



# Advisory Report on the Compensation of Northampton Elected Officials

Recommendations of the 2023 Elected Officials  
Compensation Advisory Board

**May 10, 2023**

## **Advisory Board**

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## Background

The Elected Officials Compensation Advisory Board (“the Board”) was created by the City Council in accordance with Sec. § 5-5 of Admin. Code (see Addendum 1). 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.”

## Process

The Board convened in December 2022 and set about reviewing current compensation practices for elected officials. Publicized meetings were held from January through May 2023 in accordance with open meeting laws. The City’s compensation policies, including both salary and benefits, were benchmarked against 6 communities in the Commonwealth similar to Northampton in both population size and median household income, located in the four western counties of Massachusetts, and have the same Mayor/Council form of government as Northampton (see Addendum 2, Benchmarking Table).

Input was solicited from elected officials to better understand their responsibilities, duties, and time commitments. The Board intended to solicit feedback from current and former elected officials but was unable to obtain a full list of former elected officials and their contact information. 14 currently elected Northampton officials responded to an April 2023 survey (See Addendum 4 - Elected Officials Survey Responses) asking:

1. What elected position did you, or do you currently, hold for the City of Northampton?
2. How many years did you hold, or have you held, the elected position?
3. What year(s) was the elected position held?
4. Approximately how many hours per week did you, or do you, spend on the elected position?
5. Did the pay/benefits have an impact on your decision to run for the elected position?
6. Please explain the positive or negative impacts the pay and benefits had/have on you.
7. What type of occupation (compensated or uncompensated) did you, or do you, have while holding this elected position (if any)?
8. If the elected position has ended, why did the elected position end?
9. Did you feel the compensation was fair for the elected position you held/hold and the amount of work you did?
10. If you did not feel the compensation was fair, briefly explain why.
11. Did you, or do you, have any challenges attending required meetings?
12. If you had/have challenges attending required meetings for your elected position, what were they?
13. Would you be interested in serving as an elected official again?
14. Why or why not?
15. Do you know anybody in your community who was interested in running for an elected position, but didn’t?
16. If you do, what made them ultimately decide not to run?
17. What gender do you most closely identify with?
18. What race/ethnicity do you most closely identify with?
19. What is your age?
20. What is your annual household income?
21. What is your highest level of completed education?

Board discussion and deliberations focused on the following:

- The adequacy of current salaries and stipends
- The need to ensure competitive salaries and stipends to attract qualified candidates and encourage contested elections
- The need to ensure adequate and appropriate compensation to attract candidates with diverse talents and backgrounds to encourage a diverse candidate pool that fairly represents the diversity of the City’s population.
- Improving the compensation review process

In addition, John Bidwell (Board Chair) interviewed Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra by phone, and Councilors Jim Nash (President/Ward 3), Karen Foster (Council Vice-President/Ward 2), Jamila Gore (Councilor at Large), Alex Jarrett (Ward 5), and Rachel Maiore (Ward 7) attended meetings.

### **Consideration: The Role of Compensation in Increasing Diversity of Elected Officials**

The Board discussed the importance of elected officials who represent the diversity of the residents of Northampton in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, beliefs, backgrounds, and income and the role compensation can have to encourage diversity amongst elected officials. Most current elected officials in Northampton are white and identify as women. Nationally, this is the norm for local elected officials and has been for some time (source: [Democracy Fund](#)), though Northampton lacks historic demographic data.

As a representational governing body, the Board feels that the City of Northampton must strive to be a model for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA). This means cultivating an elected official pool that draws from the full diversity of the City. The Board operated under the assumption that 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 (the consistent and fair, just, impartial treatment of all individuals - source: [U.S. Government Accountability Office](#))—is most beneficial to the City as a whole.

The [representative bureaucracy](#) model, for example, argues that with diversity, the public is better represented in administrative decisions. As the American population becomes increasingly multiracial and multiethnic, a local government whose workforce does not reflect the City’s diversity may indicate that it is constrained for some reason in its appeal or its recruitment pipeline. A lack of diversity in an area of public service raises ethical concerns about whether all Americans have genuine access to that office (source: [Democracy Fund](#)).

Although the vast majority of Northampton elected officials who responded to the Board’s survey find their work rewarding and fulfilling, most felt the compensation was not adequate. Elected officials who communicated with the Board expressed their belief low compensation may be a deterrent to residents running for elected positions. In addition, elected officials reported a significant time commitment needed to fulfill their responsibilities and expectations of their constituents, as well as the role of support aside from compensation that allows them to be an elected official. Said one elected official: “Serving on City Council can be very rewarding. I am lucky that my families [sic] finances allow me the latitude to both serve on council and determine whether I want to continue.” Most elected officials said they

knew people who have considered running but have stayed away because of the time commitment and/or lack of compensation and support.

Encouraging elected diversity means recognizing that not everybody has the time and means to meet these heavy demands.

### **Consideration: Health Insurance & Retirement Benefits**

The benefits made a significant difference for some of the elected officials surveyed. It was acknowledged that there will always be variation as elected officials' situations vary. For example, some already have benefits through work, or a spouse and others do not.

