

Meeting of the Northampton Elected Officials Compensation Advisory Board

Monday, January 9, 2022 • 5:30 – 6:30 p.m.

[Online Zoom Meeting](#) (Meeting ID: 848 0435 0600)

Minutes

Board members present

- John Bidwell – Chair
- Tara Brewster
- Felicia Corbeil
- Sam Hopper – Clerk
- Javier Luengo-Garrido
- Peter Whalen – Vice Chair

Board members absent

- *None*

Minutes

Call meeting to order

- Meeting called to order at 5:31

Previous Meeting Minutes

Related documents:

[2022-12-13 ELECTED OFFICIALS COMPENSATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES.PDF](#)

- Peter Whalen moved to approve minutes, John Bidwell seconded
 - John Bidwell: Yes
 - Tara Brewster: Yes
 - Felicia Corbeil: Yes
 - Sam Hopper: Yes
 - Javier Luengo-Garrido: Yes
 - Peter Whalen: Yes

Develop Report Roadmap

Related documents:

[2014 EOCAB - FINAL REPORT 10-27-2014.PDF](#)

[2014 EOCAB SOLICITOR OPINION 12-17-2014.PDF](#)

Meeting minutes from 2014 Elected Officials Compensation Advisory Board:

- 4/24/2014: [2014 EOCAB MINUTES 4-24-2014.PDF](#)
- 5/21/2014: [2014 EOCAB MINUTES 5-21-2014.PDF](#)

- 6-24-2014: [2014 EOCAB MINUTES 6-24-2014.PDF](#)
 - 7/24/2014: [2014 EOCAB MINUTES 7-24-2014.PDF](#)
 - 8/28/2014: [2014 EOCAB MINUTES 8-28-2014.PDF](#)
 - 9/4/2014: [2014 EOCAB MINUTES 9-4-2014.PDF](#)
 - 10/2/2014: [2014 EOCAB MINUTES - 10-2-2014.PDF](#)
 - 10/15/2014: [2014 EOCAB - MINUTES 10-15-2014.PDF](#)
- Understanding that not all recommendations from the 2014 board's report were adopted
 - Stipend recommendations adopted
 - Recommendation to discontinue health insurance and retirement benefits was not adopted
 - Conversation on defining what we want to consider as part of our scope of work for our report
 - Consensus to evaluate total compensation package, including salary & stipend, health insurance benefits, and retirement benefits
 - In previous experience when looking to diversify candidates to bring in folks not historically represented, looked at additional types of compensation, like childcare
 - Request for updated information from what was shared in the 2014 report, like how other municipalities are currently paying similar positions
 - Observes that common theme that allows folks to run for office is disposable time which is often due to a higher economic position – reviewing compensation is an opportunity to look at compensation as a social justice tool
 - Suggestion to carefully consider workload differences of similar positions in other communities as we compare elected officials' compensation in other communities, e.g., number of committees a city councilor serves on can vary and therefore the amount of work varies
 - Suggestion for board to consider additional types of compensation to allow more people to consider elected office like childcare allowance, transportation allowance, technology allowance
 - Suggestion to consider sliding scale, recognizing it's complicated
 - Suggestion to consider the time availability expected of elected officials and how it's changed in recent years
 - Request to get an update on how many hours elected officials are working – previous report noted the mayor is estimated to work 60-80 hours/week
 - Suggestion for honor system sliding scale for all types of compensation offered
 - First Woman of Color elected to Northampton City Council in 2019
 - Request for demographic information, like race and gender, when getting updated salaries & stipends to explore if there may be a correlation between racial & gender diversity and compensation

- Request to hear from current and former elected officials to get their view on compensation
 - Select Committee to Study Barriers to Serving on City Boards and Commissions sent out a survey this week and have been receiving many responses – suggestion to replicate this strategy for our board to hear from elected officials
 - Options in order to comply with Open Meeting Law:
 - 1 person (or anything less than a quorum) creates survey then presents to the board at an open meeting
 - Create survey collectively as a full board in an open meeting
- Suggestion to consider the city’s budget as the board makes recommendations on compensation, especially in light of tax bills rising
 - Suggestion to leave budget considerations to city and consider this committee’s charge to analyze and provide findings, but not work within a budget
 - Consensus to make reasonable recommendations but generally not be constrained by a budget that we do not have
- Suggestion to speak with 2014 Elected Officials Compensation Advisory Board members
- Conversation about considering confidentiality when speaking with current & former elected officials and former board members to enable more robust responses
 - Notes taken when speaking with someone on matters charged to this committee become part of the public record
 - Consider what’s written down when speaking to someone who may not want their name attached to public record
- Request to review action taken on the previous board’s recommendation, i.e., City Council votes taken based on 2014 report
- Clarification on elected officials we’re considering based on officials named in [city ordinance setting compensation](#)
 - Mayor
 - City Council President
 - At-Large City Councilor
 - Ward City Councilor
 - At-Large School Committee Member
 - Ward School Committee Member
 - Trustees of Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School
 - Elector under the Oliver Smith Will
 - Trustees under the Will of Charles E. Forbes

- Community Preservation at Large
- Information gathering plan
 - Interview 2014 Elected Officials Compensation Advisory Board members
 - 7 members include:
 - Vicki Baum-Hommes
 - John (Trey) Fortier
 - Dennis Helmus
 - Jennifer Higgins
 - Douglas Loux
 - Linda Matson
 - Todd Thompson, Chair
 - John Bidwell and Peter Whalen will take the lead on outreach
 - Survey current & former elected officials to get more information on their views of compensation
 - Felicia Corbeil and Tara Brewster will work together to draft something for the board to review at the next meeting
 - Compile updated data from what was shared in the [2014 report](#), including benchmarking tables and updates to how many folks are utilizing health benefits and the current cost
 - Will explore if we can also get any demographic information
 - Will explore if types of compensation beyond salary/stipend, health insurance benefits, and retirement benefits are provided in other municipalities
 - Compile job descriptions
 - Criteria for selecting municipalities to compare with Northampton
 - Will look at fewer municipalities than 23 (number previous board benchmarked Northampton against) - suggestion to look at 7
 - Ask city for guidance in compiling this information
 - Criteria of other municipalities that should be used to consider it similar to Northampton: Population, median income, need to be a strong mayor-council form of government (as opposed to weak mayor-council form of government)
 - Strong mayor-council form of government refers to a mayor's responsibilities compared to the city council's responsibilities
 - Mayor is the city's chief executive
 - Mayor appoints and removes departmental heads
 - Mayor has veto power
 - Sam Hopper will take the lead on contacting the Mayor's office to understand how to compile this information

Adjourn

- Peter Whalen moved to adjourn meeting, Tara Brewster seconded
 - John Bidwell: Yes
 - Tara Brewster: Yes
 - Felicia Corbeil: Yes
 - Sam Hopper: Yes
 - Javier Luengo-Garrido: Yes
 - Peter Whalen: Yes
- Meeting adjourned at 6:31 p.m.

Upcoming Meeting

January 23, 2023 @ 5:30 via Zoom