

FREDERICK COUNTY COMPENSATION REVIEW COMMISSION

March 23, 2021

The Honorable M.C. Keegan-Ayer
President, Frederick County Council
Winchester Hall
12 East Church Street
Frederick, Maryland 21701

Dear Council President Keegan-Ayer and Council Members,

Enclosed please find the final report of the Frederick County Compensation Review Commission, as required by Frederick County Resolution No. 20-25, adopted by the County Council on December 22, 2020.

The Frederick County Compensation Review Commission was charged with reviewing and making recommendations concerning the salaries of the County Executive and County Council. The Commission held four public meetings between January and March of 2021. A public hearing was held on the proposed salary increases on March 8, 2021.

The Commission reviewed data related to the Frederick County budget, history, demographics, and projections coupled with a thorough review of compensation and history for the Frederick County positions and relevant positions similar to ours in other jurisdictions.

After analysis of this data and substantial discussion, the Commission is recommending for the County Executive a base salary of \$137,000 for the first year of the term that will begin December 2022. The Commission is recommending a yearly cost of living adjustment based on the regional CPI or 2%, whichever is greater.

The Commission is recommending for members of the County Council a base salary of \$35,000 for the first year of the term that will begin December 2022. The Commission is recommending a yearly cost of living adjustment based on the regional CPI or 2%, whichever is greater.

Commission members unanimously agree that a salary increase for both the County Executive and County Council is warranted. The Commission believes these recommendations will encourage those interested in public service to seek office. The recommendations also allow salaries to keep pace with inflation, to appropriately compensate office holders for the time and job demands on them, and to maintain reasonable parity with the compensation of other elected officials throughout the state.

On behalf of the Commission members, I would like to thank the County Executive and members of the County Council for the opportunity to serve this community in this way.

Sincerely,

Dean Rose, Chairperson

FREDERICK COUNTY

COMPENSATION REVIEW COMMISSION

Report of the Compensation Review Commission March 17, 2021

I. AUTHORITY OF COMMISSION

In accordance with State law authority, Section 10-302 of Local Government of the Annotated Code of Maryland and the Frederick County Charter, Sections 207 and 406, the Frederick County Council is required to establish a Compensation Review Commission every four years to review the salaries of the County executive and County Council members and to make recommendations to the Council on these matters.

Accordingly, this Compensation Review Commission was established on December 22, 2020, by Council Resolution 20-25, to review and make recommendations concerning the salaries of the County Executive and County Council.

II. STUDY AND INFORMATION

The Commission researched pertinent information with regard to compensation issues and spent considerable time discussing the material. Included in that material was a detailed spread sheet that compared other counties within Maryland, including the following: population, operating budget, number of county employees, per capita income, median household income, County Executive salaries, Council Member salaries and Commissioner salaries. In addition, the Commission sought input from the current Council members as well as County employees to better learn the full range of duties and responsibilities of those offices.

The Commission considered a number of relevant pieces of information to evaluate the current salaries and to form its recommendation for future salaries. The included: responsibilities of the Council as a whole, information received from Council Members, what, if any, benefits that these elected officials are entitled, compensation of council members and county executives from other jurisdictions in Maryland, the cost of living in Frederick County and demographic information for the County and similar jurisdictions.

The Commission discussed the fact that the salaries for the County Executive and County Council have not been changed since Frederick County transitioned to a Charter form of government in 2014. Despite an increase in the County budget, number of County residents, number of government employees- the salaries have remained stagnant. The Commission also recognizes that the Compensation Review Commission would not be convened again for another four years. Because of this, an annual cost of living increase to any salary recommendation is strongly encouraged.

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

The County Executive is responsible for the day to day operation of Frederick County Government. This is a full-time position. The County Executive is responsible for proposing the annual County budget, overseeing spending throughout the year, and for managing all departments of County government. The executive routinely makes major decisions that greatly affect the County and its residents, sets the direction for the County government, and makes policy in many areas. The County Executive's average work week routinely exceeds 60 hours. The County Executive spends a large

amount of time dealing with the public. The County Executive is accessible and visible to citizens. At this time, the Executive is responsible for an overall County Budget of more than \$655 million.

The Commission unanimously agreed that it is essential that the salaries for elected officials should be competitive to attract a selection of high caliber and diverse candidates and to encourage greater participation in the process. The County Executive salary should reflect the reality that this is a full time position which includes demanding responsibilities and expectations. Additionally, the County Executive in Frederick County is not permitted to engage in any outside employment.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Council members are citizen legislators, and are permitted to engage in outside employment. Duties of Council Members include reviewing and approving the County budget each year, proposing, reviewing, and adopting legislation and ordinances, approving budget journals, engaging with constituents, serving on boards and commissions, and attending weekly Council meetings. Council members have scheduling and other challenges as they accommodate their Council duties and their private responsibilities. Members also participate in State and regional groups and entities as representatives of the Council.

Again, the Commission was unanimous that a salary increase would be appropriate for Council members, although the final salary number was not unanimously agreed to.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission agreed that the current salaries of the County Executive and County Council needs to be increased. By increasing the salaries, the Commission believes this will help to attract diverse and qualified candidates for future positions and will adequately compensate the County Executive and Council Members for their effort, time, and dedication to the County.

The Commission recommends for the County Executive an annual salary of \$137,000 for the first year of the term that begins December 2022. This represents an increase of \$42,000 from the current salary.

The Commission is also recommending a yearly cost of living adjustment equal to the regional CPI or 2%, whichever is greater. The County executive salary recommendation was unanimously agreed upon by all seven Commission members.

The Commission recommends for the County Council members an annual salary of \$35,000 for the first year of their term that begins December 2022. This represents an increase of \$12,500 from the current salary.

The Commission is also recommending a yearly cost of living adjustment equal to the regional CPI or 2%, whichever is greater. The Council Member salary recommendation was agreed on by a 5-2 vote, with Ms. Palmer and Mr. Pederson voting nay.