In general, the assumption is that offering benefits is beneficial to attracting a diverse candidacy. During meetings of the Board, elected officials shared their beliefs that benefits are the greatest tool to increase the diversity of who is serving the City. In subsequent discussion, the Board agreed that benefits open the doors to folks who may not have full-time jobs with benefits and can make it more plausible for a single parent, a consultant without benefits from work, and those on less-traditional paths to be able to serve as elected officials.

#### **Health Insurance Benefits**

Certain elected officials, regardless of hours worked, are eligible to participate in the City’s contributory group health benefit offerings including the Mayor, City Councilors, School Committee Members, and Members of Smith Vocational and Agricultural Board of Trustees (source: [Eligibility for Group Health Benefits Policy](#)). Northampton offers a menu of individual and family plans and pays 80% of the insurance premium.

The table below shows the number of part-time elected officials enrolled in the City’s health plan for FY2023 and the cost of these plans to the city.

<b>Part-Time Elected Officials Enrolled in Municipal Health Plan - FY23</b>			
	Number of Members in Body	Number of Members Enrolled	Cost to City FY23
City Council	9	6	\$86,282.76
School Committee	9	1	\$15,380.40
Trustees of Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School	3	2	\$19,528.20
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>\$ 121,191.36</b>

#### **Retirement Benefits**

The minimum requirements for eligibility changed in April 2012 to:

- Group 1 members must have at least 10 years of creditable service and be at least 60 years old.
- Group 2 members must be at least 55 years old with a minimum of 10 years of creditable service.

- Group 4 members must be at least 50 years old, with 10 years of creditable service.
- At age 55, there is no minimum service requirement for Group 4 members.

(source: [Eligibility for Retirement](#) )

## Recommendations

### Overview

The tables below summarize the consensus recommendations of the Board. The rationale for each recommendation is presented in the following sections.

#### Salary Recommendations

<u>Elected Official</u>	<u>Current Salary</u>	<u>Recommended Salary</u>
Mayor	\$92,500	\$130,000
Ward City Councilor	\$9,000	\$16,931.20
At-Large City Councilor	\$9,500	\$16,931.20
City Council President	\$10,000	\$21,164.00
Ward School Committee Member	\$5,000	\$9,312.16
At-Large School Committee Member	\$5,500	\$9,312.16
Trustees of Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School	\$5,000	\$9,312.16

#### Additional Recommendations

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Current Practice</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>
Health Insurance Benefits: Apply to certain elected officials, regardless of hours worked: Mayor, City Councilors, School Committee Members, and Members of Smith Vocational and Agricultural Board of Trustees	<a href="#">Eligibility for Group Health Benefits Policy</a>	Remain the same
Retirement Benefits	<a href="#">Eligibility for Retirement</a>	Remain the same
2% Annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) during years the Board does not convene	None	Implement
Funding for compensation research	None	Implement

# Full-Time Elected Official

## Mayor

### Salary History

January 1, 2000	\$65,000
January 1, 2002	\$66,950
January 1, 2003	\$68,958
January 1, 2007	\$80,000
July 1, 2009	\$75,000
July 1, 2010	\$80,000
January 4, 2016	\$92,500
Current	\$92,500

### Current Compensation

Salary  
\$92,500

Benefits  
Eligibility to enroll in municipal health and retirement plans

### Recommendations

Salary  
Increase salary to \$130,000

Benefits  
Remain the same

### Responsibilities

Under Northampton's "strong mayor" form of government, the executive and administrative powers of the city are vested in the mayor. The mayor is responsible for the administration of all city activities and functions placed under the control of the mayor by law or by charter; coordinates the activities of all agencies of the city and all persons serving the city; and serves as a member of every appointed multiple-member body of the city.

In addition, the mayor serves Ex-Officio as the Chair of the Northampton School Committee, a trustee for Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, a member of the Board of Trustees for the Academy of Music Theatre and Look Memorial Park, and the Hampshire County Representative on the MassHire Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board where responsibilities include the cosigning of the warrants for expenditures of agency funds, among other duties. The mayor participates in a number of regional, statewide, and national municipal and educational policy boards, such as the Massachusetts Mayor Association, the Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts, and the Massachusetts Municipal Association.

## Rationale

The Board recommends the mayor’s salary be increased, because:

- Northampton’s mayor is a ‘working mayor’ whose responsibilities include active, hands-on, day-to-day management of the City in addition to their role as political leader and policy maker.
- The position of mayor is a full-time position with rigorous work demands that effectively preclude outside employment. The Board felt strongly that the mayor’s salary should be competitive to attract and retain competent public servants.
- The mayor is on call 24/7, with an average work week estimated at 60-80 hours (source: 2014 Compensation Board Report). The average work week includes official duties, ceremonial duties, committee work, events, public forums, and regional and state meetings and functions. The mayor’s increased availability and expectations have been exacerbated through the proliferation of social communication channels, like social media.

