

# Advisory Report on the Compensation of Northampton Elected Officials

Recommendations of the 2023 Elected Officials  
Compensation Advisory Board

Presentation to City Council | May 18, 2023





# Advisory Board

John Bidwell

*Chair*

Tara Brewster

Felicia Corbeil

Deb Henson

Sam Hopper

*Clerk*

Javier Luengo Garrido

Peter Whalen

*Vice Chair*



# Background

The Elected Officials Compensation Advisory Board (“the Board”) was created by the City Council in accordance with Sec. § 5-5 of Admin. Code. The Board was tasked with reviewing **“the adequacy and equity of compensation, benefits, and expense allowances of municipal elected officials and report(ing) its findings and recommendations to the Mayor and City Council.”**

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# Process

**Meetings:** January - May

**Benchmarked** against 6 communities

**Input from elected officials:** survey, interviews, Q&As



# Process

## **Deliberated:**

- Adequacy of current salaries and stipends
- Attracting qualified candidates
- Attracting candidates w/diverse talents & backgrounds
- Encouraging a diverse candidate pool that fairly represents the diversity of the City's population.
- Improving the compensation review process

# Considerations





# Increasing Diversity

Northampton lacks historic demographic data, but appears to follow the national norm for elected officials who are white and identify as female.

## **The Board assumes that:**

- **As a representational governing body, the City of Northampton must strive to be a model for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.**



# Increasing Diversity

- Encouraging a fair elected representation of the City's diversity, especially underserved communities that traditionally have not been well-represented and historically have been denied equity, is most beneficial to the City as a whole.





# Increasing Diversity

- Elected officials who communicated with the Board expressed their belief low compensation may be a deterrent to residents running for elected positions. Encouraging elected diversity means recognizing that not everybody has the time and means to meet these heavy demands.

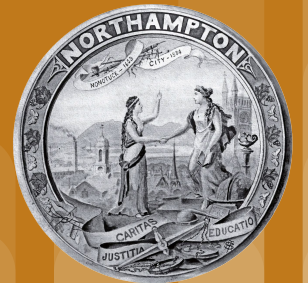
## Consideration 2



# Health Insurance & Retirement Benefits

- In general, the assumption is that offering benefits is beneficial to attracting a diverse candidate pool.
- Elected officials shared their beliefs that benefits are the greatest tool to increase the diversity of people serving the City.

# Recommendations





# The Mayor's Salary

<b>Current</b>	<b>Recommended</b>
\$92,500	\$130,000

## Rationale

- 'Working mayor': full-time position w/ rigorous work demands that preclude outside employment.
- The mayor is on call 24/7 working 60-80 hours/week.



# The Mayor's Salary

## Rationale (cont.)

- Average work week = official duties, ceremonial duties, committee work, events, public forums, and regional and state meetings and functions.
- Increased availability and expectations continue to be exacerbated via social media.



# The Mayor's Salary

## Further considerations

- Current salary ranked 98th in city salaries. In 2014, the mayor's salary ranked 64th. \$130,000 would rank the Mayor's salary 16th in FY22 city salaries.
- Average mayoral salary of the 6 benchmarking cities/towns for which we have data is \$102,700.
- Taking time off is very difficult.



# City Councilors' Salaries

	<b>Current</b>	<b>Recommended</b>
Ward Councilor	\$9,000	\$16,931.20
At-Large Councilor	\$9,500	\$16,931.20
Council President	\$10,000	\$21,164.00



# City Councilors' Salaries

## Rationale

- Average work week=20 hours for the Ward City Councilors including the At-Large City Councilor, based elected officials survey
- This 20 hours was multiplied by an individual's living wage (as defined by 1 adult, 0 children) in Hampshire County, Massachusetts (source: MIT)





# School Committee's Salaries

	<b>Current</b>	<b>Recommended</b>
Ward Member	\$5,000	\$9,312.16
At-Large Member	\$5,500	\$9,312.16

## **Rationale**

Same calculation as for the City Council but at 55% as the current Members are compensated at 55% of the City Council.



# Trustees of Smith Salaries

<b>Current</b>	<b>Recommended</b>
\$5,000	\$9,312.16

## **Rationale**

Same calculation as for the City Council but at 55% as the current Trustees are compensated at 55% of the City Council.



# Benefits

<b>Benefit</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Recommended</b>
Health Insurance Benefits	<a href="#"><u>Eligibility for Group Health Benefits Policy</u></a>	Remain the same
Retirement Benefits	<a href="#"><u>Eligibility for Retirement</u></a>	Remain the same



# Add Annual 2% COLA

## **Recommended**

2.0% increase beginning in 2025 in the years that the Compensation Board does not convene.

## **Rationale**

- Board meets infrequently
- Most jobs are reviewed annually
- COLA consideration is common in Massachusetts.



# More Efficient Review Process

## Recommendations

- City provides compensation data rather than relying on the Board so that the Board can more quickly focus on deliberation.
- City advocates for the Massachusetts Municipal Association ([MMA](#)) to manage up-to-date compensation information.



# More Efficient Review Process

## **Recommendations (cont.)**

- Future Compensation Boards invite the previous Board to an early meeting to talk through the previous process, experience, and answer questions.

**See full Compensation Board report for details, addendum, and sources.**

**Thank you for your time and consideration.**