

March 2002 EMT Full Time Mayor Study

Current Situation

The November 2002 ballot is expected to include a measure to amend the Sacramento City Charter to provide for a full-time mayor and establish a Compensation Commission to set the compensation of the full-time mayor, the city council members, and public members of city boards and commissions. As proposed, the amendment would state that "The Mayor shall devote his or her full time and attention to the duties of the office."

The measure will propose that the Compensation Commission be comprised of five (5) members, all residents of the City of Sacramento, for staggered four-year terms; be chaired by a retired judicial officer; meet at least once a year; and serve without compensation. The members would be appointed by the mayor, subject to the concurrence of a majority of the city council.

What the Mayor Earns Now

Sacramento's Charter currently defines the compensation for each council member (including the mayor) as \$20/month for each council meeting attended, not to exceed \$100/month, or \$1200/year. In addition, the mayor is entitled by the charter to \$1800/year for the purpose of entertainment and sundry expenses for which no vouchers are required.

As the duties and responsibilities of the mayor have grown, city councils over the years have approved additional entitlements, allowances, benefits, and expense reimbursements (no vouchers required) for both the mayor and council members. Of eleven joint powers authorities that pay meeting stipends, the current Mayor serves on four. (The number may vary with each mayor.)

According to information from the City's Human Resources Salary Chart dated 8/2001, the Mayor receives the following:

Salary per City Charter	\$20/mo not to exceed \$100/mo.
Entertainment expense allowance per City Charter	\$1800/yr., prorated at \$150/mo
Housing Agency & Redevelopment Agency stipends & reimbursements	\$1070/mo
Secretarial allowance	\$ 900/mo.
Technology expense allowance	\$ 500/mo.
Subtotal	\$2725/mo.
Stipends for serving on 4 joint powers authorities	+ \$ 650/mo.
Total	\$3375/mo.

(\$2725/mo. equates to \$32,700/yr.)

(\$3375/mo. equates to \$40,500/yr.)

The mayor also receives \$550/mo. as an automobile expense allowance and \$250/mo. for reimbursement of other expenses with vouchers/receipts. The mayor is also entitled to employee benefits of \$680/mo. for medical, dental, deferred compensation; \$32/mo. for basic life insurance; and \$175/mo. as a 401(a) contribution.

How Mayors Spend Their Time

By his own report, Phil Isenberg (Mayor, 1975-82), an attorney by profession, spent 20-28 hours a week performing mayoral duties, attending meetings and functions, making appearances and speeches, etc. He worked halftime at his private law offices during his tenure as mayor. When he started as mayor, he had no full-time staff. Before leaving the position, he had one administrative assistant and other unpaid assistants. The number of evenings he spent away from home at official meetings and events one year in the late 1970's totaled almost 200.

By her own report, Anne Rudin (Mayor, 1982-1992) spent regular 8-hour days, five days a week in her office at city hall, an additional 4 hours each weekday evening participating in meetings and functions, plus an average of 10 hours each weekend, for a total of 70 hours a week performing mayoral duties. She had the help of one full-time secretary and one full-time-equivalent administrative assistant.

Joe Serna, Jr. (Mayor, 1992-1999) spent 25-30 hours a week during the fall and spring semesters in his position as a tenured political science professor at CSUS. His class schedule required him to be on campus 2-3 weekday mornings a week; his office hours on campus were somewhat flexible, and he was freer in the summer. His administrative assistant Chuck Dalldorf estimates that Mayor Serna spent an average of 50-55 hours a week in

performance of his mayoral responsibilities, and pointed out that he did not sit on any joint powers authority. At city hall, the mayor was assisted by four full-time staff members.

According to her scheduling assistant, Mayor Heather Fargo (Mayor, 2000-present), a Volunteer Program Manager with the State Department of Parks and Recreation, reports to her state job half-time, i.e., 20 hours per week. The mayor spends 40-50 hours a week at city hall, attending meetings, community functions, making appearances and speeches, etc. Four full-time staff assist her in her mayoral duties.

Historical Background

Sacramento County Comparison of Elected Officials

Full-time Mayor - Pros and Cons Below are some of the major arguments that have been made or can be anticipated for and against the idea of having a full-time mayor.

Potential PROS:

- More individuals will be able to afford to run for mayor.
- Sacramento is the state capital and one of the largest cities in California, and the citizens deserve the full-time commitment of the mayor to the position.
- Sacramento needs a full-time mayor to address properly all of the complex local and regional policy issues and to promote the city within and outside of California.
- The mayor is elected citywide and is accountable to a much larger constituency than any single council member, hence it is appropriate to pay the mayor considerably more than a council member.
- Sacramento's last four mayors (including the current mayor) have devoted over 40 hours per week performing mayoral duties; the mayor deserves to be paid a full-time salary.
- Without personal job commitments, a full-time mayor will be available when needed to attend critical meetings, lobby in Washington, D.C., and respond immediately to community crises.
- A full-time mayor will provide more effective oversight to ensure that city staff implement council policy and directives and respond better to citizen needs.
- The compensation level of the mayor should be easily identifiable and available to the public as a flat, full-time salary, rather than the current "patchwork" of various stipends, entitlements, and allowances.
- The impact to the city budget will be minimal, compared to the benefit of having an elected official who can devote his/her full attention to the position of mayor.