In recommending an adjustment to the current salary, the Board took the following factors into account:

- The current salary is ranked 98th (see Addendum 3 - [FY2022 Northampton Salaries](#)). In 2014, the last time the Board made its recommendations, the mayor’s salary ranked 64th. The Board’s current recommendation would rank the Mayor’s salary 16th in FY22 city salaries.
- The average current mayoral salary of the 6 benchmarking cities/towns for which we have data is \$102,700.
- While the mayor can take-off time, and position is supported by staff and the City Council President in emergencies, the demands and focus on the job make downtime practically difficult.

## Part-Time Elected Officials

Ward City Councilors, At-Large City Councilors & City Council President

### Stipend History

\$5,000 since at least 1990 (the Board from 2014 was unable to determine the initial date) with an increase to the current stipend as of January 4, 2016.

### Current Compensation

#### Stipend

Ward City Councilor:	\$9,000
At-Large City Councilor:	\$9,500
City Council President:	\$10,000

### Recommendations

#### Stipend

Ward City Councilor:	\$16,931.20
At-Large City Councilor:	\$16,931.20
City Council President:	\$21,164.00

### Benefits

Eligibility to enroll in municipal health and retirement plans

### Benefits

Remain the same

### Responsibilities

[Article 2 of Northampton’s Charter](#)



**Rationale**

For the Ward City Councilors including the At-Large City Councilor, the Board assumed an average 20-hour work week (based on the average hours reported by elected officials in survey – Addendum 4) and multiplied that by that by an individual’s living wage (as defined as 1 adult, 0 children) in Hampshire County, Massachusetts, according to Massachusetts Institute of Technology (source: <https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/25015>).

**Ward School Committee Member & At-Large School Committee Member**

**Stipend History**

\$2,500 since at least 1990 (the Board from 2014 was unable to determine the initial date) with an increase to the current stipend as of January 4, 2016.

**Current Compensation**

Stipend

Ward School Committee Member:

\$5,000

At-Large School Committee Member:

\$5,500

**Recommendations**

Stipend

Ward School Committee Member:

\$9,312.16

At-Large School Committee Member:

\$9,312.16

Benefits

Eligibility to enroll in municipal health and retirement plans

Benefits

Remain the same

**Responsibilities**

[Article 4 of Northampton’s Charter](#)

**Rationale**

For both the Ward School Committee members as well as the At-Large School Committee member, the Board used the same calculation as for the City Council but at 55% as the current School Committee Members are compensated at 55% of the City Council.

## Trustees of Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School

### Stipend History

\$2,500 since at least 1990 (the Board from 2014 was unable to determine the initial date) with an increase to the current stipend as of January 4, 2016.

### Current Compensation

#### Stipend

\$5,000

### Recommendations

#### Stipend

\$9,312.16

#### Benefits

Eligibility to enroll in municipal health and retirement plans

#### Benefits

Remain the same

### Responsibilities

[Article 5, Section 5-3 of Northampton's Charter](#)

### Rationale

For Trustees of Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, the Board used the same calculation as for the City Council but at 55% as the current Trustees of Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School are compensated at 55% of the City Council.

### Add Annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)

The Board recommends a 2.0% increase beginning in 2025 in elected officials' compensation in the years that the Compensation Board does not convene. The average cost of living increase since 2014, when the Board last convened, has been 2.7% annually, for a cumulative price increase of 27.08% (source: [CPI Inflation Calculator](#)).

Most jobs in this country, including unelected Northampton positions, are reviewed annually including opportunities for pay increase, which usually occur. The Board feels this is standard practice that should be applied to elected officials. Considering the need for compensation to remain competitive, it is important that increases occur annually rather than only in years when the Board convenes, which can be as long as ten years.

Case in point: The mayor's current salary is ranked 98th (see Addendum 3 - [FY2022 Northampton Salaries](#)). In 2014, the last time the Board made its recommendations, the mayor's salary ranked 64th. Considering the importance of the position, the fact that the mayor's compensation has dropped 34 places is concerning. It points to the fact that the City can't rely on convening a Compensation Board alone to keep pace with compensation.

COLA consideration is common in Massachusetts. They can be applied to current and/or retired employees. They are often considered yearly and may vary. Our recommendation is to implement a modest standing COLA to balance the need to keep ongoing competitive salaries with budget considerations and ease of implementation and management.

To learn more about how the State of Massachusetts reviews compensation, read this [December 2022 Boston Globe article](#).

## **A More Efficient Compensation Review Process**

The Board recommends that the City provide compensation data to be used for compensation review rather than relying on the Board to find and gather such data. Data gathering, distillation, and recommendations are best done by experts who can do it most effectively and efficiently. This would allow the Board to more quickly focus on and fully contemplate the most salient compensation issues and considerations.

Such research could happen through the hiring of an outside consultant, such as the Employers Association of the NorthEast ([EANE](#)) or assigning a City employee to research. The Board also recommends that the City advocate the Massachusetts Municipal Association ([MMA](#)) to manage up-to-date compensation information across the towns and cities of the State.

In addition, the Board recommends that future Compensation Boards invite the previous Board to an early meeting to talk through the previous process, experience, and answer questions.

