives 66% of salary for a superior court judge; council members receive 40% of mayor’s salary

²Plus \$50 per meeting

³City Council members also receive \$20 per budget session meeting.

⁴Mayor appointed by city council, not directly elected. Compensation follows Government Code provisions for general law cities.

⁵Compensation set by ordinance; requires super-majority vote of mayor and city council

⁶Mayor appointed by city council, not directly elected. Compensation set by municipal code.

Conclusion

The following conclusions can be made from the peer agency and related research:

- San Bernardino’s Council members are compensated well below the norm for elected officials, and in fact, receive less compensation than any of the peer agencies.
- Setting the Mayor’s compensation based on the salary of a superior court judge is an antiquated practice that only one of the peer agencies follows (Chula Vista).
- Following the compensation provisions for general law cities would result in improved compensation for Council members, but reduced compensation for the Mayor.
- Most peer agencies do not specify a salary amount for elected official compensation in the charter document itself. Instead, they either follow the provisions for general law cities, or establish the amounts by ordinance following a public hearing. Establishing compensation by ordinance following a public hearing may be the best alternative for San Bernardino if the Charter includes a requirement that Mayor be full-time.

