



To: Bellingham City Council
From: Stacey Carroll, HR Experts On-Call
Date: November 21, 2022
Subject: City of Bellingham Salary Commission

In November 2021 the City Council approved an ordinance to establish an independent salary commission to review and fix the salaries for members of the City Council of the City of Bellingham. According to the Ordinance, the decision of the salary commission will be final with no further action from City Council and will be incorporated into the budget and will amend Bellingham Municipal Code 3.12.010 A. The salary commission had seven appointment members. The City of Bellingham Salary Commission began meeting in September 2022. The Commission continued meetings through November 2022.

The Commission received education regarding various forms of local governments and requested a variety of information to assist in their decision making. They had a chance to learn about the position through interviews with two current council members. They reviewed the current salaries and benefits of other Washington city councils and other forms of government. They reviewed the MIT living wage calculator for Bellingham and reviewed Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) for average wages of Bellingham. The Commissioners were also able to review comments made from the general public via the Engage Bellingham website and email. As required by the Ordinance, the commission held a public hearing on September 28, 2022. Members of the commission actively participated in the process and shared their unique perspectives that led to a unanimous decision regarding the final salary determination.

With a vote of 6-0 with one commissioner excused, the commission set the annual wage of \$67,000 effective January 1, 2023 with an annual adjustment factor of 3% effective on January 1, 2024 and every January 1st thereafter. This salary will replace the current salary including the monthly meeting stipend. In their decision, the commission clarified that one factor in the decision is that City Council members receive benefits equal to part-time employees which does not include dependent coverage. While the commission did not have authority to alter or modify the benefits of Councilmembers, they accounted for the cost of dependent medical benefits into their salary determination.

Bellingham Municipal Code 3.12.010 A is amended as follows:

- A. Effective January 1, 2023 the annual salary for members of the city council shall be calculated as follows:
 - 1. January 1, 2023, \$5,583.33 per month;
 - 2. The annual salary for councilmembers shall increase annually by three percent, beginning January 1, 2024.

The Commission wants to thank city staff for providing the Commission with support to enable a smooth process to reach a timely and agreeable decision. It has been an honor to serve the citizens of Bellingham through this effort.