# Addendum 1 – Northampton Code of Ordinances

Source: [Sec. § 5-5 Compensation of elected officials](#)

**A. Compensation.** Elected officials' annual compensation shall be as follows:

[Amended 10-21-2021 by Ord. No. 21.325]

Mayor	Until January 4, 2016: \$80,000 As of January 4, 2016: \$92,500
City Council President	Until January 4, 2016: \$5,500 As of January 4, 2016: \$10,000
At-Large City Councilor	Until January 4, 2016: \$5,000 As of January 4, 2016: \$9,500
Ward City Councilor	Until January 4, 2016: \$5,000 As of January 4, 2016: \$9,000
At-Large School Committee Member	Until January 4, 2016: \$2,500 As of January 4, 2016: \$5,500
Ward School Committee Member	Until January 4, 2016: \$2,500 As of January 4, 2016: \$5,000
Trustees of Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School	Until January 4, 2016: \$2,500 As of January 4, 2016: \$5,000
Elector under the Oliver Smith Will	Until January 4, 2016: \$10 As of January 4, 2016: \$10
Trustees under the Will of Charles E. Forbes	Until January 4, 2016: \$0 As of January 4, 2016: \$0
Community Preservation at Large	Until January 4, 2016: \$0 As of January 4, 2016: \$0

**B. Benefits and expenses.** The Mayor, City Council, School Committee and Trustees of Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School shall be eligible to enroll in the City's municipal health insurance program and retirement plans.

[Amended 10-21-2021 by Ord. No. 21.325]

**C. Elected Officials Compensation Advisory Board; members; term; compensation.**

- (1) The Elected Officials Compensation Advisory Board shall periodically, but not less frequently than 10 years, study the adequacy and equity of the compensation, benefits and expense allowances of municipal elected officials and report its findings and recommendations to the Mayor and City Council, and said reports shall be filed with the City Clerk.
- (2) The Board shall be composed of seven members, each appointed by the Mayor subject to confirmation by the City Council. The members shall each serve a term of two years.
- (3) Members of the Board shall serve without compensation. Members of the Board are subject to State Ethics Commission and conflict of interest laws.
- (4) Former and current elected officials, and relatives of elected officials, shall not be eligible to serve on this committee.
- (5) The committee will submit recommendations to the City Council, which will have the authorization to act/not act on these recommendations.

## Addendum 2 – Benchmarking Tables

Sources: [US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey 2017-2022 5-year estimates](#), [Collins Center for Public Management at UMass Boston October 2022 survey seeking salaries for Massachusetts Mayor](#), Northampton Human Resources Department, city officials for each benchmarking municipality, municipal codes of ordinances for each benchmarking municipality

### Mayor

Municipality	Number of Households	Median Household Income	Population	Municipal Budget	FY23 Mayoral Salary
Easthampton	7,796	63,098	16,120	\$48,500,000	\$83,000
Northampton	11,949	72,687	29,379	\$126,000,000	\$92,500
Greenfield	8,100	52,211	17,661	\$58,300,000	\$93,157
Westfield	15,292	73,692	40,922	\$161,000,000	\$100,000
Pittsfield	19,290	59,522	43,890	\$198,000,000	\$110,100
Agawam	11,785	78,619	28,715	\$104,400,000	\$110,424
West Springfield	12,734	60,023	28,814	\$113,100,000	\$120,000

### City Council

Municipality	Number of Households	Median Household Income	Population	Municipal Budget	Council President Stipend	Councilor At-Large Stipend	Councilor Stipend
Greenfield	8,100	52,211	17,661	\$58,300,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Easthampton	7,796	63,098	16,120	\$48,500,000	\$6,500	\$6,000	\$6,000
Pittsfield	19,290	59,522	43,890	\$198,000,000	\$10,000	\$8,000	\$8,000
Northampton	11,949	72,687	29,379	\$126,000,000	\$10,000	\$9,500	\$9,000
Agawam	11,785	78,619	28,715	\$104,400,000	\$12,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
West Springfield	12,734	60,023	28,814	\$113,100,000	\$12,500	\$10,000	\$10,000
Westfield	15,292	73,692	40,922	\$161,000,000	\$14,000	\$14,000	\$14,000

## School Committee

Municipality	Number of Households	Median Household Income	Population	Municipal Budget	School Committee Chair Stipend	School Committee At-Large Member Stipend	School Committee Member & Smith Voc Trustee Stipend
Pittsfield	19,290	59,522	43,890	\$198,000,000	n/a	\$0	\$0
Greenfield	8,100	52,211	17,661	\$58,300,000	n/a	\$2,000	\$2,000
Easthampton	7,796	63,098	16,120	\$48,500,000	\$4,250	\$4,000	\$4,000
Northampton	11,949	72,687	29,379	\$126,000,000	n/a	\$5,500	\$5,000
Agawam	11,785	78,619	28,715	\$104,400,000	n/a	\$5,000	\$5,000
West Springfield	12,734	60,023	28,814	\$113,100,000	\$6,250	\$5,000	\$5,000
Westfield	15,292	73,692	40,922	\$161,000,000	n/a	\$8,680	\$8,680

