



# Minutes of the Arlington Citizens Salary Commission Zoom Meeting

City of Arlington  
238 N Olympic Avenue  
March 25, 2021

**Commission Members Present:** Carla Gastineau, Heather Logan, Mandy Kruger and Steve Maisch, VACANT

**Elected Officials Present:** Mayor Barbara Tolbert and Councilmember Michele Blythe

**Staff Present:** Administrative Services Director James Trefry and Deputy City Clerk Ashleigh Scott

Commissioner Logan called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM and roll call and self-introductions of those present followed.

## APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Gastineau moved to approve the agenda as presented. Commissioner Maisch seconded the motion, which passed with a unanimous vote.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Commissioner Logan opened public comment opened at 6:02 p.m. With no members of the public present or wanting to speak, the public comment portion closed at 6:03 p.m.

## ELECTED OFFICIALS COMMENTS

Commissioner Logan opened Elected Official comments at 6:04 p.m.

Mayor Tolbert was the first to speak and wanted to thank the commissioners for their hard work in gathering and reviewing the updated data. Commissioner Maisch had a question for Mayor Tolbert in regards to her thoughts on adding back benefits for the Mayor and Councilmembers. Mayor Tolbert stated for future public service, it would be greatly appreciated to have those benefits moving forward. In her first year, staff took furloughs and increases were put on hold due to the recession. She currently pays over \$1,200 a month out of pocket for medical benefits, but does not include vision, dental, etc.

Commissioner Logan asked what other cities are considered full service aside from the City of Everett, because they have a population over 85,000 residents. Mayor Tolbert stated Arlington could be considered the same size in square footage, with less employees but have full-service city functions like transportation, water and sewer, police and the airport, and so on. Commissioner Logan wanted to get a copy of Mayor Tolbert's job description, because moving forward, wants to see what is currently listed versus the actual amount of work

Mayor Tolbert puts in on a monthly and annual basis. The next interested Mayor or Councilmember(s) should have a better idea of the amount of expected time and type of specific duties these positions actually entail. Commissioner Logan and others agreed to review over the job descriptions, qualifications and benefits package to attract qualified individuals.

Councilmember Blythe brought up that now and moving into the future, attracting individuals who want to make the community not only a better place to work and live but citizens who step forward to actually run and have confidence to pursue this role; make it more appealing to new applicants. She continued on to note these individuals wanting and having the ability to make differences but be compensated and taken care of in putting in hard work while on the Council. Commissioner Kruger brought up that the City of Marysville would be a good city in comparison based on functions, even though it is bigger in population. Administrative Services Director Trefry highlighted information in the email Jan Schuette had submitted prior to the last meeting on March 11, 2021.

Mayor Tolbert agreed that she would like to see compensation be transitioned to salary and not per meeting moving forward. It would also streamline the process, making it easier for staff and councilmembers to process payroll. Mayor Tolbert finished with stating they wanted to balance in-person meetings during COVID once allowed and consider a hybrid model. Commissioner Gastineau stated that Marysville and some other surrounding cities still require a timesheet and a recording of meetings, trainings, and webinars they have attended.

The Citizen Salary Commission thanked Councilmember Blythe and Mayor Tolbert for their participation and thoughts and closed the Elected Official comments at 6:56 p.m.

**REVIEW UPDATED DATA**

Administrative Services Director Trefry reviewed salary options with funds towards benefits, but not having them be part of the city health programs. In order to do so, there would need to be an amendment to the City Code to expand the existing mandate of the Commission beyond salary.

Commissioner Maisch asked what non-represented employees do if they do not need the benefits – opt out? James Trefry answered that if a non-represented employee chooses to opt-out, up to \$300 would go towards a HRA account.

Commissioner Gastineau wanted to remind everyone not to individualize councilmember's stories and situations and to keep this as a generalized group because the recommendation of the Commission is going to be focused on the positions and not applicable to specific incumbents.

Administrative Services Director Trefry reviewed the Arlington Municipal Code 2.04.027 Expense Reimbursement, because if the Commission chooses to change the compensation to salary, the code will need to be amended. Discussion continued on how to manage the potential of councilmembers and/or mayors who never show to meetings and still get compensated due to salary, holding them accountable and how the HR Department handles city employees, but ultimately the HR Director can make recommendations to the Council,

but does not “manage” them. A reporting requirement such as minimum meetings per month could be recommended for use by all members of Council in lieu of the current per meeting documentation.

Commissioner Logan discussed with Councilmembers Kruger and Gastineau about a meeting cap to keep councilmembers from taking on too many meetings, webinars and/or trainings so it can match their salary compensation. Administrative Services Director Trefry stated August, September and December are low meeting count months, but retreats and other special meetings make up for Council breaks or weeks that have no meetings scheduled so the monthly average is about the same over the course of a year.

Administrative Services Director James Trefry then began to review the Snohomish County City’s 2020 compensation information.

Administrative Services Director Trefry continued to review the volume of trips through Arlington in a day that results from work traffic versus non-work traffic – the hours where everyone is home and it’s visiting for either shopping or eating out. Other reasons include retail, casinos, parks and recreation, etc. He screen-shared a traffic map to show traffic volumes and also reminding Commissioners of ongoing and new projects coming into the City. There was a review of the community maps that shows what’s to come, what has just recently opened and get an idea of how many people will be moving into Arlington over the next few years. Commission Logan wanted to get a link or copies of the maps James Trefry was reviewing and stated they were a wonderful visual.

**DISCUSSION/ADOPTION OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

Commission Logan –Suggested making the Mayor’s position salaried and to give a boost in compensation and offer benefits. No specific benefit program but at least half the premium. For City Councilmembers, she suggested having a minor increase and offer benefits, with a stipend for the Mayor Pro Tem and also turn their compensation to salary.

Commissioner Gastineau – Suggested to increase Councilmembers to \$1,500 a month plus standard reimbursements, and stated she is okay with the opt-out \$300 allowance option, member only benefits, and \$50-100 more for Mayor Pro Tem. For the Mayor, she suggested around \$7,100 a month plus mileage and expense reimbursements, and benefits for self and family.

Commission Kruger – Wants a stipend that is the average of the three major insurance company premiums. She would also like the opt-out options, is open to mileage and expense reimbursements. Commissioner Kruger wants to draw in talent, and noted the cost of living will increase and possibly giving a car allowance to the mayor and maybe the Councilmembers, but did not have a salary suggestion for the Mayor yet.

Administrative Services Director James Trefry mentioned mileage reimbursement in 2019 differs from 2020 due to COVID and not much traveling had occurred. He also reviewed the summary of salary commission changes on the calendar and that minor changes were an option if things aren’t working.

Commissioner Maisch – Wants to review the budgets more to see what’s doable but does want to see an increase for more money. James Trefry reviewed potential income increases and ways to absorb budget changes until the economy recovers.

The Citizen Salary Commission all agreed to moving away from per meeting compensation and change to salary plus benefits. Mayor Pro Tem should not be compensated additional or perhaps receive a minor additional reimbursement, because we have a City Administrator and the duties of Pro Tem are different than some other jurisdictions where there are more duties than how Arlington has historically used the position. There is interest in COLA increases, stipends and a review of standards for reporting and expectations.

Commissioners will bring their updated suggestions to the next meeting for making a final decision.

**ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

  
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Heather Logan, Chair