

Trisha Summers

From: greengables <greengables@rocketmail.com>
Sent: Monday, July 6, 2020 11:15 AM
To: Trisha Summers
Cc: Steve Whitaker; Susan Johnson; jgillespies@cityofmilton.net; Todd Morton; Phil Linden; Robert Whalen; Locke Systems
Subject: July 6 council meeting: citizen comment for item G

This comment is for agenda item F. The mayor salary study. I would like this read into the record if that option exists.

July 6, 2020

Dear Mayor and Council,

I was surprised and deeply disappointed on Thursday to see on tonight's agenda not only a discussion about the salary for the mayor and a findings of fact, but, an ordinance --with today as the effective date. You could vote on this tonight – after one meeting and no real public comments – only statements that may or may not be read into the record. I certainly did not intend to spend my holiday weekend researching other cities, reviewing the findings of fact, or writing a statement to council, but that's what I did. I never thought I would see a move like this from this administration, so I hope it is a misunderstanding.

Let me be clear -- I'm not against a salary increase. I think it's long overdue. What I am against is the process and methodology to arrive at a decision -- if tonight is the entire process. I find nothing transparent or open about this – it feels very pro-forma. My understanding is that the mayor's salary has been under discussion before May 18th, but not in a public meeting. Why hasn't a salary commission been established? Why is the city executive staff preparing a mayor salary study and writing the findings of fact? Am I the only one who is uncomfortable with staff preparing a salary study for their boss? I'm not saying anyone did anything inappropriate, but does it reflect the appearance of fairness and transparency? It doesn't to me.

I have many questions about this study – more than I can cover in this statement. Here are just a few: First, who decided on the criteria to be used? What criteria was selected? Was it only population and a strong mayor? Why only those two criteria? Where is the study data? Is it just the two tables? Why were all the other cities with comparable population discarded? The study compares Milton to Port Orchard, Edgewood, and Othello – all cities that used a salary commission to set the mayor's salary. Why did this study choose to not recommend that process? Did the Milton study consider budgets or staffing as a criteria? If so, I don't see the data, and I don't see an explanation for the justification for including Port Orchard as a peer city when their budget is \$97 million with 84 FTEs and Poulsbo with a budget of \$80 million and 104 FTEs? If budget and FTEs were not a criteria, why not? Has anyone investigated the reason why the mayor of Othello's salary is so high? I did and know the reason – it's

specific to that mayor and his qualifications and the situation facing that city when their city administrator left to take a job at Gig Harbor. Does anyone know the process the Coupeville city council went through to establish the salary for their mayor? I do -- it was discussed over several meetings with lots of public input. All the cities on the list went through the process in a methodical way – I think the citizens of Milton deserve the same.

I also question the accompanying ordinance. Many years ago Milton repealed the code for the mayor and combined it into the city administrator code, which, when I compared our city against other cities in the study, is vague -- lacking specific performance expectations for both the mayor and city administrator positions. But what I am especially puzzled by is the section that reads "As is applicable to the City's FLSA exempt employees, the Mayor has the discretion to perform her duties in as much or as little time as she deems appropriate, taking time off at her discretion." I must point out that the other FLSA exempt employees are accountable to the mayor, so their discretion has a limiting factor. As an elected official, the mayor isn't directly accountable in an employee sense to anyone – not now and not with a salary increase. I am in no way suggesting or even thinking that this mayor will be anything but a hard working professional, which has me even more curious why someone felt it was necessary to include that statement in the ordinance. It feels like it is saying something but not being direct. I didn't find it in the ordinances I reviewed, but I didn't look at all of them...yet. :)

Finally, I know, after listening to the May 18 meeting, that for many of you this is clearly an emotional issue, and I know it would feel good to give the mayor an acknowledgement of how much you appreciate the job she is doing by passing this ordinance tonight. But this is a business decision, and there isn't a reason I'm aware of that requires this be settled tonight. I respectfully request that the council move to form a salary commission so an appropriate salary for the mayor and also for the council can be determined. The information exists to arrive at a transparent and fair decision regarding compensation. It might even be the same number proposed tonight. I can't tell with the little time and data that's been presented so far – but the choice is yours to make.

Sincerely,

Jacki Strader
1809 13th Ave, Milton

Trisha Summers

From: KEVIN RINGUS <romans8@comcast.net>
Sent: Monday, July 6, 2020 11:59 AM
To: Trisha Summers
Subject: July 6, 2020 Agenda - Comments for item 6F

Madam Mayor... members of Council

For years, Milton's mayors have taken it upon themselves to do more than the ceremonial and 'other duties' of the position. The salary has been set, after much discussion, in the 2020 budget. This salary is known to every person that files for the position of mayor, as well as the challenges.

Due to the current pandemic, businesses have been shuttered for nearly 5 months. Citizens asked to stay home and stay healthy. Many have lost their source of income. In fact, City Hall has been closed to the public since mid-March. Elected officials and exempt-salaried staff everywhere are experiencing more stress and longer hours planning, preparing, and adjusting.

On May 18th, Councilmember Morton added this topic to the already published agenda. This late addition denied the public any opportunity to submit comments (as we are required to do). Comments are required to be submitted by 12pm on the day of the regularly scheduled council meeting. In fact, after a lengthy discussion, one citizen watching the Zoom meeting 'raised his hand' to comment. He was told that he could not comment.

Councilmember Morton started the conversation by stating "as we've discussed in the past... over the... quite a few years". He goes on to state "we've talked about it over and over, but never done anything about it." Further, "with the Chief's help, we have done some research

Chief Hernandez stated that he has done research on the topic. The Mayor even commented that she has had conversations with Edgewood's mayor in the past. After much conversation 'to see what council thinks', it was agreed that this should be discussed, in person, over more than one meeting.

Now, it is being brought on for a decision without the benefit of discussion or vetting. No study session, no review by the Finance Committee, and no members of the public in attendance.

Although it was referenced that a Salary Commission is not necessary to raise the salary of the mayor, the Council would benefit from an unbiased report. On May 18th, Councilmember Morton stated: "with the Chief's help, we did some research... made some calculations, talked with the Chief about what would be appropriate... and came up with roughly \$74,000 a year." I still have no idea who 'we' consists of though.

Six weeks later, using the same set of comparable salaries, three subordinates of the mayor recommend a salary of \$93,700 plus health benefits. This is a huge difference. Some of the cities listed do not have comparable needs or finances.

Further, unlike the salaries that were adopted in the May 18th meeting, this is NOT within the current budget. The City Administrator position as well as the Municipal Services Supervisor have both been

removed from the budget since 2018. Revenues received for the 1st quarter lagged behind projections. The revenue gap is expected to become greater in the 2nd and 3rd quarters of 2020.

It also concerns me that this increase is only effective until December 31, 2021. There was much discussion on the ability to use this salary to attract qualified candidates for mayor during times when the City does not have a city administrator. The filing period will be in early June, 2021. For council to remove this amount and, then, reinstate it in 2021 *if the mayor agrees to work on a full time basis* will stretch the appearance of fairness that we are all supposed to uphold.

Does the mayor's position deserve an increase...certainly. Now is not the time. It should have been done in the prior year through the budget process. Alternatively, it can be made effective in 2021 IF the budget can sustain it.

Kevin Ringus