## Benchmarking Benefits

Municipality	Health Insurance Offered (% paid by city)	Retirement/options
Agawam	Yes (50-70%)	No, but offer life insurance policy option (for retirees/active employees)
Easthampton	Yes – mayor only (75%)	Yes (Mayor = City retirement & part-time employees = OBRA 7.5%)
Greenfield	Yes - mayor only (80% HMO; 60% PPO)	No
Pittsfield	Yes	Yes (optional for elected; mandatory for others)
West Springfield	Yes – mayor only (75%)	Mayor only (mayor is only elected official who is full-time)
Westfield	Yes (77%)	Yes (no match by towns, but officials can contribute to plan)

## Addendum 3 – [FY2022 Northampton Salaries](#)

## Addendum 4 – Northampton Elected Officials Survey Responses

Q1 - What elected position did you, or do you currently, hold for the City of Northampton?

What elected position did you, or do you currently, hold for the City of Northampton?

City Council

Trustee, Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School

SVAHS Board of Trustees Member

City Councilor

School committee for Ward 6

City councilor at large

School Committee

City Councilor Ward 6

Trustee Smith Vocational & Agricultural High School

City Council

City Councilor

School Committee Member

City Councilor

City councilor

NA

## Q2 - How many years did you hold, or have you held, the elected position?

How many years did you hold, or have you held, the elected position?

I have completed six of seven years.

1.25

Will be 2 in 11/23. Will be running for reelection

1

In my 2nd year

1 year 3 months

1.25 yr

I was elected as City Councilor for Ward 6: 26 years ago

Thirteen

3

3

3

3

15 months

NA



### Q3 - What year(s) was the elected position held?

What year(s) was the elected position held?