Potential CONS:

- Our system works. If it isn't broken, don't fix it.
- The mayor and council ought to be civic-minded citizens, not professional politicians.
- A change to a full-time mayor should be made only if coupled with term limits and/or campaign finance reform.
- If the mayor were full-time and the council members part-time, it would drive a wedge between the mayor and the council and change the balance of power.
- If the position of mayor is paid full-time, the council members will also want to be full-time politicians.
- A full-time mayor will interfere with the city manager's administrative role and blur lines of authority within the city staff.
- The city has higher spending priorities than paying for a full-time mayor.
- A full-time mayor will press for a change to a "strong mayor" form of government.
- A full-time mayor will want more staff, which will increase the city budget above and beyond the full-time salary of the mayor.

Relationship of Full-time Mayor and Structure of Government

While it is true that California cities with a strong mayor form of government have full-time mayors (e.g., Los Angeles, San Francisco, Fresno, Oakland), it is also true that a city can have a full-time mayor without having a strong mayor form of government. The Cities of San Diego, San Jose, and Long Beach have full-time mayors who operate under the council-manager form of government.

Though there are variations within each of these two basic structures of government, the fundamental difference is whether or not the mayor serves as the chief administrative officer of the city. In the council-manager form of government, the mayor and council establish policies and a professional, hired city manager administers the policies. In the strong mayor structure, the council establishes policy and the mayor is the chief administrative officer of the city.

How Compensation Levels Can Be Established

A general law city operates within the guidelines of California municipal law. Section 36516 of the California Government Code governs the compensation level for council members in general law cities, based on the size of

the population. In general law cities, a city council has at least five members who select one of their colleagues to serve each year as mayor. Thus, the mayor's compensation and council members' compensation is the same. The amount ranges from \$300 per month for cities of 35,000 or fewer to \$1,000 per month for cities of 250,000 or more. The amount of compensation can be changed by a measure submitted to the voters in a municipal election. Council compensation can also be changed by ordinance, but an increase by ordinance may not exceed an amount equal to 5 percent for each calendar year.

Only cities that existed when the state constitution was adopted can organize as a charter city. All of the largest cities in California are charter cities, including Sacramento. According to the League of California Cities, a city's charter can only be changed by a majority vote of city residents - not by a vote of the city council. Charter cities in California have custom-tailored provisions in their charters concerning how compensation levels are to be established.

San Diego's charter establishes a salary-setting commission that meets every two years, with no pay, to review salaries of the mayor and council members. The Civil Service Commission appoints seven members to the salary-setting commission. The salary-setting commission recommends salary levels to the city council. The city council can accept the recommendation, reject an increase, or reduce the recommended salary, but cannot increase the amount above the recommendation.

San Jose also has a salary-setting commission, with five members appointed by the Civil Service Commission. The commissioners serve four-year, staggered terms. The salary-setting commission meets and recommends salaries every two years. Three votes of the five-member commission are required to forward a recommendation to the city council. The city council may not amend the recommendation except to lower the recommended salary levels.

In the salary section of the Long Beach charter, the mayor's salary was defined as an annual salary of \$67,500, commencing with the first mayor to assume office on or after July 1, 1988. The charter also includes an automatic adjustment of the salary on each July 1 thereafter equivalent to the most recent upward change in the annual average of the Consumer Price Index for that metropolitan area. Another charter provision establishes the salary of each city council member at twenty-five percent (25%) of the mayor's salary.

Los Angeles' charter states that the mayor's salary shall be 30% more than that of a Los Angeles Municipal Judge.

Possible Ways to Set Compensation Level

Though there may be others, the major potential mechanisms for setting a full-time mayor's salary can be summarized as follows:

- Establish in the city charter that the city council is authorized to set the salary annually by ordinance
- Establish a specific amount in the city charter
- Establish a specific amount in the city charter with an automatic adjustment factor
- Establish a salary-setting commission in the city charter
- Establish in the city charter that the salary level is be a certain percentage of some other specific elected official's salary

Criteria to Consider in Setting Compensation Level for a Full-time Mayor

Sacramento League members may wish to suggest the criteria that should be considered in setting a full-time mayor's compensation, regardless of the composition of the body established to set the salary level.

Below are a number of possible criteria that might be considered:

- Number of constituents by whom elected and to whom accountable and responsible
- Mayor's level of responsibility within the council-manager structure of government
- Range and complexity of issues facing the mayor
- Salary levels of other elected officials with comparable levels of responsibility

Relevant League Principles and Positions

The following League of Women Voters principles and positions are relevant to the issue of whether Sacramento's mayor should be a full-time position and if so, how the compensation level should be established.

- LWVUS Government Position Promote an open governmental system that is representative, accountable and responsive; that assures opportunities for citizen participation in government decision making.
- LWVC Principles The League of Women Voters believes in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States.

The League of Women Voters believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing, and coordination among the different agencies and levels of government.

- LWVS Position on Pay Equity (revised 1995) LWVS supports the concept of pay equity for jobs which share comparable levels of skill, efforts, working conditions, and responsibility.

Consensus Questions

1. Should the position of Mayor, City of Sacramento be compensated as a full-time position? Any conditions?
2. Should LWVS express a preference for the mechanism to be used for setting the compensation level? If so, which mechanism?
3. Should LWVS recommend the criteria to be used in setting the compensation level? If so, what should those criteria be?