2016, 2017, 2019, 2021

2022-present

2022 & 2023

2021 - present

Nov 2021

2022-present

2021

I've been City Councilor for Ward 6 from 1997 - 2023

2010

January 2020

2020-2023

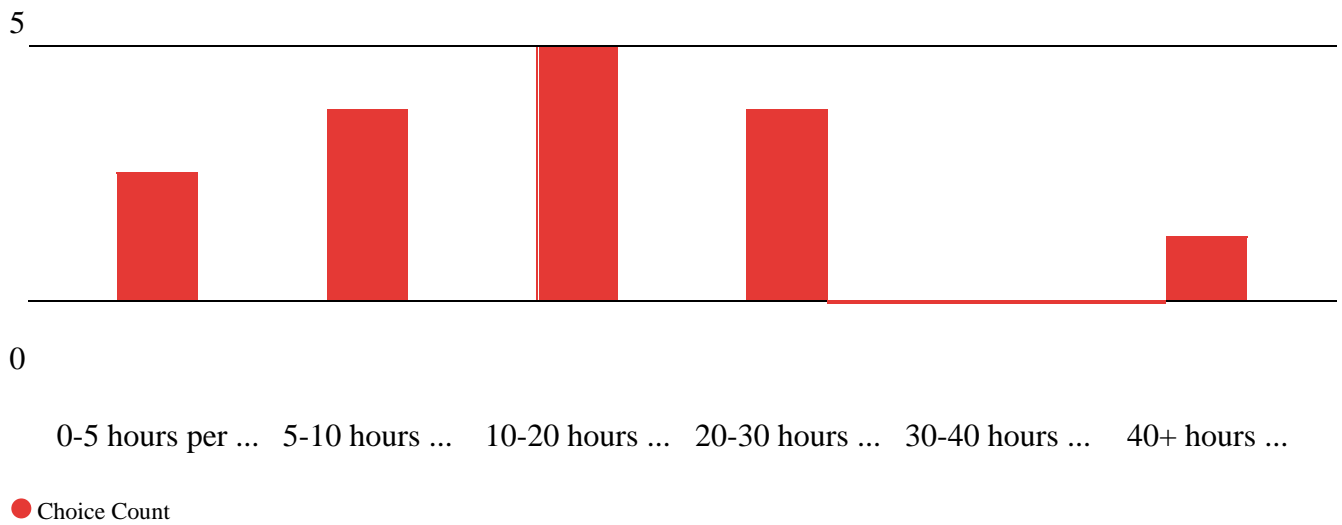
2020-present

2020 - present

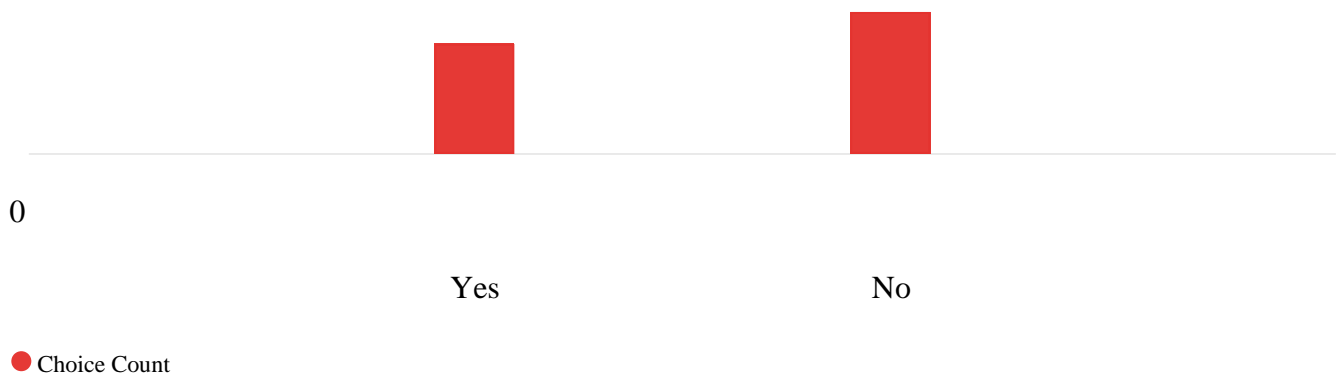
2022-23

NA

Q4 - Approximately how many hours per week did you, or do you, spend on the elected position?



Q5 - Did the pay/benefits have an impact on your decision to run for the elected position?



## Q6 - Please explain the positive or negative impacts the pay and benefits had/have on you.

Please explain the positive or negative impacts the pay and benefits had/have on you.

The pay and benefits are not reasons to seek elected office. The stipend for City Councilors is welcome, however it should not be considered pay as it falls significantly short of adequate compensation for time and energy required. Access to medical insurance through the City is meaningful. As part of the GIC, the City offers access to a large group with a strong benefit plan, which, sadly, most people do not have access to. The City's medical plan has benefited my entire family and afforded us considerable comfort.

My primary motive is to serve the school and the stipend feels like a thank you.

Positive-Health Insurance Negative-Stipend of \$5k not enough

It has been helpful to be able to get health insurance for my family.

They help to acknowledge the amount of time I put onto this work. Some weeks are far more than 10-20 hours

The pay is minimal, I already have health benefits, I do it as a service to my community

When I was elected as City Councilor I did not run for the money. I ran because I wanted to represent Ward 6 and the residents of Northampton when I was elected.

Positive

If there had been no compensation, I would not have run.

Health insurance and the limited pay are an essential part of meeting my needs.

I don't take part in the benefits and the pay is fairly unnoticeable

My family currently access our health insurance and FSA through the city - I would not have been able to consider serving without the stipend and benefits

I view it as a stipend that validates the importance of the job,, but is not intended to be direct compensation for all the hours worked.

NA

**Q7 - What type of occupation (compensated or uncompensated) did you, or do you, have while holding this elected position (if any)?**

What type of occupation (compensated or uncompensated) did you, or do you, have while holding this elected position (if any)?

I am a Vocational Consultant that specializes in working with youth transitioning out of high school who have an IEP. My job allows me flexibility around my schedule so I can meet my City Council obligations.

Education consultant

Construction Project Representative

Attorney

I am a 3/4 time psychologist

Writer and working at a retail store

Currently retired

Retired

Part time auto dealer shuttle driver

Health data research/ solo parent of three young children

A combination of administration of manual labor.

Full time job, compensated

Compensated - nonprofit director

I am otherwise retired.

NA

### Q8 - If your elected position has ended, why did the elected position end?

If your elected position has ended, why did the elected position end?

NA

NA

N/A

N/A

I am still a City Councilor of Ward 6 and the election will take place for re-election in November 2023.

N/A

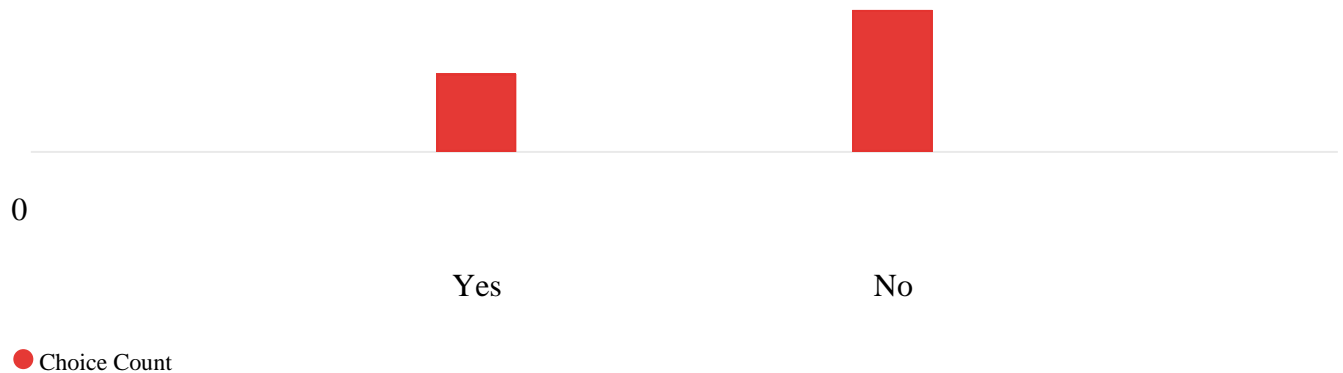
n/a

I am currently serving my last year for now; I can not continue juggling both my elected responsibilities and my occupation responsibilities (and do it all well!)

NA

NA

### Q9 - Did you feel the compensation was fair for the elected position you held/hold and the amount of work you did?



## Q10 - If you did not feel the compensation was fair, briefly explain why.

If you did not feel the compensation was fair, briefly explain why.

I am going to speak about the role of City Councilor. I ran for City Council with the knowledge that the level of service expected would not be matched by the salary and benefits and I have never evaluated my compensation as being “fair” or “unfair”. The stipend and access to the city’s health insurance plan are very much appreciated. That said, this compensation does not match the demands of the job. While councilors are not volunteers, they provide many hours of service with the understanding that they are being under-compensated. Here are the demands of the job of City Councilor. During 2022 the City Council took the following actions: considered 221 pieces of legislation, including 141 Orders, 42 Ordinances, 13 Resolutions; convened in full City Council 27 times and in City Council committees 46 times; held 24 Public Hearings on matters such as the budget, zoning, administrative orders, and pole petitions. City Council Budget narrative for FY2024. Between City Council and Committee Meetings, Councilors will participate in 50 or more public meetings a year. City Councilors often attend additional committee meetings because the topic is of importance and the discussion will inform them around improving legislation and on their vote. Beyond council meetings, City Councilors research and study legislation before deliberating and casting their voting. Councilors may also draft and sponsor legislation. Councilors answer phone calls, respond to emails, and meet directly with constituents over zoom, at City Hall, at cafes, and on the street where folks live. Councilors routinely meet with the Mayor, Administrators, State Officials, and community organizations. They attend community forums and participate as dignitaries at events. Council business can occur any day of the week, sometimes on short notice as issues arise, and very often the work is in the evening or on weekends. Northampton is a politically active community and residents hold high expectations for their elected representatives. They expect Councilors to be responsive and ready to listen to their ideas and concerns. Councilors may be publicly lauded or criticized during public comment, public hearings, in the press, and in social media. Taking all of this in, increasing compensation to better match the demands of the job while also recognizing the impacts on family and professional life would broaden the range of residents interested in serving on City Council.

The stipend is definitely fair but the health care benefits make it unfair. It means the position is rewarded much more for the elected trustees who have the city pay for their health insurance. It also means they don't want to lose the position because they'll lose the health insurance.

Not enough for the time commitment required to be effective

City councilor requires, at least, 10+ hours a week to just provide a minimal level of representation. Considerably more time should be spent on this role. The authorized compensation is not just a sacrifice from private sector work, it amounts to less (far less) than minimum wage depending on how the job is performed.

The time I spend varies, but I figure I'm making \$10-22/hr which seems a little low for the responsibility of the position

As a City Councilor, I have learned that I can't predict the number of hours I work in a week. As an example, City Council meetings are much longer than in the past. City Council meetings start at 7 pm and for 2 council meetings, the first ended at 3:25 am in the morning. The second council meeting went from 7 pm to 2:20 am. City Councilor Bill Dwight had to tell the Mayor it was time to close our meeting. I never know, from day to day, 24 hours a day, how long I will be working for that day or for the week. The amount of Committees we have to attend, the number of site visits with the Building Inspector, during COVID-19 due to complaints and working along with the DPW Director of complaints.

Knowledge and years of experience

The expectation of Councilors is extremely high- and growing. Northampton's demographics skew older. We have a quite a large population of retired residents who have time to be active in City affairs. The Culture of

Northampton is such that our residents are particularly engaged in local governance. There is a point of pride for us.

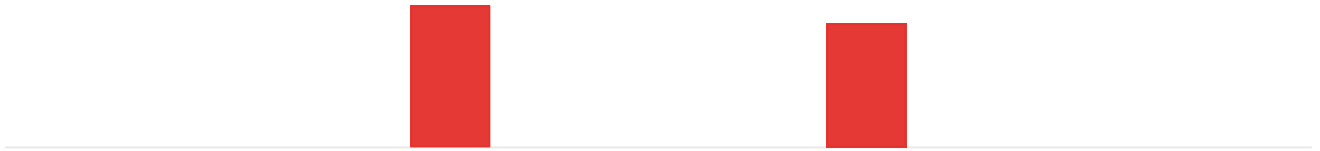
It also means that the amount of inquiries, correspondence, public comment, etc. is quite high. The Pandemic, Climate Emergency and Anti-Racism movement have added another layer of civic engagement. All good things but just to say that the expectations and demands on Councilors are formidable. Our full Council Meetings regularly go past the 5 hour mark. We also serve on three sub-committees and sometimes sub-committees of those sub-committees. And those are just the required meetings. We also, of course, regularly meet with resident groups, activists, and city staff and individual constituents.

On average, I work about 20 hours per week as a City Councilor, which works out to below minimum wage. A job that requires this much knowledge and skill needs to pay a living wage for Northampton.

While most weeks require an average of 10 hours of work, some weeks require much, much more. I spent 20 hours on school committee related meetings and work each of the past two weeks, which draws me away from my family and work responsibilities. Also, meetings go so late at night that it takes me a full day to recover the next day, but because of my work and family, I can't take that time to recover.

The question above is a tricky one - I had to work very very hard to set boundaries to hold the amount of work I've done as a councilor to my available time and in line with compensation; people often want us to do significantly more (have more oversight, more responsibility, more meetings, etc.) than is possible as a very part time responsibility

## Q11 - Did you, or do you, have any challenges attending required meetings?



● Choice Count

## Q12 - If you had/have challenges attending required meetings for your elected position, what were they?

If you had/have challenges attending required meetings for your elected position, what were they?

Meetings can be taxing on family life. Lots of missed dinners. For Councilors with children, missed bedtime, performances, sporting events, school open houses, etc. I personally chose not to run for election until my children were out of high school because of this. Meetings that are especially long ending around midnight can throw my sleep schedule off for a few days. Fridays can be a sleepwalk.

NA

NA

Only if they are held on the night I work late at my job

Most of the regular school committee meetings are 5-6 hours long, ending around midnight which is late to be making thoughtful decisions.

Rarely

As as a solo parent of three kids, I am grateful for the flexibility that remote meetings offer. There's no way I could afford the amount of childcare I'd need if I had to pay for it in my absence. Still, the sheer amount of meetings make it a challenge.

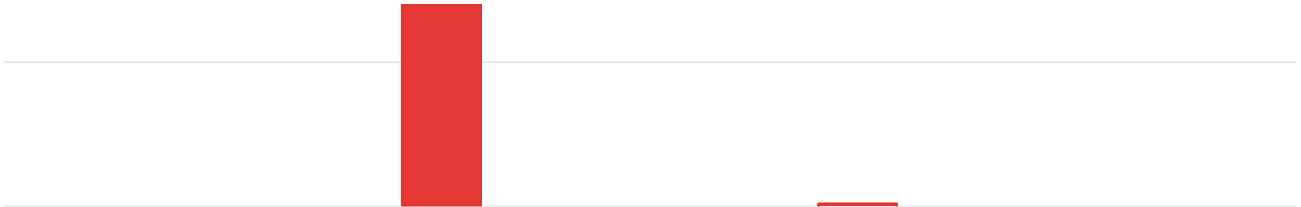
Regularly scheduled meetings run late into the night. Sub-committee and special meetings often get scheduled when I need to be with my kids - as a two-working parent household, I need to be with kids many afternoons and evenings.



Often it is my family responsibilities that make meeting times challenging, but I have had to leave work early or schedule someone to take my place at work so I could attend a meeting

NA

### Q13 - Would you be interested in serving as an elected official again?



● Choice Count

### Q14 - Why or why not?

Why or why not?

I am on the cusp of deciding whether I will run again or not. Serving on City Council can be very rewarding. I am lucky that my families finances allow me the latitude to both serve on council and determine whether I want to continue. A significant responsibility outside of elected duties, but very much tied to holding office, is running for election. This is a job in itself.

It's really rewarding. I like making a contribution to civic life.

More work to be done as SVAHS-BOT member. 2-year term is too short, should be changed to 4-years

I enjoy it and think I am of service to the city.

I am committed to the work of helping the schools

As a retired teacher I have experience with and interest in working with the schools to offer the best education possible for our students

Because I have been involved from the time I became a City Councilor in designing many ordinances and resolutions throughout my years of service. These have given residents a better quality of life.

Many residents who have talked to me want to be heard. I want to be able to continue on with total communication and transparency which I feel is essential, all residents in the City want to be heard. I will always work hard to make myself available to my residents and in the City day and night and I will always want to hear their concerns. Also to, as a City Councilor it is my fiscal responsibility to look at the budget carefully. My priorities: the budget, the roads, intersections in ward 6 and in the City, quality education, public safety, economic development, human rights, and best practices. I fully support affordable housing and Habitat for Humanity along with working with the Planning Department, Wayne Feiden, Habitat for Humanity homes have been build on the Glendale Road area, Westhampton Road area, Burts Pit Road area and now a lot on Woodland.

still serving

I love serving and now have the skill set and acquired knowledge to more efficiently serve my community.

It's an important public service.

I'm not sure. Not only have the hours taken a toll, the incredible disrespect from some members of the public has been disheartening and I'm not sure it's worth it

Very fulfilling, chance to make a difference - I would serve again when my other responsibilities lessen

I find the job challenging and fulfilling, and believe I make a positive contribution.

NA

Q15 - Do you know anybody in your community who was interested in running for an elected position, but didn't?



## Q16 - If you do, what made them ultimately decide not to run?

If you do, what made them ultimately decide not to run?

Children, career, family, stress.

NA

They didn't have enough time to devote to it

Not enough support

N/A

They told me, due to the long hours of City Council and having children would not fit their schedule to run. Also, very difficult for a single parent to be able to do these hours and hire childcare.

Too much work; commitment; too many meetings.

Costs/unpaid time of running an election, low pay after election, difficulty of dealing with constituents.

The immense number of hours required

Concerns about public pressure and time commitment

Inability to balance the demands of being an elected official with their family and "day job" responsibilities.

NA